
The Reality of Reduction: The Failed Synthesis of Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu has become the most influential 'critical theorist' in the world of social science.¹ In an age marked by the death of communism his oeuvre may be viewed as the most impressive living embodiment of a neo-Marxist tradition that, triumphant only a decade ago, currently is struggling to survive. Indeed, despite the author's own claims to the contrary (e.g. Bourdieu 1990b: 22 and 123-39), and his impressively omnivorous ingestion of vast portions of theoretically antagonistic ideas, Bourdieu's work cannot be understood unless it is seen as the latest in the long line of brilliant reconstructors of a system of thought he himself has rarely defended but which, nonetheless, penetrates to the very marrow of his social science.²

Perhaps it is the failure to recognize the cultural thrust of every important form of twentieth-century Marxism that has made Bourdieu's own Marxist lineaments so invisible to so many. His American interpreters (e.g. Brubaker 1985; DiMaggio 1979: 1469; Ringer 1992), for example, tend to deny or overlook this fundamental theoretical link. Cultural Marxists themselves have had no such trouble, recognizing and sometimes criticizing Bourdieu's work as part of the century long effort - extending from Lukács and Gramsci to the later Sartre and Habermas - to create a neo-Marxist theory of superstructural forms.³ Stuart Hall (1978: 29), a key figure in the British cultural studies school that originated in Birmingham, has hailed Bourdieu for promising to develop 'an adequate Marxist theory of ideology.' Nicholas Garnham and Raymond Williams (1980: 211) also have recognized that, 'while Bourdieu has concentrated his attention upon the mode of domination,

upon what he calls the exercise of Symbolic Power, his theory is cast in resolutely materialist terms.'

Yet there is a paradox here. For, perhaps more than any other social scientist in the critical tradition, Bourdieu has moved well beyond the merely revisionist effort to tinker with one part or another of Marx's original thought. Rather, like Habermas, he has sought heroically to reconstruct historical materialism and even to create a new theory that, while resembling original Marxism in critical respects, simultaneously seeks to displace it in significant ways.⁴ Indeed, if we were to employ the kind of metasociology of knowledge to which Bourdieu himself often so recklessly resorts, we might say that being a Bourdieuan has become a mark of distinction precisely because of the crisis engulfing the neo-Marxist tradition. In a period that has subjected materialist social theory to relentless epistemological critique, it is vital to recognize that his own critical approach accepts the importance, if not the authenticity, of symbolic action and cultural systems. At the same time, however, Bourdieu's work gives full play to the materialism and corrosive cynicism of our time. In an age when utopian hopes have become routinized, when liberation movements have given way to fundamentalist revivals and socialist regimes to market economies, Bourdieu's understanding of action and order implies that this must be so. No matter what the ideals of an actor, a group, or an age, Bourdieu's theory of practice suggests, they are bound to be degraded by the strategic will to power that underlies, and undermines, every dimension of social life.

Still, the sociology of knowledge can never substitute for the analysis of knowledge. Bourdieu, it must be said, not only reflects the contradictions of our time but tries to resolve them. He recently described his theory (Bourdieu 1994: 10) as 'a philosophy of action' that has broken decisively with 'a series of very socially powerful oppositions, individuality/society, individual/collective, conscious/unconscious, interested/disinterested, objective/subjective.' From the beginning, indeed, it has been the self-conscious ambition to resolve and even dissolve a series of classical theoretical antinomies that has established the originality and importance of Bourdieu's work and, for his devoted followers at least, has marked its brilliant success.

Bourdieu's near-encyclopedic oeuvre throws a manifold challenge at the current divisions and accepted modes of thinking of social science [because of] its persistent attempt to straddle some of the deep-seated antinomies that rend social science asunder . . . by honing a set of conceptual and methodological devices capable of dissolving these very distinctions.

(Wacquant in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 3 and passim).⁵

Long before the micro-macro link (Alexander et al. 1987) became a faddish phrase, and a decade before the 'new theoretical movement' (Alexander 1988a) emerged from the second phase of postwar social theory, Bourdieu already had begun a remarkably ambitious project to sublimate three of the most obdurate dichotomies of the theoretical world: structure/agency, symbolic/material, and interpretive/strategic. In his style of work as well as its content, moreover, Bourdieu seeks to bridge long-standing epistemological disputes as well. He brings together, more effectively perhaps than any other living writer, abstract general theory and middle-range empirical studies. He also has something important to say about the conflict between critical and positive theory. As one dense empirical study after another has issued from his pen, it has become increasingly clear that Bourdieu's understanding of critical theory, like Habermas's, shares a welcome characteristic with Marx's own: he seeks not to displace positive social science but to incorporate and recreate it.

Despite the fundamentally critical nature of the discussion that follows – indeed, precisely because of it – one must begin, therefore, by recognizing the exhilarating and exemplary ambition of Pierre Bourdieu, and by expressing admiration for the austere yet still febrile sensibility of this French master who has produced studies that are not only enlightening but *très amusant*.

Nonetheless, I will argue in the essay that Bourdieu's sociology is irredeemably flawed, in theoretical as well as in empirical terms, and ultimately in ideological and moral terms as well. It distorts the nature of action and order and misunderstands the basic institutional and cultural structures, let alone the moral and human possibilities, of contemporary life.

Since the early 1960s, Bourdieu has taken aim at two intellectual opponents: structuralist semiotics and rationalistic behaviorism.⁶ Against these perspectives, he has reached out to pragmatism and phenomenology and announced his intention to recover the actor and the meaningfulness of her world. That he can do neither, I will suggest, is the result of his continuing commitment not only to a cultural form of Marxist thought but to significant strains in the very traditions he is fighting against. The result is that Bourdieu strategizes action (reincorporating behaviorism), subjects it to overarching symbolic codes (reincorporating structuralism), and subjugates both code and action to an underlying material base (reincorporating orthodox Marxism).

In the reflections that follow, I begin by considering Bourdieu's polemic against structuralist cultural theory and how this false critique lays the basis for Bourdieu's conception of 'habitus,' which while

apparently embracing phenomenology actually casts subjectivity in a determinate, antivoluntaristic form. It is in silent recognition of this reduction, I will suggest, that Bourdieu emphasizes the strategic, economizing dimension of action in turn. Only after these considerations on Bourdieu's general theoretical model of action and order do I take up the framework that Bourdieu develops for his more empirical research. Examining a broad although by no means complete sample of his institutional studies, I argue that Bourdieu's 'social fields' are far less autonomous from economic structures than has commonly been assumed, and conclude that his portrait of modern society can provide neither the theoretical nor the empirical resources for understanding, much less appreciating, the pluralist and democratic dimensions of contemporary societies.

The Misleading Critique of Cultural Theory

In a refrain that constitutes the primary polemical theme of his work, Bourdieu accuses symbolic structuralism of being a form of 'objectivism' (OTP: 1)⁷ that eliminates agency because its 'mechanical interlocking of pre-set actions' (LOP: 107) conflates 'the model [for action] and its execution' (ibid.: 33). At the same time, however, Bourdieu makes a directly contrary criticism. He attacks structuralism, not because it is objectivist, but because it is idealist: it is a 'hagiographic hermeneutics' that 'reduc[es] all social relations to communicative relations' (OTP: 1).⁸

This paradoxical criticism – which equates mechanism with communication – is intellectually problematic, although we will soon see that it plays a pivotal logical role in Bourdieu's theorizing. Yet in social terms the association of objectivism and idealism is hardly anomalous. From the mid-1960s, the period during which Bourdieu's own project emerged, precisely the same charges were raised against a perspective that was becoming equally discredited in political-cum-theoretical ways, namely structural-functionalism. Bourdieu's early attack on role theory (OTP: 2), which relates its failures to the objectivism of symbolic structuralism, shows the close connection between these historically contemporaneous critiques. Like Dahrendorf (1968), Garfinkel (1967), and Turner (1962) before him, Bourdieu claims that structuralism portrays action as dogmatically following formal and explicit rules.

To slip from *regularity*, i.e., from what recurs with a certain statistically measurable frequency and from the formula which describes it, to a

consciously laid down and consciously respected *ruling*, or to unconscious regulating by a mysterious cerebral or social mechanism, are the two commonest ways of sliding from the model of reality to the reality of the model.

(LOP: 39, original italics)

The result, he asserts, is that actions are described by structuralists as if they 'had as their principle conscious obedience to consciously devised and sanctioned rules' (ibid.).

If this antistructuralist criticism is taken in a weak form, there is no denying it a certain merit. It is true that pristine culturalism says little about action, even if it does not necessarily dismiss it in the principled manner Bourdieu suggests. In this sense, Bourdieu's insistence on the role of time, place, strategy, and improvisation (OTP: 8-10) is a useful, if not particularly original, restatement of the phenomenological and ethnomethodological arguments that concrete action must have its place. But Bourdieu's attack on structuralism goes well beyond the simple effort to restore to the concrete and temporally rooted elements a distinctive and acknowledged place. He means not only to modify theories that employ symbolic codes as explanation but to dismiss the usefulness of symbolic theory as such. He is making a strong claim, not a weak one. This claim rests on the assertion that cultural theory assumes 'consciousness' and 'obedience,' leaving the actor neither intuitive nor autonomous.

This is the same distorted understanding of structuralism in which Garfinkel (1967) had earlier engaged when he accused the structural-functional actor of being a 'cultural dope,'⁹ and it allows Bourdieu, as it allowed Garfinkel, to equate his alternative to structuralism with the riposte against logical formalism that Wittgenstein made in his famous discussion of what it means to follow a rule. Wittgenstein (1968 paras 206-38) argued for the centrality of tacit knowledge, which he equated with knowledge gained 'practically,' via action, in contrast with knowledge gained through formal or conscious attempts to follow explicit rules.

Even if we forget for the moment that formal logic and conscious rule-following have little to do with cultural theory, it still seems fair to ask: what's new? Notions about the 'practicality' of action originated neither with Bourdieu nor with Garfinkel; they express, rather, the broad commitments of a particular theoretical tradition. In European philosophy, the fundamental early critique of 'structura'list and 'abstract' theorizing about action and order was Husserl's phenomenological demonstration of the nature and function of intentionality. Husserl and Heidegger were critical, formative influences on the

phenomenologies of Schutz and the early Garfinkel, and on such thinkers as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Wittgenstein's work, while differing in specifics, parallels these developments, influenced perhaps by the early phenomenologists and certainly influencing the later ones in turn. In American philosophy, of course, parallel remonstrations for the practicality of action were made by the Pragmatists.

While our interest here is in the systematics of social theory, not in its historiographics or intellectual history, Bourdieu's place in this broad tradition is important to note precisely because it exposes the weakness of some of his central claims. For there is a persistent thread in Bourdieu's theorizing in which his argument against structuralism amounts to little more than the 'weak' suggestion I have noted above, namely that rules must be distinguished from the acts which are informed by them, a notion that leads to the perfectly reasonable insistence that action *qua* action – action in its contingency – has an independent theoretical significance that cannot be ignored. Once we are aware of the tradition of practical action theory within which Bourdieu works, however, we can see not only that the articulation of alternative understandings of action preceded him but that these criticisms of structuralism that he has produced had already been lodged, and in a fundamental manner, in the early, now classical works of Peircean pragmatism (e.g. Peirce 1985 [1931]; Morris 1946). Indeed, at about the same time that Bourdieu began to formulate his theory these already well-known Pragmatist criticisms had begun to generate a series of important responses. On the one hand, neo-structuralists like Eco (1985), Benveniste (1985), and Sahlins (1976, 1981) argued that such criticisms of Saussurian semiotics are mistaken because they take the structuralist emphasis on symbolic code for an ignorance of acts. On the other hand, these neo-structuralists developed more pragmatically sensitive versions of structuralist theory.

It is fair to say, I think, that neither structuralism nor functionalism implies formal, rule-governed action or excludes the independent consideration of action as such. Insofar as structuralism ignores *parole*, it does so only in order to assert the greater priority, not the exclusivity, of *langue*.¹⁰ How else, after all, can we explain Lévi-Strauss's (1969) famous *bricoleur*, that messy spinner of tales who sits comfortably within everyday life and grabs from myth what he needs to construct the narratives of his local world? Indeed, there are illuminating passages in Bourdieu's own writing (e.g. OTP: 110-12; LOP: 85-8) that demonstrate how symbolic codes provide elasticity even while their structure is maintained. They are able to do so, Bourdieu suggests, precisely because the abstraction of their categories allows a wide range

of concretely differentiated actions to be signified by the same signifier. Similar points have been made by contemporary neo-structuralists. Theorists like Eco, Benveniste, and Sahlins – and other more social scientific thinkers who have used semiotics to explore the changing contours of historical and contemporary life (e.g. Hunt 1984; Jameson 1980; Sewell 1980) have developed detailed accounts of how sign structures become involved in action sequences, in practical processes that mediate cultural determinacy and contingent event. Eco's well-known term for this mediation – *semiosis* – has become emblematic for such an understanding of action that blends pragmatic considerations with a sense of structured cultural constraint.

Moreover, while linguistic structuralism is certainly the most significant element in Bourdieu's anticultural polemic, his attack on kinship structuralism suffers from a similar refusal either to understand or to recognize the theory's breadth and complexity, and it undermines his theoretical alternative in just as fundamental a way. In various biographical accounts (e.g. IOW: 20; LOP: 15–17), for example, Bourdieu claims to have become disillusioned with structuralism primarily because it could not account for the failure of observed marriage patterns to conform closely to legitimate rules and norms. He concludes that cultural codes do not have broad effects on actual behavior, which must be seen, instead, as practical in force and intent. In fact, however, structural anthropologists have long been aware of the problems that Bourdieu points out, making concerted efforts to demonstrate that such empirical variations in no way vitiate the influence of broader cultural codes. They have done so (see, e.g., the influential discussions by Needham 1972 and Goode 1981) by clarifying the relationship between the relatively autonomous levels of kin classification ('prescription'), jural rules ('preference'), and statistical patterns ('practice'). Once again, Lévi-Strauss himself acknowledged, at a very early point in the development of his structural theory (1969: xxiii–xxiv, xxx–xxxiii), that the existence of prior and more general kinship 'systems' does not preclude choice and agency from entering into the actual patterning of marriage transactions themselves.

That Bourdieu has distorted culturalism and ignored important developments in contemporary neo-structuralist thinking is not important in itself. These mistakes are important, rather, for what they reveal about Bourdieu's more general theoretical intent. If we may speak, *contra* Bourdieu, of theoretical dispositions that exist on the level of ideas alone, we wish to ask: what is Bourdieu's theoretical interest in portraying structuralism as ideal and determinate, and as a theory that implies formal and conscious obedience to rules?

Bourdieu constructs this vulgarized enemy-tradition, it would seem, 'so that' he can present his own version of *practical* action as the only viable alternative for theories that wish to maintain some reference to supra-individual, collectivist forms. By portraying cultural theory as objectivist and determinist, by attacking symbolic structuralism as the principal source of antivoluntaristic theory, Bourdieu means to suggest that collective theory is coercive only in its culturalist form. In so doing, he is preparing his reader for an alternative version of collectivist theory that can maintain the voluntarism of action without giving culture pride of place.

Misinterpreting one's theoretical opponents in a manner that opens up a protected space for a reductionist alternative is common practice in the history of social thought (Alexander 1995a). Rational choice theorists, for example, have consistently distorted cultural theory in the same way as Bourdieu. By representing it as a form of objectivist determinism, they can argue that only an anticultural understanding of action can allow voluntarism to be maintained. Marx also distorted the cultural tradition to make way for his reductionist alternative, but he did so in an entirely different way. Portraying cultural theory as thoroughly voluntarist and individualist – as 'idealist' – he could introduce collectivist materialism as the only viable theoretical alternative. It is clear, in fact, that Bourdieu's interpretive 'deception' brings together both the behaviorist and the Marxist distortions of the common enemy, 'cultural idealism.' It does so, we will see, so that a theory that is collective but ultimately instrumental can be justified in its place.

Bourdieu's energetic critique of cultural theory as deterministic is deceptive in this sense: when the outer layer of his theorizing is peeled away, one finds that a renewed interest in the creativity or voluntariness of action is not at all what he actually has in mind. When he calls his own approach a theory of 'practice' or 'practical action,' we have every right to expect, in light of his critique of structuralism, that this approach will have both an anticultural *and* an anticollective cast. But this is not the case. Bourdieu's intention, it turns out, is not to qualify the autonomy of cultural norms vis-à-vis action and its other, non-cultural environments, thereby giving to culture a less determinate cast. His intention, rather, is to submerge cultural norms, to demonstrate that they are determined by forces of an entirely different, decidedly material kind. Bourdieu wishes not to free up creative and interpretive action but to attach it to structures in a noninterpretive way.

Bourdieu's theory of practice, then, is too practical by half. Overwhelmed by demands for practicality, his actors are in a state of

continuous adaptation to – not communication with – their external environments. We will see, in fact, that Bourdieu actually conceives of actors as motivated by a structure of dispositions which merely translates material structures into the subjective domain.

The Subjectification of Objective Force: Habitus

The self-neutralizing character of Bourdieu's agency is displayed in the way that he develops his pivotal concept of habitus. A 'system of structured, structuring dispositions' (LOP: 52), habitus identifies the internal and motivated character of action, which is said to carry the imprint of social structure but to be actively creative at the same time. As a 'generative principle of regulated improvisations,' habitus 'reactivates the sense objectified in institutions' by 'continuously pulling them from the state of dead letters' and by 'imposing the revisions and transformations that reactivation entails' (ibid.: 57). Again, Bourdieu seems to be suggesting that human effort, in the form of affectively and cognitively structured motivation, must be given a new and more powerful theoretical role.

The notion of habitus allowed me to break away from the structuralist paradigm without falling back into the old philosophy of the subject or of consciousness. . . . I wished to put forward the 'creative', active, and inventive capacities of habitus and of agent (which the word usually does not convey) but to do so by recalling that this generative power is not one of universal mind . . . but that of an acting agent.

(Bourdieu 1985: 13)

This, however, is not really the case. Like Bourdieu's other key concepts, habitus turns out not merely to be loosely defined – the criticism so beloved by scientism – but to be ambiguous in what can only be called a systematic way. Despite Bourdieu's repeated claim that habitus is akin to Chomsky's generative grammar, it turns out to be more like a Trojan horse for determinism. Time and time again it is explained not as a site for voluntarism – for improvising within certain limits – but as the reflection and replication of exterior structures. Bourdieu allows that persons act from within the habitus, but habituated action, he insists, actually prefigures structure. Habitus allows structure to pass from the visible and (theoretically and ideologically) vulnerable position of a phenomenon that possesses external form into the invisible and protected physiognomy of subjective, noumenal space. Far from an alternative to social structural explanation, habitus merely operationalizes it.¹¹

The problem with the concept of habitus lies, indeed, in Bourdieu's insistence that 'dispositions . . . are the product of economic and social processes that are more or less completely reducible to these constraints' (LOP: 50). True, Bourdieu employs this concept to insist that socialization intervenes between economic environment and social action. Habitus is presented as an unconscious motivational structure that is formed in earlier, family life. It is not formed, however, around 'relatively autonomous' values or ideals. This standard of the relative autonomy of culture (Alexander 1990) is fundamental for understanding the weaknesses in Bourdieu's theory. Values possess relative independence vis-à-vis social structures because ideals are immanently universalistic. This is so, in the first place, because they have an inherent tendency to become matters of principle that demand to be generalized in 'unpractical' ways. It is also so in a more historical sense, for social differentiation itself involves the growing organizational independence of religious and secular values, and of their intellectual carrier groups, vis-à-vis the more particularistic centers of economic and political life (Eisenstadt 1981; Walzer 1983). For Bourdieu, however, socialization does not transmit values that are in tension with life-as-it-is-found-to-be-lived; rather, it produces values that are immediate reflections of the hierarchical structures of material life.

Through the economic and social necessity that they bring to bear on the relatively autonomous world of the domestic economy and family relations, or more precisely, through the specifically *familial manifestations of this external necessity* . . . the structures characterizing a determinate class of conditions of existence produce the structures of the *habitus*, which in their turn are the basis of the perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences.

(LOP: 54, italics added)

What we have here is a materially reflective rather than culturally mediated conception of socialization and family life. What results, not surprisingly, is an account of the actor's habituation to external material conditions and the hegemonic ideals of the dominant economic class. When Bourdieu speaks of 'the internalization of externality' as enabling 'the external forces to exert themselves, but in accordance with the specific logic of the organisms in which they are incorporated, i.e. in a durable, systematic and non-mechanical way' (LOP: 55), he is speaking frankly about his theory. Habitus has no independent power to direct action, in the way that 'self' has for Mead or 'personality' for Parsons. Habitus does not lead us to a

social psychology or to the issues of identity, character, conformity, and independence. What it initiates, instead, is an endless and circular account of objective structures structuring subjective structures that structure objective structures in turn.

The 'subject' born of the world of objects does not arise as a subjectivity facing an objectivity: the objective universe is made up of objects which are the product of objectifying operations structured according to the same structures that the *habitus* applies to them. The *habitus* is a metaphor of the world of objects.

(I.OP: 76-7)

Bourdieu is not merely asserting, then, that 'agents are possessed by their habitus more than they possess it' (OTP: 18), a 'weak' position taken by any theory that posits the social construction of agency. His point is that the social internalized are not rules but the political-economic structures and powers that rules merely obfuscate.

The reductionism of habitus dovetails neatly with Bourdieu's reductionist attack on the symbolic autonomy of language which is yet another version of his broad attack on structuralist theory. 'The constitutive power which is granted to ordinary language,' Bourdieu insists, 'lies not in the language itself but in the group which authorizes it and invests it with authority' (ibid.). While paying formal obeisance to language theorists like Saussure and Chomsky, Bourdieu's own approach fails to recognize that the meaning of words is derived from relations of difference inside each linguistic set. Because he fails to acknowledge the meaningful specificity of language *qua* language, he is unable to recognize the possibility that symbolic systems modeled on language can exert an independent force against, rather than in support of, institutional and economic life. As the symbolic code which structures the self, 'habitus' must be treated in exactly the same way.

What follows from this assertion of the dependence of habitus is that the analyst must focus on real political-economic causes rather than on their 'ephemeral,' merely 'subjective' representations. In the following passage Bourdieu disputes ethnomethodology's focus on the interpersonal negotiation of legitimacy, but his criticism has more general implications.

One is entitled to undertake to give an 'account of accounts,' so long as one does not put forward one's contribution to the science of pre-scientific representation of the social world as if it were a science of the social world. But this is still too generous, because the prerequisite for a science of

commonsense representations which seeks to be more than a complicitous description is a science of the structures which govern both practices and the concomitant representations, the latter being the principal obstacle to the construction of such a science.

(ibid.: 21)

Bourdieu insists, once again, that the structures behind accounts can only be of a material kind. In doing so, he makes it clear that his theoretical objective is to eliminate the significance of motive and subjectivity, not to underline their importance.

Only by constructing the objective structures (price curves, chances of access to higher education, laws of the matrimonial market, etc.) is one able to pose the question of the mechanisms through which the relationship is established between the structures and the practices or the representations which accompany them, instead of treating these 'thought objects' as 'reasons' or 'motives' and making them the determining cause of the practices.

(ibid.)

That Bourdieu himself never offers 'an account of accounts' underscores the manner in which his interest in an alternative to anthropological structuralism is primarily an interest not in the nature of contingent action but in structuralism of a more materialist kind. His frequent references to the creativity of the agent are summarily abstract, highly generalized statements which amount to no more than a gloss when compared to the detailed and systematic theorizing developed by ethnomethodology and its more positivist variant, conversation analysis. To acknowledge and attempt to theoretically incorporate the ad hocing procedures first identified by Garfinkel (1967) and the turn-taking procedures detailed by Schegloff (1992) and others would demonstrate that there is, indeed, a space of indeterminacy – a space for practice or use in Wittgenstein's sense – between institutionalized expectations of any kind and any particular individual act. That Bourdieu is correct in criticizing these micro-theorists for ignoring the more structured environment of action does not negate the specific significance of their contribution. Whereas Garfinkel began with a phenomenological critique of the objectivity of structural-functionalism and an encounter with Wittgenstein to develop an (overly) voluntaristic theory of action, Bourdieu transformed similar criticisms and sympathies into a theory that merely redeployed objective order and eliminated the attention to interaction as an order *sui generis*.

The habitus does not have its own emergent properties, its own logic, its own internal complexity. Because it does not possess any real independence, it cannot provide a vehicle for establishing a true micro-macro link (Alexander et al. 1987: 257-98). The theory of practice, then, is nothing other than a theory of the determination of practice, and it is precisely the theoretical function of habitus to show how and why this must be so: 'Practical taxonomies . . . are a transformed, misrecognizable form of the real divisions of the social order' (OTP: 163).

Because this sense of ineluctable determinism contradicts Bourdieu's declared aim of bringing the actor back into social theory, it is not surprising that he continually complains (IOW: 113) that 'the charge of reductionism thrown at me' is unfair. He protests, 'I am taken to task for overlooking the specific logic and autonomy of the symbolic order, thereby reduced to a mere reflection of the social order.' In fact, he insists, he has written that 'the space of symbolic stances [i.e. the habitus] and the space of social positions are two independent, but homologous, spaces.'¹² Even in such efforts at self-defense, however, we are only reminded of how Bourdieu's habitus theory simply misses the relevant theoretical point. True, he is careful to specify that subjective dispositions are not simply direct reflections of exterior life: they are mediated in the sense that they are transformed, via early family experience, into a socialized habitus. Yet, as the unrelenting necessitarian tone of the above quoted passages demonstrates, it is the very 'homologous' character of habitus that guarantees its subordination, that is, the determination in both a causal/empirical and analytical/theoretical sense of the symbolized interior order to external structural force.

While public lectures and expository interviews provide theorists with opportunities for clarification and illustration, they also allow retrospective reconstructions of one's intellectual life and work in order to re-represent one's theory vis-à-vis critical attack. For Bourdieu, such self-defense often involves precisely the *mea culpa* I have just described: assertions that his frequent reference to the 'homologous' nature of symbolic orders gives the lie to charges of determinism. Even in such tightly controlled and self-conscious intellectual exercises, however, Bourdieu seems unable to keep himself from affirming determinism 'in the last instance.' He begins one public lecture, for example, by asserting his claim for voluntarism: 'These symbolic struggles, both the individual struggles of daily life and the collective, organized struggles of political life, have a specific logic, which grants them a real autonomy from the structures in which they

are rooted' (IOW: 135). This assertion is then immediately undercut by an argument that draws upon habitus in a thoroughly reductionist way.¹³

Symbolic power relations tend to reproduce and to reinforce the power relations which constitute the structure of the social space. More concretely, the legitimization of the social order . . . results from the fact that agents apply to the objective structures of the social world structures of perception and appreciation that have emerged from these objective structures and tend therefore to see the world as self-evident.

(ibid.)

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Bourdieu retheorized the ethnographic observations of Kabyle peasants he had conducted in the late 1950s, he spoke of them as 'agents endowed with schemes of perception of a determinate sort, which are themselves determined, negatively at least, by the material conditions of existence' (OTP: 116). For the Kabyle there is an intrinsic 'relationship between a mode of production and a mode of perception' (ibid.). On the one hand, this means that the 'Kabyle peasant does not react to "objective conditions" but to the practical interpretation which he produces of these conditions, and the principle of which is the socially constituted schemes of his habitus' (ibid.). On the other hand, Bourdieu wishes to focus attention on 'the economic and social conditions of the production of the dispositions [that are] generating both these practices and also the collective definition of the practical functions in whose service they function' (OTP: 115). The mundanity of peasant life, in other words, is a perfect setting to demonstrate how the ideality of the habitus and the practicality of everyday necessity neatly coincide.

The Kabyle woman setting up her loom is not performing an act of cosmogony; she is simply setting up her loom to weave cloth intended to serve a technical function. It so happens that, given the symbolic equipment available to her for thinking her own activity – and in particular her language, which constantly refers her back to the logic of ploughing – she can only think what she is doing in the enchanted, this is to say, mystified, form which spiritualism, thirsty for eternal mysteries, finds so enchanting.

(ibid.)

In the later ethnographic studies of art, popular culture, intellectual life, and status conflict in modern societies – which we will examine in some detail below – Bourdieu displays the same inability to conceptualize a distance, or critical space, between mental structures and the

social conditions from which they emerge. 'Different conditions of existence,' he asserts (D: 170), 'produce different habitus.' Thought is no more than an inverted reflection of life.

The habitus is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes.

(ibid.)

Acts of solidarity, sympathy, and even love are analyzed not as motivated or volitional but as predetermined results of outside pressures.

The concordance between a socially classified person and the socially classified things or persons which 'suit' him is represented by all acts of cooption in fellow-feeling, friendship or love which lead to lasting relations.

(ibid.: 241)

These most human of humanity's traits turn out not to be edifying expressions of the independent self, but strategies by which the habitus creates links with an other, who turns out merely to represent himself.¹⁴

The difficulties Bourdieu encounters here are familiar ones. In its effort to explain the supposed stability of capitalist societies, cultural Marxism from Lukács to Marcuse and Althusser always has had difficulty in conceptualizing cultural countermovements, for it has been unable to theorize a cultural world that truly has relative autonomy from the base.¹⁵ Bourdieu's habitus concept merely restates this difficulty in a more precise, microsociological way. In habitus theory, domination is not an 'empirical' fact: it results from systematic theoretical inattention to the conditions of autonomy. Actors are 'dominated agents' (ibid.: 471) *in principle*, that is, on good theoretical grounds.

Dominated agents, who assess the value of their position and their characteristics by applying a system of schemes of perception and appreciation which is the embodiment of the objective laws whereby their value is objectively constituted, tend to attribute to themselves what the distribution attributes to them, refusing what they are refused ('That's not for the likes of us'), adjusting their expectations to their chances, defining themselves as the established order defines them, reproducing in their verdict on themselves the verdict the economy pronounces on them, in a word, condemning themselves to what is in any case their lot.

(ibid.)

Or, as Bourdieu puts the matter more simply in a more recent publication:

If it is fitting to recall that the dominated always contribute to their own domination, it is necessary at once to be reminded that the dispositions which incline them to this complicity are also the effect, embodied, of domination.

(Bourdieu 1989: 12)

With the signal and revealing exception of behaviorism, the thrust of virtually every school of modern developmental psychology has demonstrated that personality growth involves the 'generalization' of motivational structures, that is, their movement away from any precise correlation with external conditions. Individual development depends upon a shift within the actor's cognitive and moral frameworks – in the actor's capacities to think, to feel, and to evaluate – from concreteness to increasing abstraction. This movement involves changing the cognitive and moral reference from things and persons to rules, to rules about rules, and finally to the possibility of some form of real individuality and independence that involves the actor's ability to rethink the very rules that, according to tradition and group constraint, must be applied to the social situation at hand.

How this internal universalization of internal cognitive and moral development relates to the unevenness and specificity of particular social and cultural formations has, of course, proved to be an enormously difficult problem, which Piaget did not address and neither Parsons nor Habermas effectively resolved. Because of the manner in which Bourdieu has formulated habitus, however, the problem as such does not even exist. Habitus binds actors tightly to the social world; it does not allow them to generalize vis-à-vis it. Bourdieu glories in the concreteness of habitus, which is said to motivate the actor to reproduce what she inherits and which utterly neglects the kind of critical thinking that the idea of cognitive and moral generalization implies. In any real sense there is no 'self' in Bourdieu's theory at all. There is merely the intersection of time and space, a site for social implantation in its most primitive form.

It is at this point in Bourdieu's conceptual architecture that the body comes in. Reading these discussions in a merely empirical way, one can praise Bourdieu for taking Merleau-Ponty's suggestion and focusing attention on this understudied domain of social life. At the same time, however, Bourdieu's focus on the body must also be understood in a more specifically theoretical way. Insofar as he

reduces the habitus to the socialized body, Bourdieu finds a material location for internalized dispositions that allows him to ignore the complexities and subjectivities that the category of 'self' implies. With the body, in other words, Bourdieu can be even more practical than before.¹⁶ Rather than speaking of the symbolic and psychological processes involved in such self-forming processes as identity, fantasy, projection, or role-playing, Bourdieu can argue that 'all that is involved [in socialization] is the practical transference of incorporated, quasi-postural schemes' (OTP: 116).

Asserting that 'practical belief is not a "state of mind" . . . but rather a state of the body,' Bourdieu (LOP: 68) employs his special kind of sociologized biologism – much as he employs habitus more generally – to enforce determination rather than reduce it: 'The body [is] an automaton that "leads the mind unconsciously along with it"' (ibid.). Socialization does not depend on symbolic interaction and a learned ability to interpret another's sensibility and intention; it involves, rather, simply the child's contact with 'the paternal body and the maternal body' (ibid.: 78). The result, habituated 'practical sense,' is 'social necessity turned into nature [and] converted into motor schemes and body automaticisms' (ibid.: 69).

Is it any wonder, then, that Bourdieu attacks Piaget for not realizing that the ability to generalize from one situation to another is produced simply by 'bodily gymnastics' rather than by 'explicit comprehension' (ibid.: 89)? The physicality of the habitus, Bourdieu insists, can produce 'the equivalent of an act of generalization' through the notion of the socialized body – 'without recourse to concepts' (ibid.). Bourdieu considers it a theoretical triumph to have shown that the actor's generality is 'unrepresented,' that is, a physical disposition rather than a cognitive and moral capacity for re-presenting the discrete experiences of everyday life. As compared with Piaget, Bourdieu proclaims that his explanation of generality 'dispenses with all the operations required by [notions about the actor's] construction of a concept.' Without concepts, of course, there can be no critical thought. But this does not bother Bourdieu. It has been the theoretical function of habitus to explain why a critical distance from social structure is impossible to attain.¹⁷

Because Bourdieu purports to incorporate the psychodynamic, self-referential element so forcefully into his social theory, it is important to emphasize how sharply his approach to habitus and embodiment differs from psychoanalytic thinking about the self, even of the most sociological kind. While psychoanalytic object relations theory sees the self, or ego, as created from internalized and socially situated

others, it understands this social self as increasingly differentiated from these residues, indeed, as forming a distinctive 'identity' by struggling against these earlier object internalizations. Ego psychology documents a similar struggle for differentiated autonomy. Thus, while Erik Erikson (1950) emphasized trust and connection, he introduced the notion of 'identity crisis' and, with it, a social understanding of the individual specificity of contemporary social strains. Erikson's position was elaborated by even more explicitly sociological psychologists, for example in Keniston's investigations of uncommitted youth (1965) and political radicals (1968; cf. Weinstein and Platt 1969).¹⁸ In more recent psychoanalytic theory, theorists like Kohut (1978) have increasingly emphasized the self as a distinctive identity that has analytic independence from its internalized objects, even while stressing the importance of the interrelatedness of self and environment. Even in the thinking of Melanie Klein (1965), who initiated a psychoanalytic tradition that emphasized the body, the breast and the body ego have been regarded as reference points from which the self must differentiate, not as mirror-images with which the self is identified, as in Bourdieu's notion of being 'embodied in.'

I have compared Bourdieu's habitus theory with psychoanalytic and developmental theories of self to illustrate the different kind of emphasis that a real interest in the empirical autonomy of self would involve. In this regard, one must also refer to two other traditions in which self autonomy is conceptualized, one more philosophical, the other more empirical and socio-cultural.

In *Search for a Method* (1963) – his separately published introduction to *Critique of Dialectical Reason* – Sartre demonstrated how nondeterministic the phenomenological insistence on reflexivity can be, even within a quasi-Marxist frame. Rather than automatically reproducing domination, Sartre's conception of the actor insists on role distance, self-consciousness, and a projective orientation to the future (cf. Terrail 1992), concepts which can acknowledge subordination but also open up the possibilities of resistance. Sartre could partially achieve the restoration of intentionality to Marxism because his later thought remained rooted in existential phenomenology. Moreover, while his effort to incorporate Marxism significantly reduced the independence of the actor, it did so via a philosophical-anthropological reference to the limitations imposed by 'scarcity' rather than by pointing to the effects of an external agent or institution. In this way, Sartre's theory was saved from the kind of totalizing objectification that permeates even culturally Marxist work. When Bourdieu theorizes the habitus, by contrast, he conceives of the

economic 'moment' in a much more conventional form of economic force and material force. For both these reasons, Bourdieu is unable to maintain reflexivity or intentionality in anything like the manner that Sartre achieved.¹⁹

The second way to conceptualize self autonomy in a more satisfactory way is to acknowledge the role of cultural internalization while understanding that it allows the self access to collective representations that can be resources for its independence from socially dominant values and institutions. Moscovici has created a contemporary school of social psychology around precisely this insight. In his research on 'social representations' (Farr and Moscovici 1984), for example, he has investigated what might be called the social psychology of the relative autonomy of culture. These studies demonstrate how the internalization, externalization, and creation of social stereotypes may not merely reinforce crowd psychology (Moscovici 1935) but may also allow for the nonconformist and principled influence of minority sentiments (Moscovici et al. 1985) in contemporary societies. In a more philosophical vein, similar arguments have been developed by Charles Taylor (1989).

The case I have made in this section – that habitus represents a mimetic and reflective position vis-à-vis social structure rather than an agonistic and independent one – does not rest on an argument that Bourdieu has adopted an 'equilibrium theory' of self as compared to an approach that emphasizes conflict or allows for social change. The latter considerations refer to more empirical levels of explanation than do arguments about Bourdieu's presuppositions and his general models of self, society, and culture. In fact, the conflation of these two levels has sometimes undercut criticisms of habitus by confusing them with charges that the 'reproductive' implications of the concept force Bourdieu to adopt a static, equilibrium view of society (Frow 1987; Jenkins 1986). This confusion has, in turn, prompted the defense of habitus (most forcefully by Brubaker 1985: 759–60) via the demonstration that Bourdieu has, in fact, employed habitus to explain empirical conflict and social change. The fact that he has done so, however, does not indicate that habitus allows voluntarism, identity, or contingency to open up the deterministic cast of his theory.

Bourdieu has, indeed, succeeded in 'explaining' critical movements of social change, and he has employed the habitus concept to do so. What he has done is to describe change as resulting from the conflict between a generation's or cohort's habitus – formed in childhood – and the socio-economic environment it faces at the time of adulthood. This conflict is not portrayed, however, as resulting from

an autonomization of self, which would be connected to the relative independence of culture or to cognitive generalization and a differentiating rather than fusing understanding of internalization. The dislocated or separated habitus is described, rather, as emerging from systemic, objectively generated discontinuities that have developed in the social structures of particular societies over extended periods of time.²⁰

This notion of temporally generated structural discontinuities allows Bourdieu to explain rebellion against a particular kind of social structure at a particular time and to identify particular groups of actors as the apparent agents involved – without giving up for a moment the objectivist and determinist slant of his habitus theory. Responding to what he characterizes as criticisms of 'the "durability" of habitus and the charge of "determinism" which goes with it' (1988b: 8), Bourdieu counters by noting that he recognizes that habitus 'becomes active only in the relation to a field.' He means here to suggest that a separation between habitus and its immediate environment is possible, that 'the same habitus can lead to very different practices and position-takings depending on the state of the field (ibid.).'²¹ Because he continues to insist on the objectivity of the field, however, Bourdieu can argue that this independence of habitus and field does not imply any new subjectivity. When an actor or group whose habitus was formed at point A changes its behavior at point B, this has nothing whatever to do with a shift in subjective identity: 'One should be careful not to describe as an effect of the conversion of habitus what is nothing more than the effect of a change in the relation between habitus and field' (ibid.). In other words, changed behavior of a once-formed character depends on shifts in the actor's external environment.

While several different empirical applications of this reductionistic and deterministic account of rupture can be found (e.g. Bourdieu et al. 1979: 4–5), the case to which Bourdieu returns time and time again is the student and faculty rebellion of 'May '68.' He explains this monumental upheaval in French society as a crisis of succession between academic generations stimulated by broader demographic shifts. Insisting on the structural rather than the subjective, he writes that 'crises (notably that of May 1968) divide the field along pre-existing lines of fracture' (HA: 128). It was long-term shifts in the market for educated labor that created the underlying strain: 'The specific contradiction in the mode of reproduction in its educational aspects [took] on an increasingly critical form with the growing number of those who [saw] their chances of reproduction threatened'

(ibid.: 163). The student habitus formed according to one set of expectations – high-status intellectual employment – but at a later point in the life of that generation faced an economic-cum-educational organization which made reality very different. This clash made equilibrium impossible: ‘The automatic harmony between expectations and probable trajectories, which led people to see as self-evident the order of succession, was broken, and the university order founded on the concordance between internalized temporal structures and objective structures was . . . challenged’ (ibid.: 156). The massive protests which resulted had little to do with psychological identity or socialized independence, and everything to do with interest and a sense of objective deprivation. ‘Refusing to accept their exclusion,’ Bourdieu writes, the students of May ’68 found ‘themselves falling back on a protest against the legitimacy of the instrument of their exclusion, which threaten[ed] the whole of their class’ (ibid.: 163; cf. ibid.: 128–93, *passim*).

In other publications Bourdieu returns to the same analysis and reaches the same conclusions. His theoretical interest is in denying the voluntaristic, self- or value-generated dimension of critical change.

This is what is shown by my analysis of the May ’68 movement. . . . It’s no coincidence if a number of the May ’68 leaders were great innovators in intellectual life and elsewhere. Social structures don’t run like clock-work. For example, the people who don’t get the job that was so to speak statutorily assigned to them . . . will work at changing the job so that the difference between the job they had expected to get and the job they actually get disappears. All the phenomena associated with the ‘over-production of graduates’ and ‘devaluation of degrees’ . . . are major factors of renewal because the contradictions which stem from them lead to change.

(IOW: 45)

Even in Bourdieu’s efforts to make this crisis model more complex, the subjective element falls away. While he carefully argues for the temporal and empirical independence of these ‘habitus crises’ in different social domains, he insists that for a general, societal crisis to emerge there needs to be an overlapping of discontinuities, a situation that is possible only because each refers, ultimately, to the same underlying economic contradiction.

Without ever being totally coordinated, since they are the product of ‘causal series’ characterized by different structural durations, the dispositions and the situations which combine synchronically to constitute a determined

conjuncture are never wholly independent, since they are engendered by the objective structures, that is, *in the last analysis*, by the economic bases of the social formation in question.

(OTP: 83, italics added).²²

The students and assistant lecturers in sociology thus represent one of the cases of the coincidence between the dispositions and the interests of agents occupying homologous positions in different fields which, through the synchronization of crises latent in different fields, has made the generalization of the crisis possible. . . . The crisis as conjuncture, that is to say as conjunction of independent causal series, supposes the existence of worlds which are separate but which participate in the same universe. . . . The meeting of these series supposes their relative dependence as regards the fundamental structures – especially the economic ones – which determine the logics of the different fields.

(HA: 173–4)

It is revealing that Bourdieu’s effort to explain individual psychological crises fails in the same way. Because personal crises involve psychological anxiety, they present a potential challenge to Bourdieu’s resolutely collectivist reduction of the self. Bourdieu interprets such crises, however, in precisely the opposite way. He suggests (1988b: 8) that because habitus is conceived as the product of ‘social conditionings’ rather than ‘character,’ it can be understood as encountering ‘structures of objective chances’ that both reinforce and challenge it. It is, then, simply a deficit of objective reinforcement that explains why the self-as-habitus is subject to continuous anxiety and change. Acknowledging that habitus can ‘be built . . . upon contradiction, upon tension, even upon instability,’ Bourdieu can insist, nonetheless, that the source of such tension can be nothing other than the objective economic situation. For example, if the children of the ‘subproletariat’ are psychologically ‘unstable,’ it is because they ‘bear inscribed in their habitus the instability of the living conditions of [a] family doomed to insecurity in their conditions of employment, housing, and thereby of existence’ (ibid.).

From Habit to Strategy

This deterministic retelling of structure as practice is camouflaged and transmuted by yet another theoretical move pretending to resuscitate action by fighting the good fight against ‘objectivist idealism.’ In his

habitus theory, Bourdieu was able to regain *terra objectiva* despite acknowledging the real constraining influence of internalized norms by making them superstructures homologous with the external base. In the theoretical move we will consider here, he achieves a similar aim but in a simpler way: he discards the very notion of internalized normative control itself. In thinking about action Bourdieu now argues that what we must do is 'to substitute strategy for rule' (OTP: 9).

With this second approach to practice Bourdieu transforms Wittgenstein into Bentham and embarks upon an enterprise that is more ingenuous, and more revealing of what I have claimed to be his originating theoretical intent. For in this part of Bourdieu's work, the alternative to rule is neither improvisation nor habitus but rational calculation – strategization – exercised on an extraordinarily wide plane.²³

Even when Bourdieu insisted on the practicality of action-as-habitus, he described it as symbolic in motivation and intent. When he focuses on the practicality of action-as-strategy, however, action slides from communication to exchange. What we have is the behaviorist interpolation of pleasure and pain decked out as the struggle for social existence: 'Every exchange contains a more or less dissimulated challenge, and the logic of challenge and riposte is but the limit toward which every act of communication tends' (OTP: 14). Voluntarism – the relative autonomy of the actor from collective constraint – emerges not, as in the habitus theory, from subjectivity and lived experience but from the realistic impossibility of knowing with certainty what the response will be to a thoroughly strategic act. 'In the relative predictability and unpredictability of the possible ripostes,' Bourdieu suggests, agents find 'the opportunity to put their strategies to work' (ibid.: 15). Effective action, like successful war, must contain the element of surprise. Voluntarism is reduced here to unpredictability, recalling Keynes's similar insistence that every calculation about the future involves information not available to an actor in present time. Yet, whereas Bourdieu concludes that the actor's response to this knowledge deficit will be to engage in frantic calculation and deceit, Keynes (1965 [1936]: 135–64, 194–209) suggests that the objective inability to know the future in anything more than a probabilistic way opens the theoretical door to irrational motivation ('animal passions') and to the concept of trust. For Bourdieu, even the most traditional peasant plays the game of life like the stock market. For Keynes, even the most hardened capitalist plays the stock market like the game of life.

Altruistic behavior – the reproduction in action of common moral norms – thus becomes impossible in any substantive sense of the word. Since for Bourdieu exchange is no more than a dissimulated challenge, it comes as no surprise when he defines altruism as merely the most clever of the disguises that calculating egoism can take. Indeed, he claims that altruism itself is one of those 'second-order strategies' whose function is to transform 'the primary profit of practice' into action 'whose purpose is to give apparent satisfaction to the demands of the official rule' (OTP: 22). In this way, he explains, it is possible 'to compound the satisfactions of enlightened self-interest with the advantage of ethical impeccability' (ibid.). Exhibitions of altruism, then, are nothing other than 'officializing strategies,' calculations which have the purely ideological function 'to transmute "egoistic," private, particular interests . . . into disinterested, collective, publicly avowable, legitimate interests' (ibid.: 40). We are in Alice's Wonderland, a topsy-turvy world where altruism is egoism and egoism must give the appearance of altruism in turn. In this world, action is instrumental by definition.

Practice never ceases to conform to economic calculation even when it gives every appearance of disinterestedness by departing from the logic of interested calculation (in the narrow sense) and playing for stakes that are non-material and not easily quantified.

(ibid.: 177)

In Mauss's (1954 [1923–4]) famous essay on the gift, he had argued in precisely the opposite way, demonstrating that every exchange was regulated by cultural forms and real commitments to mutual obligation. Bourdieu is haunted by Mauss's ghost. His work (e.g. LOP: 98–111) is marked by repeated attacks on the very conception of collective obligation, and by continuous efforts to demonstrate that gift-giving must be viewed, instead, as the highest, most wily stage of selfish efforts at domination.²⁴ Surely, the *reductio ad absurdum* of this argument is Bourdieu's conception of symbolic violence. It is only when 'the direct application of overt physical or economic violence is negatively sanctioned,' he writes, that gifts and generosity come into their own. They replace 'overt (physical or economic) violence' with 'symbolic violence' (OTP: 191–2). According to this logic, gift-giving is merely a thinly veiled sublimation for violent physical attack.

With this theoretical indifference to the ethical possibilities of a historical movement away from physical domination, Bourdieu denies

the implications of the civilizing process that thinkers like Freud and Elias so well understood: it is precisely the *failure* to sublimate violence into more symbolic kinds of aggression that creates the psychological conditions for the most drastic upheavals in contemporary life. I will suggest below, indeed, that Bourdieu's failure to appreciate the positive elements of abstract obligation – which sublimates force via law and allows competitive conflicts within civil society rather than violent conflicts outside of it – makes it impossible for Bourdieu to understand democracy itself.

The Oxymoron of 'Unconscious Strategy'

Bourdieu's relentless drive for the hard edge, the strained, Veblenesque effort to avoid sentimentality at all costs, eventually leads his conception of practical action into a real theoretical bind. In the work on habitus, he displaces the 'objective idealism' of symbolic structuralism with an emphasis on structured affect, which even if a Trojan horse for materialism at least has the virtue of recognizing the real existence of motivation of a nonrational and emotional kind. In his strategization theory, however, Bourdieu seems to displace habitualized emotion, replacing it with crass calculation that gives to the external conditions of action much more explicit pride of place. If order is described in a collective yet external way, it seems, action must be rationalized after all.

For what Bourdieu makes perfectly clear by his emphasis on strategy is that neither affective disposition nor symbolic schemas, in fact, the real motivational source for action. Into this strain of his theorizing the conception of action-as-typification – the phenomenological notion which describes unconscious intention weaving affect and schema into the orderly continuity of contingent interaction – is never allowed to intrude. After all, one can acknowledge the typifying dimension of action as equal to the strategic only if one conceptualizes action's internal environments (the psychological and cultural ones) as affecting action independently of its external environment (the social system). Once Bourdieu's theory is strategized, this becomes impossible. Affect and schema, glutinized into habitus, are treated, in effect, as objective environments in relation to which actors' calculations are exercised mechanistically. Despite their internal ontological location, they are external in an epistemological sense, for they do not mitigate, qualify, or condition the nature of calculation itself. As a result, motivation is conceptualized as rational in a merely strategic way.

Bourdieu's point is that action must be practical. We must look, he insists, to its functions in the real world, not to the internal structures of the ideal world to which it pays merely formal obeisance. 'As soon as one moves from the structure of language to the functions it fulfills, that is, to the uses agents actually make of it,' Bourdieu warns, 'one sees that mere knowledge of the code gives only very imperfect mastery of the linguistic interactions really taking place' (OTP: 25; cf. Bourdieu 1991a). Yet, surely, codes may be less than omnipresent and omniscient without giving up a degree of symbolic control. The power Bourdieu wants to give to objective considerations, in other words, goes well beyond acknowledging that they have a role. He insists that 'everything takes place as if, from among the class of "signifieds" abstractly corresponding to a speech sound, the receiver "selected" the one which seems to him to be compatible with the *circumstances* as he perceives them' (OTP: 25, italics added). Bourdieu understands perception objectively rather than subjectively. Segueing his way from perception to objective structures, he leaves structures in the subjective, semiotic sense entirely behind:

Reception depends to a large degree on the objective structure of the relations between the interacting agents' objective positions in the social structure (e.g. relations of competition or objective antagonism, or relations of power and authority, etc.).

(OTP: 25)

There is a theoretical contradiction, then, between two different versions of Bourdieu's practical action theory. One stresses the role of nonrational action and objectively constructed habitus, the other the role of rational motivation having an objective result. Bourdieu cannot resolve this contradiction truly; to do so, he would have to cut through the mystifying camouflage that gives his theory its apparently synthetic form. What he does, instead, is conceptualize a form of action that is theoretically oxymoronic. We might call this the notion of action as 'unconscious strategy,' a compound whose theoretical function is to make more palatable the vulgar reduction of action to strategization. Whereas rational choice theory typically stipulates only one environment for its actor, that of material conditions, Bourdieu's recognition of the affective-symbolic habitus requires that the environment for his strategic action be more complex. The actor calculates in relation to both material and symbolic conditions, and the latter are situated within, not outside, his self. If an object of action is considered to be unconscious and nonmaterial, however,

that action cannot also be said to be 'rational' according to the conventional criteria of social theory. Bourdieu's trouble stems from the fact that, despite this prohibition, he will not allow such action to be called nonrational either.

Bourdieu is caught in a dilemma that he does not face and cannot resolve. Because of this he is forced to make the incongruous suggestion that strategization, which is omnipresent, proceeds largely in an unconscious way (e.g. OTP: 36; HA: 94). What he is objecting to about rational actor theory is not its insistence on rationality but its association of rationality with an "intention" of "consciousness" (LOP: 50), an association that in his view makes it not only naive but restrictively economic.²⁵ Economistic rational choice theory suggests either that ends are 'consciously posited' (ibid.) or that economic reasoning is conscious and prior to the act. The result is that economics is 'unaware that practices can have other principles than mechanical causes or conscious ends.' The alternative, according to Bourdieu, is to recognize that practices 'can obey an economic logic without obeying narrowly economic interests.' Reason can, indeed, be seen as 'immanent in practices,' but it is not located in 'decisions,' that is, in the claim that choices are made in a manner that is consciously calculated. Yet neither does the rationality of action emerge from the 'determinations of mechanisms external to and superior to the agents.' Action is reasonable and rational because, without conscious calculation, it remains structured by the need to 'achieve the objectives inscribed in the logic of particular field at the lowest cost' (ibid.). It can be described as consistent with 'genuinely intentional strategies' even 'when it is in no way inspired by [any] conscious concern' (D: 246). Action, then, is 'reasonable without being the product of a reasoned design,' informed by an 'objective finality' without being actually determined mechanistically, 'intelligible and coherent' without involving intelligent, coherent, and deliberate decisions, and 'adjusted to the future' without being oriented toward a projection or plan (LOP: 50-51).

What an extraordinarily supple concept Bourdieu's conception of practical action is! Once it has postulated calculation as unconscious, it can achieve all the advantages of rational actor theories without taking account of the criticisms that have been lodged so persistently against it for hundreds of years.

'Unconscious strategy' is oxymoronic because the same action cannot be completely rational and nonrational at the same time. In presuppositional terms, habitus refers to normative standards of evaluation, or at least to standards of evaluation that can and must

be normativized. Norms, if they are indeed norms, can bind action only on nonrational, subjective, and nonindividual grounds. They cannot do so – the habitus cannot work – if actors have the ability to weigh the adherence to norms solely according to the external and objective consequences of their acts. To presuppose this possibility would be to combine a conception of collective and internal order with a rational conception of action.

To suggest such a combination violates not only theoretical logic but simple common sense. For conceptions of order and action must be complementary. Internalized, normative order and rational action are like oil and water; they can be placed beside one another but they cannot mix. If actors are simply calculating creatures, the objects of their calculation may certainly be norms; if so, then these same norms cannot form the character (habitus) of the calculating agents as well. Norms which are merely objects of calculation can only be the norms of others, not of the actor herself. Norms which are entirely objects of calculation can no longer be understood as having a subjective role; rather, they play the same theoretical role as other kinds of external, objective things. One might put the matter this way. While the empirical referent of the concept 'norm' retains the ontological status of norm, that is, an antimaterial, subjective, mentalistic identity, it does not retain the epistemological status of norm: it no longer refers to a mode of orientation but to an object of orientation. As the whole tradition from Kant to Habermas suggests, norms create order only when they bind action via internal commitments, in relation to which an exclusively rational calculation is impossible.²⁶

For the sake of argument, we might allow that what Bourdieu means by calling even unconsciously motivated actions rational is simply that all actions have a rational effect, not that they are rationally caused. We might unpack Bourdieu's oxymoron, in other words, by recalling his earlier discussion of the necessity to move from structures to functions and to the uses that actors make of the elements that move them. But surely this is the worst kind of functionalist reasoning, arguing from effect to cause without demonstrating feedback loops in-between. It was to avoid just such teleology that Bourdieu first introduced the notion of habitus as an alternative to utilitarian thinking. Yet habitus now is employed in such a way as to demonstrate utilitarianism's omnipresence.²⁷ On the one hand, it continues to mark the presence of emotional and cultural referents inside the actor; on the other, these referents now function merely to allow a pervasively calculating view of action to take an unconscious, and uncriticized, theoretical role.

The unconscious location of the utility-maximizing impetus in Bourdieu's work has been remarked upon by other critics. Honneth (1986: 57) comments, for example, that 'to avoid . . . having to assume that acting subjects possess the actual intention of utility maximization, Bourdieu proceeds from the idea that the positionally based utility calculus of social groups is manifest in their collective perceptual and evaluative schemata on an unconscious level.' The result, he suggests, is that Bourdieu can now claim 'that even if they subjectively orient their actions in other ways, social subjects act from the economic viewpoint of utility.' These and other similarly pointed criticisms (cf. Ferry and Renaut 1990: 78; Jenkins 1982: 275) err, however, when they identify habitus as itself the carrier of unconscious utility rather than discussing the latter as an emphasis that parallels and seriously undercuts the former. Habitus cannot be equated with the utility maximization of ongoing action; it is the emotional reflection of the actor's objective position at a much earlier point in time. The habitus is defined as being oriented not in any direct sense to objects in the actor's contemporary world but, rather, to internalized expectations that have derived from an earlier world. Only by assuming the dominance of strategic calculation can action be portrayed as oriented to contemporary external objects at the same time.

To criticize unconscious strategization in this way, in other words, glosses what is most troubling about the very concept of 'practice.' We have seen that, while it was presented initially as a conceptual alternative to 'objective idealism,' practice actually carries three fundamentally different meanings in Bourdieu's theory. As an expression of the lifeworldly, particularizing focus of action, practice allows Bourdieu to challenge any conception of typifying action as abstract rule-following. His reductionist portrayal of the formation of habitus, on the other hand, allows him to portray practice not only as down-to-earth but as oriented primarily to economic and stratificational issues. Finally, when Bourdieu turns 'from rule to strategy,' action becomes practical because it is neither emotional nor moral but cognitive, calculated, and strategic in the short-range sense. The latter conception assumes an unconscious position not because Bourdieu conflates it with the nonrational habitus but because he wishes to avoid the narrow economism and self-evident superficiality of exchange theory.

Theoretical logic exerts an ineluctable force, but this force is typically misunderstood by the theorists upon whom it acts. Bourdieu certainly is not himself aware that, by virtue of his reductionistic theoretical logic, he has been led to adopt the oxymoronic position

I have called unconscious strategization. Because he does not know this, he can hardly search for a better way to formulate the synthesis he wishes to achieve, which eludes him as a result. In fact, Bourdieu views this notion of unconscious strategization not as a theoretical failure but as a crowning theoretical triumph. He proclaims that, instead of a naive exchange theory – 'the ethnocentric naiveties of economics' (OTP: 177) – he has succeeded in proposing a sophisticated, post-Freudian one. Instead of seeing unconscious strategization as a residual category of last resort that allows him to make the best of a bad theoretical situation, Bourdieu hails it as a conceptual heuristic of enormous importance.

For it is this theoretical oxymoron that provides the invisible theoretical fulcrum of Bourdieu's macrosociology. From this ingenious but impoverished version of the micro-macro link Bourdieu drives the instrumental reduction of action – practice as profit-seeking – into every realm of social life. He contends that every society is defined by an overarching 'economy of practices,' that is, an economy of 'rational practice[s]' that 'can be defined in relation to all kinds of functions' (LOP: 50). The problem with economic theory is not, finally, that it is conceptually imperialistic but, in a strange way, that it is not ambitious enough. 'The theory of strictly economic practice is simply a particular case of a general theory of the economics of practice,' Bourdieu writes in his first major theoretical treatise (OTP: 177), and he has reiterated this central point ever since.

Via the concept of the economy of practices we are led to the heart of Bourdieu's research program. He intends 'to carry out in full what economics does only partially, and to extend economic calculation to all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought' (LOP: 51). Bourdieu promises, in short, to do no less than to ferret out the economy of practices in every arena of social life. There are, he writes confidently, a 'whole universe of economies, that is, of fields of struggle' (ibid.).²⁸ These fields of struggle are, in fact, the primary objects that his research program takes up. We turn now to Bourdieu's empirical sociology of the field, and to the struggles he describes.

'Field Theory' and Homology: The Reduction of Institutional Autonomy

It has been argued by some commentators (e.g. Brubaker 1985), as well as by Bourdieu (e.g. 1985: 17–19) himself, that by introducing the

'theory of the field' Bourdieu has complexified his model of contemporary society, in a sense de-Marxifying it. With this theory, the argument goes, Bourdieu intends to emphasize the independent, non-economic character of differentiated social spheres and the necessity for a more pluralistic, nonsynchronous, and antireductionistic theory to understand them. In a 1985 interview with German theorists, for example, Bourdieu pointed to the influence on his thinking of Weber's notion of *Vielseitigkeit*, which he translated as 'the many-sidedness of social reality.' This conception of social fragmentation, Bourdieu writes,

was doubtless the basis of . . . the work that I am preparing on the theory of fields – and which could be called 'the plurality of worlds' [which] will end with a consideration of the plurality of logics corresponding to different worlds, that is, to different fields as places in which different kinds of common sense, different commonplace ideas and different systems of topics, all irreducible to each other, are constructed.

(IOW: 21)

In order to interpret this assertion, we must shift our level of generality. Up until this point, we have examined presuppositional questions of action and order and their effect on the most general models of social life. We must move now to more specific, empirical questions about how these general commitments become translated into propositions about the structure of contemporary society. When this shift in reference is undertaken, it becomes clear that the field concept is not a departure but a specification and elaboration of Bourdieu's more general commitments, which have not been altered in any way. As the field theory becomes a more important focus in Bourdieu's sociology, we observe not a new theoretical development but the unacknowledged process of self-revision that so often marks the work of important thinkers, and important traditions, as they achieve sufficient influence to merit critical scrutiny.

Bourdieu fails to introduce into his field theory notions of action and order that are less reductionistic and more multidimensional than the parts of his work we have examined thus far. Interests are still the name of Bourdieu's game, not culturally habituated motives which exhibit a critical capacity because they are produced by socialization within a relatively autonomous culture. This point is hammered home again and again. 'Interest is . . . a condition of the functioning of a field,' Bourdieu suggests, 'insofar as it is what "gets people moving," what makes them get together, compete and struggle with each other' (IOW: 88). Even 'when one breaks away from economism in order to

describe the universe of possible economies,' he assures us, 'one is able to satisfy the principle of sufficient reason according to which there is no action without a *raison d'être*, i.e., without interest, or, to put it another way, without investment in a game' (LOP: 290). Or, finally and most bluntly:

The notion of interest . . . was conceived as a instrument of rupture intended to bring the materialist mode of questioning to bear on realms from which it was absent and on the sphere of cultural production in particular. It is the means of a deliberate (and provisional) reductionism.

(Bourdieu 1988b: 1)

When Bourdieu speaks about the autonomy and plurality of fields, he does not mean to make his model of society pluralistic, in either the sociologically liberal sense of Parsons (cf. Alexander and Colomy 1990) or, more recently, Boltanski and Thevenot (1991), or the philosophically liberal sense of Walzer (1983). What he means, instead, is to open up the possibility that institutional domains can be studied as arenas of struggle without immediately treating them as simple epiphenomena of production and consumption relations of capitalist economies, a status that would leave them without empirical interest and without independent social effect.

There is, to be sure, a line of reasoning in Bourdieu's work that describes fields as 'products of a long, slow process of autonomization' (LOP: 67). One even can see a tendency – increasing as the *Marxisant* period of the 1960s and 1970s drew to a close – to conceptualize fields as independent institutional spheres dominated by elites whose power is based on their autonomy as such. When Bourdieu writes about scientists in 1985, for example, he describes their 'stake [in] the existence of a science of the social capable of affirming its autonomy against all forms of power' (IOW: 169; cf. also on science, Bourdieu 1991c: 6). This marks a significant departure from Marxist propositions about the concrete organization of empirical social life. If this line of reasoning were carried through consistently, it would push Bourdieu toward that instrumentalizing strain of Weberian work in which the concept of 'closure' plays such a central role. Neo-Weberian sociologists like Parkin, Collins, Rex, and Dahrendorf have written extensively about the struggles for institutional control and resource monopoly that the search for social closure entails.²⁹ While this strand of the Weberian tradition manifests an instrumentalizing and reductionist understanding of action and order whose zeal nearly matches Bourdieu's own, at least it has the virtue of recognizing the empirical

reality of social differentiation and the boundaries it places upon economic power.

There are occasions, indeed, when one of Bourdieu's (e.g. 1991c) discussions of field actually takes on just such a de-racinated Weberian form. Generally, however, the argument that Bourdieu's work should be seen as Weberian in either scope or intent – arguments made by Bourdieu himself or his interpreters (e.g. Brubaker 1985; Ringer 1992; van den Berg 1991) – is flawed in fundamental ways. In the first place, it fails to distinguish between the different and often incompatible strands of Weber's own work, one more materialist, the other more multidimensional. For example, in the key article where Bourdieu (1985) asserts the Weberian origins of field theory, he cites as the crucial instigating event his reading of Weber's sociology of religion. The image of the latter that Bourdieu identifies as having stimulated him, however, is sharply reductionist and materialist. It is a reading that recalls other 'sympathetic' Marxist interpretations, which are less efforts at the interpretation of Weber than polemical appropriations of his ideas by thinkers who remain neo-Marxists. Bourdieu himself seems to recognize the politics of his interpretation, acknowledging that he has made a "structuralist" reinterpretation' (1985: 18), which 'attributes routinely to Weber himself . . . concepts such as those of religious field or of symbolic capital and a mode of thinking all of which are clearly alien to the logic of his thought' (ibid.). When Brubaker (1985: 748) praises Bourdieu for following 'the "generalized" or "radical" materialism exemplified in Weber's work,' then, he is reproducing Bourdieu's own Weber interpretation, which attends to only one of the dimensions of Weberian thought.

Bourdieu's field theory, furthermore, ultimately differs from the Weberian precisely in the fact that it does not carry the recognition of 'autonomization' all the way to an acknowledgment of 'closure.' To the contrary, at virtually every opportunity Bourdieu insists that each field must be seen as a microcosm – his preferred term is 'homology' (see pp. 139–41 above) – of a social system that is most decidedly capitalist in form. Even when he follows the post-Marxian path of field theory, then, Bourdieu remains committed to his general theory of 'practical action,' with all the systematic contradictions it entails. Practice is habitualized, habits are economized, and both practice and habitus give way to conceptions of unconscious strategizing oriented to structures of domination that almost always take on a class form.

Each social realm, for Bourdieu, can be allowed its own autonomy, and each can be seen as depending upon a specific habitus in turn. Each arena, however, must at the same time be understood as a venue for

profit-making and calculation. For it is the objective material structure of each field that forms the actor's habitus and the telos of every field-specific social act. These structures, furthermore, are intimately related to – adumbrating, articulating, and recapitulating – the objective structures of capitalist society as a whole. In 1975, in one of his first applications of field theory to a specific institutional domain, Bourdieu already made this connection abundantly clear. After a lengthy presentation of the scientific field in terms of internally structured, asymmetrical struggles over the commodity of truth, he addressed 'the question of the field's degree of autonomy,' which he defined 'in relation, first, to the social demands of the dominant class and [second, to] the internal and external social conditions' (1975: 35). The apparent autonomy of the natural science field derives from the fact that 'the dominant class grants the natural sciences an autonomy corresponding to the interest it finds in the economic applications of scientific techniques' (ibid.: 36). The 'belated and precarious' autonomy of the social sciences, by contrast, can be explained because 'the dominant class has no reason to expect anything' except perhaps 'a particular valuable contribution to the legitimation of the established order and a strengthening of the arsenal of symbolic instruments of domination' (ibid.).

Indeed, in a retrospective discussion of the genesis of the field concept, Bourdieu claims that this stress on objective forces as structuring the field actually revises an earlier position which had stressed more autonomy for the field for agents.

In order to truly construct the notion of the field, it was necessary to go beyond [my] first attempt to analyze the 'intellectual field' as a relatively autonomous universe of specific relationships: in fact the immediately visible relationships between the agents involved in intellectual life, especially the interactions among the authors or the authors and editors, had cancelled the objective relationships between the positions occupied by these agents, positions which determine the form of these interactions.

(Bourdieu 1985: 17)

He suggests that this later, more deterministic position – which 'proposed a construct of the religious field as a *structure of objective relationships*' – displaced a more 'interactional view of the relationships between the religious agents' (ibid., italics in original).³⁰

One should no more accept at face value this autobiographical narrative than Bourdieu's equally post hoc reconstruction of his field theory as Weberian in its intent. Yet, the theoretical point he is making here – his insistence on the objective and external structuring of field

relationships as against a more emergentist, agentic, and internalist view – should be taken seriously indeed. Bourdieu's choice of 'homology' to conceptualize the relation between fields is a telling one. He might have chosen a concept like differentiation, autonomization, fragmentation, or even pluralization. Why did he not? Because ideas like these do not suggest the tight intertwining and determinate structuring that Bourdieu sees at the heart of contemporary life.

To be sure, the meaning Bourdieu attributes to homology is not entirely coherent. On the one hand, when responding to criticisms of his field theory as materialistic and reductionist, he insists on the fact that he is positing homology, *not* identity, between the field and its economic/class environment. On the other hand, when Bourdieu polemicizes against 'idealist' approaches to meaning which emphasize the relative independence of fields from other institutional environments, he insists that there is a homology between meanings, fields, and objective economic relations that assures their tight intertwining. This latter understanding reveals the equation in Bourdieu's theory between 'correspondence' and 'homology,' an equation that certainly confirms the traditional theoretical understanding of the term.

In neo-Marxist theory, Lucien Goldmann introduced 'homology' in *Toward a Sociology of the Novel* (1975), to emphasize the isomorphism he believed he had discovered between 'the literary form of the novel' and the 'everyday relationship of men with goods . . . in a society producing for the market' (ibid.: 127). Homology, for Goldmann, suggests a relationship of transformation between parallel lines, a movement from the more basic, economic plane of social life onto the superstructural level, where the imaginative forms of consciousness prevail. 'The novel form,' he writes, 'seems to be the transformation on the literary plane of everyday life in individualistic society born of production for the market' (ibid.). Homology implies such a 'rigorous' correspondence between levels, in other words, that it allowed Goldmann to see an identity undergirding apparent distinctions, 'a single structure manifest on two different levels.' It allowed him to speak, indeed, of a 'homologous history of the structures' involved (ibid.: 128).³¹ Homology suggests an echoing process that reproduces essentially similar structures in interrelated entities while avoiding any suggestion of exact replication. It does not, then, suggest any real autonomy in a causal sense, in the sense in which structure B is conceived as feeding back to redirect and restructure the workings and direction of structure A. It was, in fact, precisely because of this merely echoing, iterative implication that Parsons and Shils (1951) criticized the notion of homology when they sought to define

the relationship between culture, society, and personality as one of interpenetration between relatively autonomous systems. Their polemical object was the 'culture and personality' school of interwar and post-war anthropology, as exemplified by Ruth Benedict.

Sympathetic interpreters of Bourdieu's field theory have failed to appreciate the importance of the difference between an analytical construction that involves real, if relative, autonomy for elements in various institutional fields and one that rests upon the notion of homology, which denies it. In speaking about the kinds of possible relationships between social realms, for example, Brubaker (1985: 748) describes only two alternatives – Bourdieu's theory of 'structurally homologous fields,' which is 'premised on the systematic unity of practical social life,' and Daniel Bell's notion of the 'disjunction of realms,' which argues that cultural, social, and psychological systems can run in directly contradictory directions within the same social formation. Surely, however, there is a third alternative between these two extremes, one which recognizes the disjunctive tensions yet simultaneous interdependencies between levels of organization and subsystems in societies that are differentiated to some degree.³²

In virtually every systematic study of a field that he has made, and in virtually every casual discussion as well, Bourdieu carefully insists upon the imbeddedness of the field in a broader struggle between the social classes of late capitalist society. In a paper on the sociology of sport in the early 1980s, for example, Bourdieu begins by emphasizing closure and the internal, intra-systemic nature of the power struggles that, according to his field theory, mark sports off as a sociological domain: 'One has to notice the space of sporting practices as a system from which every element derives its distinctive value' (IOW: 156). He then turns immediately, however, to the underlying social categories of stratification and domination which he insists are associated with each distinctive sporting practice. 'The sociologist's work,' he writes, 'consists in establishing the socially pertinent properties that mean that a sport has an affinity with the interests, tastes and preferences of a determinate social category' (ibid.: 157). Indeed, Bourdieu insists that each sport 'is associated with a social position and an innate experience of the physical and social world' (ibid.), that is, with membership in a class fraction and position in an economic organization. In fact, in one of the more anomalous and revealing passages of his work, Bourdieu warns that 'we must beware of establishing a direct relation, as I have just done [sic], between a sport and a social position, between wrestling or football and workers, or between judo and the lower middle classes.' On theoretical grounds, however, he insists

that just such an association is necessary, and he employs the concept of homology to make this point. There is a 'correspondence, which is a real homology . . . between the space of sporting practices, or, more precisely, the space of the different finely analyzed modalities of the practice of different sports, and the space of social positions' (ibid.: 158).

It is a pity that Bourdieu did not pay heed to his own advice. Instead, he continually stresses the intimate connection between internal position in a field and the external role played by the field in the reproduction of the capitalist economy. We will see, in fact, that in his theory of the particular reproductive demands of late capitalism Bourdieu discovers an empirical device for resolving the tension between the independent appearance of field-specific group struggles and their simultaneous subjection to the laws of capitalist life.

Research Program and Empirical Reduction: The 'Double Determinism' of the Empirical Studies

Bourdieu's empirical studies hardly confront the facts of the social world in an 'objective,' or unmediated, way, as he so often maintains (e.g. LOP: 1-21). These studies, rather, elaborate and specify the complex yet ultimately reductionistic presuppositions and models I have described above. They do so via a more empirically related, intermediate model of contemporary institutional life, one which draws substantially from the neo-Marxist tradition. The result is a series of empirical studies which, paradoxically, offer a densely 'empirical' account of contemporary society that is, at the same time, not only highly simplistic but highly contrived.³³

The macro-theory that supplies the infrastructure - I use the term advisedly - for Bourdieu's empirical work on fields is a familiar amalgam of postscarcity Marxism and new class theory, cross-cut by residues from the conceptual labyrinth of structural Marxism. The evident importance in Bourdieu's model of structural Marxist categories may seem surprising in light of the striking animosity toward these theorists that Bourdieu has often expressed, for example in his (1975) shoot-up of Balibar's homage to the Althusserian reading of Marx. This animosity was not expressed, however, during the third and formative period of Bourdieu's work, the 1960s post-Sartrean development marked by the incorporation into his thinking of orthodox Marxist ideas (see Appendix). Nor did this animosity do anything to undermine the eagerness with which Bourdieu and

his colleagues took up empirical investigations which demonstrated that education functioned, to use Althusser's term, as an ideological state apparatus that served merely to reproduce the class structure of capitalist societies.

The apparent conflict between such macro-structuralism and the 'praxis' language Bourdieu employs for the micro-level is mitigated not only by the reductionism of the habitus-strategy-field amalgam described above but also by the fact that Bourdieu employs them in different theoretical contexts. In the most generalized and discursive, that is, 'theoretical,' presentations of his perspective, Bourdieu makes heavy use of the praxis theory of the younger Marx (acknowledged in IOW: 13, denied in IOW: 20) and of the reverberations of this same Hegelian language in the works of Sartre, Wittgenstein, and phenomenology. In his empirical studies, by contrast, he makes equally strong use of the model of 'relative autonomy and determinism in the last instance' introduced by Althusser and his students. If Bourdieu cut his Marxist baby teeth on Sartre, he cut his Marxist wisdom teeth on Althusser.

The rough, ready, and vulgar metahistory that informs Bourdieu's empirical investigations posits three major historical phases. In the traditional-feudal period, economic underdevelopment allowed and even demanded that relations of domination be camouflaged by religion, producing symbolically mystified forms of cross-class solidarity. With the emergence of industrial capitalism, this camouflage became both unnecessary and impossible, for class domination assumed for the first time an effective and impersonal form.

If it is true that symbolic violence is the gentle, disguised form which violence takes when overt violence is impossible, it is understandable that symbolic forms of domination should have progressively withered away as objective mechanisms came to be constituted which, in rendering the work of euphemization superfluous, tended to reproduce the 'disenchanted' dispositions that their development demanded.

(LOP: 133)

In late capitalism, this disenchantment has given way, before both economic and political exigencies, to the re-enchantment of the world; in Bourdieu's terms, to a renewed emphasis on symbolic mystification.

It is equally clear why the development of the capacity for subversion and critique that the most brutal forms of 'economic' exploitation have aroused, and the uncovering of the ideological and practical effects of the

mechanisms ensuring the reproduction of the relations of domination, should bring about a return to modes of accumulation based on the conversion of economic capital into symbolic capital, with all the forms of legitimizing redistribution, public ('social' policies) and private (financing of 'disinterested' foundations, donations to hospitals, academic and cultural institutions, etc.), through which the dominant groups secure a capital of 'credit' which seems to owe nothing to the logic of exploitation. . . . The denial of the economic and of economic interest which, in pre-capitalist societies, was exerted first in the very area of 'economic' transactions . . . thus finds its favoured refuge in the domain of art and 'culture', the site of pure consumption.

(ibid.: 133-4)

Bourdieu's class and institutional theory follows directly from these assertions about shifts in productive mode and attendant changes in legitimation. On the consumption side, there is a movement from producing material goods to producing taste and symbols. On the productive side, brute force is displaced by information-processing and the demand for technical skills that involve the manipulation of symbols. The fundamental struggle of this late capitalist period is between the 'old class' and the 'new.' The former, whose status is ascribed, includes the industrial owners and managers, bankers, the judiciary, and the old aristocratic families. The new class(es) include(s) scientists, advertisers, technicians, artists, professors, journalists, and writers whose status is relatively open and whose distinction must be asserted rather than assumed, achieved rather than inherited.

Emerging from 'a new field of struggle over the symbolic manipulation of the conduct of private life,' these agents fight over 'the principles of the construction of social reality' (Bourdieu 1987a: 119). In Poulantzian fashion, Bourdieu calls the first group the 'dominant fraction of the dominant class,' and he insists that it remains still in control. The second group ranges from the 'subordinate fraction of the dominant class' to all those who aspire to be included in it, which includes every other fraction of the urban middle and upper strata except the petty bourgeois. Below these two struggling 'dominant classes' are the peasants and the manual working class, with access neither to material nor to symbolic resources.³⁴

When Bourdieu explores the structure of a social field, he analyzes it, first, as a site of intense struggle over field-specific goods. At the same time, however, he demonstrates that this struggle merely serves to reconfigure the broader conflict between the new and old class fractions of capitalist society. It is this double ambition that sets his work off from other efforts to develop a neo-Marxist research

program, on the one hand, and from more Weberian sociological efforts, on the other.

Education and Science as Fields: Producing Habitus and Reproducing Stratification

Because in new class theory knowledge is the central commodity over which people fight, it is not surprising that in Bourdieu's society, as in Althusser's, schools become the central site of contention. Bourdieu, who has never written a word about factories or the production of material goods, has spent more time on the educational system than any other institutional domain. It might be said, of course, that such an emphasis on education seems to suggest a more 'voluntaristic' reading of habitus than I have inferred above. After all, Parsons, Mead, and Piaget are also distinguished by the importance they place on schooling as an arena for the formation of the socialized self. Bourdieu's treatment of schools, however, emphasizes exactly the opposite claim, reinforcing an antivoluntaristic reading of habitus in turn. As his well-known early studies with Passeron (1977, 1979) amply demonstrate, Bourdieu treats education primarily as an institution that reproduces existing class relations by providing 'the justificatory ideology which enables the privileged classes, the main users of the educational system, to see their success as the confirmation of natural, personal gifts' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979: 71). Because schools 'practice an implicit pedagogic action' that requires an already existing 'initial familiarity with the dominant culture,' the information and training they offer can be competently acquired 'only by subjects [already] endowed with the system of predispositions that is the condition for [subsequent academic] success' (Bourdieu 1973: 80).

The disposition to make use of the school and the predispositions to succeed in it depend, as we have seen, on the objective chances of using it and succeeding in it that are attached to the different social classes, these dispositions and predispositions in turn constituting one of the most important factors in the perpetuation of the structure of educational chances as an objectively graspable manifestation of the relationship between the educational system and the structure of class relations.

(Bourdieu and Passeron 1977: 204)

What 'habitus' adds to this Marxist understanding of education-as-reproduction is to demonstrate that reproduction must be conceived in a more subtle, more psychologically and culturally centered way.³⁵ Given the conditions of late capitalist life, Bourdieu suggests, inherited

wealth and class position more generally can be maintained across generations only if they are translated into mental structures that manifest themselves as personal and individualized qualities, as manifestations of talent and achievement.

The most hidden and most specific function of the educational system consists in hiding its objective function, that is, masking the objective truth of its relationship to the structure of class relations.

(Bourdieu and Passeron 1977: 208)

By making social hierarchies and the reproduction of these hierarchies appear to be based upon the hierarchy of 'gifts', merits, or skills established and ratified by its sanctions . . . the educational system fulfills a function of legitimation which is more and more necessary to the perpetuation of the 'social order' as the evolution of the power relationship between classes tends more completely to exclude the imposition of a hierarchy based upon the crude and ruthless affirmation of the power relationship.

(Bourdieu 1973: 84)

Insofar as class qualities become mystified in this way – as individual 'charisma' (cf. Bourdieu 1968) – education serves to camouflage the real structure of inherited domination.

The official differences produced by academic classifications tend to produce (or reinforce) real differences by inducing in the classified individuals a collectively recognized and supported belief in the differences, thus producing behaviors that are intended to bring real being into line with official being.

(D: 25)

Among all the solutions put forward throughout history to the problem of the transmission of power privileges, there surely does not exist one that is better concealed, and therefore better adapted to societies which tend to refuse the most patent forms of the hereditary transmission of power privileges.

(Bourdieu 1973: 72)

What is so extraordinarily effective about schooling, however, is that, simultaneously, it serves capitalism in exactly the opposite way. Because the medium it supplies for individual distinction is abstract, the achievements of every individual can easily be compared, ranked, and standardized. The social system thus becomes increasingly rationalized, not individualized, and a stronger cultural market results.³⁶

The educational system minimizes the obstacles to the free circulation of cultural capital . . . (without, however, destroying the profits associated with the charismatic ideology of the irreplaceable individual) . . . thereby setting up a unified market for all cultural capacities.

(LOP: 132)

This linked attention to the field and its actors, on the one hand, and to the overarching and overdetermining structure of the capitalist system, on the other, also characterizes Bourdieu's work on scientific and intellectual life. He lays out the structure of the academic domain, the faculties, the training milieu, and the systems of budgetary control, insisting that these structures manifest themselves only through individual and group actions. The dynamics of the field are struggles within and between the faculties for power over resources and other academic media of domination. Law and medicine are on one side, liberal arts and sciences on the other. Group and individual action in the academic field are portrayed as thoroughly strategic and calculated; there is no attention – indeed, there is systematic inattention – to the actual content of disciplines or to the influence of ideas, much less to the rationality or truth of science as such.

Academic power presupposes the aptitude and propensity, themselves socially acquired, to exploit the opportunities offered by the field: the capacity to 'have pupils, to place them, to keep them in a relation of dependency' and thus to ensure the basis of a durable power, the fact of 'having well-placed pupils' implies perhaps above all the art of manipulating other people's [careers].

(HA: 88)

Since strategic calculation depends upon the quantity and quality of available resources, it is no wonder that Bourdieu dismisses not only the possibility of sincerely held academic values as motivating factors but the very notion of intellectual independence as such. It is structural constraints that determine the activities of academic persons.

All the declarations of the professors on the subject of the academic institution and the social world . . . are motivated in the last analysis by their position within the field.

(ibid.: 128)

This microconstruction of the deterministic field is encapsulated inside a macro one. Bourdieu tries to link the field-specific dynamics of academic life directly to class struggles in the society at large.

Claiming homology between internal and external struggles, he points to 'the institutions of higher education (that is to say the whole set of the faculties and the *grandes écoles*) whose structure reproduces in specifically academic logic the structure of the field of power (or, in other words, the oppositions between the fractions of the dominant class) to which it gives access' (ibid.: 38).

The 'old faculties,' primarily law and medicine, are linked up with the old (dominant) segment of the capitalist, or dominant, class and produce knowledge and personnel that directly serve their interest. Bourdieu writes, for example, that 'the faculties which are dominant in the political order have the function of training executive agents able to put into practice without questioning or doubting, within the limits of a given social order, the techniques and recipes of a body of knowledge which they claim neither to produce nor to transform' (ibid.: 63). The more research-oriented, scientific and especially humanistic faculties, by contrast, provide more free-floating symbols which the 'new class' (the subordinate fraction of the dominant class) utilizes in its struggle for its own place in the sun. Yet, in writing about the creations of the human sciences, Bourdieu stresses that 'the specific effect of [their] constructions . . . resides precisely in the *illusion* of their rational genesis, free from any determination' (ibid.: 65, italics added). In fact, these constructions reflect – they are generalized from – a class-specific and class-derived habitus. They are 'rooted not only in a rational need for coherence and compatibility with facts, but in the social necessity of a system of objectively orchestrated dispositions and the more or less objectified and codified "arbitrary" culture values which express it' (ibid.: 64).

The result of this double determinism, both intra- and extra-field, is that the struggles in the academy are not really portrayed as agentic at all. The educated habitus is a mere mediator, not an activator of a self with relative autonomy or self-control. This degradation of the self is clear, first of all, in Bourdieu's understanding of the student.

Differences in academic achievement . . . are so closely associated with social differences that they seem to be the retranslation in to a specifically academic logic of initial differences of incorporated capital (the *habitus*) or of objectified capital which are associated with different social or geographical origins. They seem to be the result of a gradual transformation of inherited advantages into 'earned' advantages.

(ibid.: 52)

It is clear also in Bourdieu's degradation of the educator: 'The structure of the university field reflects the structure of the field of power,

while its own activity of selection and indoctrination contributes to the reproduction of that structure' (ibid.: 40–41).

These 'findings' on education can be challenged in different ways. In empirical terms, for example, they fly in the face of most empirical studies of status-attainment in industrial societies (e.g. Blau and Duncan 1967; Caillé 1992: 169–76). While at various times in his work Bourdieu dismisses these studies as the product merely of 'atomistic,' 'functionalist,' and 'American' theorizing, he never actually confronts their data.³⁷ Despite their theoretical limitations, these studies provide compelling evidence that educational attainment cannot be reduced to father's occupation but constitutes an independent achievement that has wide repercussions for social mobility.³⁸

The approach to evaluating Bourdieu's work I have taken here, however, is not primarily an empirical one. My aim, rather, is to show how such studies are not, in fact, really empirical at all. Rather than efforts to confront the empirical world, they are efforts to specify and elaborate the broader, more discursive commitments that I have criticized above. It is not surprising, then, that the problems I have identified in Bourdieu's work more generally – the impoverished understanding of meaning, the caricature of motivation, the inability to conceptualize the interplay of sensible self and differentiated institution in contemporary society – should undermine these particular studies as well.

The full implications of Bourdieu's reduction of the intellectual domain become apparent in his studies of social theory itself. In Bourdieu's strikingly reductionist Heidegger study (Bourdieu 1991b), he applies his field theory of the academy to the ideas of a single thinker. In response to long-standing political criticisms of the existential phenomenologist who became a neo-Nazi, Bourdieu insists that his own sociological approach is superior to other explanations because it denies the German thinker autonomy as an active subject. Heidegger was produced by his place in society.

As soon as one tries to understand, rather than to incriminate or excuse, one sees that the thinker [i.e. Heidegger] is less the subject than the object of his most fundamental rhetorical strategies, those which are activated when, led by the practical dispositions of his habitus, he becomes inhabited, like a medium so to speak, with the requirements of the social spaces (which are simultaneously mental spaces) which enter into relation through him.

(ibid.: 105)

The language is familiar: social spaces produce 'requirements' which 'inhabit' the actor via the 'practical dispositions' of his habitus.

Heidegger's philosophy, Bourdieu insists, must not be seen as an individual creation but as a field-produced phenomenon, one which iterates, in a camouflaged way, the social structure outside of it. Once again, the concept of homology is central to his reductionist account.

Imposing philosophical form entails observing political formalities, and the transformation implied by a transfer from one social space (which is inseparable from a mental space) to another tends to disguise the relation between the final product and the social determinants which hide behind it, since a philosophical stance is not more than a *homologue*, in a different system, of a 'naive' politico-moral stance.

(*ibid.*: 42, italics added)

Or, more simply and directly put: The philosophical field becomes a venue for power struggles which merely translate the class fractions of the wider domain.

The habitus of this 'professor ordinarius' whose origins were in the lesser rural bourgeoisie, and who was unable to think without using mental and verbal patterns borrowed from ontology . . . is in fact the enabling factor establishing homology between the philosophical and political fields . . . in the social space it is that of the *Mittelstand* and the academic fraction of that class; in the structure of the academic field it is that of philosophy, etc.).

(*ibid.*: 47)

It is worth noting that Bourdieu's disciples have carried this degradation of intellectual autonomy, and the elimination of intellectual responsibility it implies, into a full-fledged research program. Boschetti, for example, analyzes Sartre's career, and French existentialism more generally, as a desperate but ultimately rather unoriginal *méconnaissance* (false consciousness). Articulating a fantasy of escape, Sartre's theory of freedom is attributed to the evasive strategy common to middle-ranking bourgeois, who 'renounces the privileges [and limitations] of his class' (Boschetti 1992: 85). This class determination, according to Boschetti, is simply reinforced by the specific conditions of the French intellectual field, which must be seen as a reflection of macro-institutional life in turn.

The illusion of escaping from social determination and being able to accede to an absolute view of the universe is a typical product of the situation intellectual work presupposes. Theory and contemplation imply a suspension of intellectual life and permit the removal of its conditioning.

(*ibid.*: 86)

If Sartre's class habitus and the nature of the broad intellectual field explain his ideas, however, it was his strategic mastery of symbolic capital in two particular and different academic subfields, philosophy and literature, that explains his unique power.

It was certainly to Sartre's advantage to be able to exploit his accumulated technical and symbolic capital in every sector. Literature and philosophy had long been separate and relatively autonomous fields. . . . Sartre produced an extraordinary effect of legitimacy because his works fully conformed to the expectations of the production fields to which they belong. Perfectly at home among the Parisian intellectual elite, he intuitively mastered the rules of the game, producing a highly successful strategy.

(*ibid.*: 82-3)

Neither does Boschetti ignore the social position of the audience for such highly strategic innovation. Locating Sartre's audience 'among the ranks of the new, less established intellectual public created by the expansion of secondary education,' she concludes that 'it is easy to understand Sartre's appeal for these somewhat marginal members of the intellectual field.' Why? Because 'the attractive image of intellectual greatness he proposed offered them a kind of compensation by proxy for their social irrelevance' (*ibid.*: 86). Even for the philosopher of freedom, intellectual choices boil down to strategies that are bound by the exigencies of field and class.

In the face of such colossal sociologism, one can only recall with wonder Bourdieu's oft-stated ambition to bring agency back into social thought: 'I wanted, so to speak, to reintroduce agents that Lévi-Strauss and the structuralists, among others Althusser, tended to abolish, making them simple epiphenomena of structure. And I mean agents, not subjects' (IOW: 9). In his studies of education and the intellectual field, he certainly has not found a way.

Taste, Strategy, and the Deformations of Class Habitus

In a post-accumulationist mode of production where needs are largely ideal, it makes sense that 'taste' would form the second principal arena of Bourdieu's empirical work. Formed by family and trained by school, the habitus becomes transformed into a consumer by taste. In Bourdieu's studies of high art and photography (Bourdieu et al., 1965; Bourdieu et al. 1991b [1966]) we find the doubleness of determinism once again at work. Because objects are not beautiful in themselves, interpretations of beauty rely upon established codes (cf. Bourdieu 1968). These codes are transferred from hegemonic culture to habitus via schools, the upper echelon of which provide access to the esoteric

and valuable codes reserved for the dominant class – ‘statistics show that access to “cultural works” is a privilege of the cultivated class’ (Bourdieu et al. 1991b [1966]: 37).

In Bourdieu’s early writings, this first level of reduction is baldly stated, couched in the terminology of Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism: ‘The sanctification of culture and art, this “currency of the absolute” which is worshipped by a society enslaved to the absolute of currency, fulfills a vital function by contributing to the conservation of the social order’ (ibid.: 111). So broadly stated, however, such determinism misses what Bourdieu increasingly insists on calling the autonomy of the artistic field and the subtleties generated thereby. Because beauty is a specific, distinctive commodity that has become increasingly independent over historical time, it defines a field with its own ‘laws’ and players subject to its effects. The game of art, of course, can be no different than the games generated by every other field. It organizes a particular form of scarcity and it generates particular struggles thereby. Within the artistic field, artists and critics struggle with one another in an effort to monopolize aesthetic control. Rather than beauty, art buyers seek distinction, the superiority that possession of scarce yet highly valued symbols provides.

Explicit aesthetic choices are in fact often constituted in opposition to the choices of the groups closest in social space, with whom the competition is most direct and most immediate, and . . . by the intention . . . of marking distinction vis-à-vis lower groups.

(D: 60)

As for the players in this artistic field, they correspond to broader divisions between new class and old: abstraction is linked to the new, subordinate fraction of the dominant class and the avant-garde, Impressionism and the realism of the ‘Great Masters’ to the old, dominant fraction of the dominant class and to traditionalism.

Bourdieu’s sociology of mass taste, which mixes high and popular culture, follows the same lines, both analytically and empirically. Once again, his field-specific analysis echoes the contradictions of his general model and presuppositions. While he begins with the suggestion that ‘consumption is . . . a stage in a process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code’ (D: 2), he makes it immediately evident that he views communication instrumentally, that is, as a means of domination. Consumption is strategically directed toward the acquisition of objects whose value is defined by codes that reflect the real division of social life.

To see what Bourdieu is really getting at in his studies of consumption, it is necessary to take this reflection theory very seriously. He is not merely providing a gloss on the old sociological saw that ‘taste is social.’ Rather, following the precise and explicit reduction of his habitus model, he is developing a reflection theory of consumption on a truly ambitious scale. Indeed, his approach replicates rather precisely the foundational theory of Marx. In the discussion of the commodity form in the famous first chapter of *Capital*, after all, Marx did a great deal more than speak vaguely about ideology and false consciousness. He defined the commodity as a fetishizing symbol that distorted consciousness because its phenomenal appearance camouflaged the reality of the abstract, exploited labor upon which the production of commodities is based. Under capitalism, Marx believed, the wage relation turned labor into the ultimate commodity. Misrepresented as an exchange of money for human labor, what was being paid for actually was only labor power, the abstract and degraded capacity to produce surplus value. This is exactly the perspective – historicizing, reductive, and economic – that Bourdieu brings to his study of the objects that produce status distinction and taste.

I contend that a power or capital becomes symbolic, and exerts a specific effect of domination, which I call symbolic power or symbolic violence . . . only when it is *misrecognized* in its arbitrary truth as capital and *recognized* as legitimate. . . . This act of (false) knowledge and recognition is an act of practical knowledge.

(Bourdieu 1988b: 5, original italics)

Bourdieu’s consumption theory easily can be misread, for in the specificity and ambition of its explanatory effort it draws heavily upon semiotics, a tradition that is internalist and purely symbolic in its orientation. Bourdieu makes use of such a structuralist approach, for example, when he describes the standards of popular taste in terms of binary oppositions, like high and low, hot and cold, shiny and dull, sharp and smooth, loud and quiet, harmonic and atonal, realistic and abstract. It is vital to see, however, that Bourdieu is actually turning semiotic structuralism upside down, for he insists that these oppositions are mere reflections of the ‘real’ oppositions of life, of differences in work experience, consumption practices, and more generally of the economic life of different classes and class fractions.

Taste is the practical operator of the transmutation of things into distinct and distinctive signs, of continuous distributions into discontinuous oppositions; it raises the differences inscribed in the physical order of bodies to

the symbolic order of significant distinctions. It transforms objectively classified practices, in which a class condition signifies itself (through taste), into classifying practices, that is, into a symbolic expression of class position.

(D: 175)

Thus, the highly physical and intellectually restrictive qualities of working-class life demand, according to Bourdieu, a simplistic and realist aesthetic that cannot comprehend abstraction. Taste for the latter, by contrast, can be developed only among those classes for whom a more information-based labor process has produced distancing from the concreteness of nature.

Bourdieu tries to demonstrate that the symbolic criteria which define every domain of fashion are reflections or inductions from reality, which are linked, in turn, with a particular work experience and the status it allows.

Whereas the working classes, reduced to 'essential' goods and virtues, demand cleanness and practicality, the middle classes, relatively freed from necessity, look for a warm, 'cosy,' comfortable or neat interior, or a fashionable and original garment. These are values [in turn] which the privileged classes relegate to second rank because they have long been theirs and seem to go without saying.

(ibid.: 247)

Thus Bourdieu discovers 'the bourgeois predilection for the "Impressionists," whose simultaneously lyrical and naturalistic adherence to natural or human nature contrasts both with realist or critical representation of the social world . . . and with all forms of abstraction' (ibid.: 20). Post-impressionist art, by contrast, 'is the product of an artistic intention which asserts the absolute primacy of form over function' (ibid.: 30). It is for this reason, Bourdieu confidently asserts, that Post-impressionism is appropriated by less secure, more intellectualized, more upwardly mobile groups, that is, by the so-called dominated factions of the dominant class. Even the most subtle distinctions of fashion have their objective correlate. Every quality has its place. Not only can the taste for composers and compositions be reduced to class habitus, but so even can contrasts in musical instruments - 'the sharp, rough timbre of plucked strings/the warm, bourgeois timbre of hammered strings' (ibid.: 19).

The consumption field, then, is defined by categories of popular taste that embody objective qualities and reflect actual differences in social experience. The struggles generated by such a field, in other

words, are symbolic only in name. Relations are not about meaning but about acquiring capital in a symbolic form. In short, symbols are commodities in relation to which action is instrumental. Consumers aim to define themselves in terms of valued categories by acquiring the commodities thereof. Fashion in art, television, music, automobiles, and sports is simply class struggle by another name.

The endless changes in fashion result from the objective orchestration between, on the one hand, the logic of struggles internal to the field of production, which are organized in terms of old/new, itself linked, through the oppositions expensive/(relatively) cheap and classical/practical (or rear-guard/avant-garde), to the opposition old/young . . . and, on the other hand, the logic of the struggles internal to the field of the dominant and dominated fractions, or, more precisely, the established and the challengers.

(ibid.: 233)

When class factions adopt a new style, or opt to maintain the old, they are making strategic decisions based on objective considerations of cost. Whether these calculations are conscious or not is, as we have seen, not an issue that is of any theoretical concern.

The acquisition of culture competence is inseparable from insensible acquisition of a 'sense' for sound cultural investment. This investment sense, being the product of adjustment to the objective chances of turning competence to good account, facilitates forward adjustment to these chances, and is itself a dimension of a relation to culture - close or distant, off-hand or reverential, hedonistic or academic - which is the internalized form of the objective relationship between the site of acquisition and the 'center of cultural values.'

(ibid.: 85)

Decisions to maintain styles are 'reproduction strategies,' referring to 'practices whereby individuals or families tend, unconsciously or consciously, to maintain or increase their assets and consequently to maintain or improve their position in the class structure' (ibid.: 125). The decision to adopt a new style, by contrast, is a 'reconversion strategy,' whereby capital is changed from 'one form to another' and made 'more accessible, more profitable or more legitimate' (ibid.: 131).

Once again, my interest here is to not provide an empirical response to this segment of Bourdieu's research program, but rather to demonstrate that, because these empirical studies are structured by his more general theory, they reveal problems that are not different in kind. It is difficult to leave unchallenged, however, the extremely

distorted empirical image of the working class that permeates Bourdieu's studies, not only because such a caricature raises serious moral questions but because the very critical tradition within which Bourdieu works offers such a large body of countervailing material. Because of their oppressive working conditions and their proximity to nature, Bourdieu insists throughout his work, manual workers do not have the capacity to exercise taste in the sense of imposing an ideological sensibility on physical commodities, nor do they exhibit the capacity to exercise rationality in political life. Their sensibility is 'realist' by default, for the extremity of their social conditions forces their environment to be imprinted upon them. This patronizing perspective appears from the very beginning of Bourdieu's empirical studies of consumption. In his jointly authored text on photography (Bourdieu et al. 1965), for example, he and his co-authors not only reduce tastes and attitudes toward photography to class location but claim that the working class is more attached to photography than to other arts because it is realistic.

Because culture has been so crudely reduced to material circumstance, Bourdieu cannot recognize countercultures or popular culture. Such phenomena are independent or antagonistic to the centers of social power. They suggest that 'cultural tradition' can organize itself independently of power, a possibility that allows subordinated groups to maintain relatively independent, and often resistant, standards of judgment and taste. As one of his interviewers pointedly asked Bourdieu almost a decade ago:

You have said that the dominated classes have only a passive role in strategies of distinction, that they are only a form of resistance. Is there not, in your view, a popular culture?

(1980: 15)

Because it is British cultural Marxism, particularly in the historical form exemplified by E.P. Thompson, that represents an approach that is more sensitive to a popular culture approach, it seems fitting that it is a British sociologist, Craig Jenkins, who has been Bourdieu's most persistent critic in this regard. Although Jenkins's criticism is harsh, it speaks directly to the issue:

The superficiality of Bourdieu's discussion of the working class is matched only by its arrogance and condescension. . . . Perhaps it is time Bourdieu took up the anthropologists's pith helmet again and actually went out and spent some time among the women and men about whom he writes.

(Jenkins 1986: 104)

This statement touches on yet another element in the empirical evaluation of Bourdieu's studies which I have not been able to take up here. Paradoxically, his own recent insistence (1994: 9) on 'the universal validity of models constructed in relation to the particular case of France' points to the critical question: Is the validity of his models undermined because their avowedly universal propositions are based on what is, after all, specifically national data? While a comparative dimension could not, in itself, have 'invalidated' the more generalized elements in Bourdieu's theory, such consideration might well have forced him to elaborate these presuppositions in a different way. In his studies of art in American living-rooms, for example, Halle (1993) has demonstrated that realistic still-life paintings are preferred as living-room art in every social class. This finding starkly challenges one of the fundamental empirical propositions in Bourdieu's work on taste, for it suggests that such aesthetic judgments as the taste for abstraction over realism do not actually reflect differences in the labor process. Employing even more directly comparative data, Lamont (1992) has challenged Bourdieu's focus on aesthetic criteria *tout court*, demonstrating that, in status competition between American business managers, the exhibition of moral rectitude is more important than establishing aesthetic judgment.³⁹

Epistemological Realism and Radical Truth: Reflexivity between Social Reduction and Disciplinary Conceit

When one reviews Bourdieu's research program one cannot help but be struck by the ample evidence it provides of interpretive brilliance. He possesses a fine sense for the texture of meaning, for symbolic relationships and psychological experience, for the oblique angles that reveal the color and nuance of language and mind. He would be a powerful interpreter of the meaning of contemporary life – in either a semiotic or a hermeneutic sense – if only he allowed himself the leave. He will not, however, and that is the point.

Bourdieu insists that interpretation is not his achievement. It is not the narration, the coding, the meaning-making, the solidarity, the spirituality of communicative interaction – or their inversions – which interest him. Rather, it is the status of such communicative processes as derivation or residue. Communicative acts and the culture that informs them are presented as reflections of the structured habitus rather than as refractions of cultural patterns that are in tension with, and often provide critical commentaries upon, social structure itself. They are presented as microcosms of the macrocosm, not as creations

of selves which possess distinctive personhood. In the end, communicative interactions are not interpretive actions at all, but strategic interventions to gain profit from symbolic life. This is simply to say, of course, that the goals, methods, and findings of Bourdieu's research program are truncated and impoverished by the more generalized conceptions of action and order I have analyzed above.

In rejecting interpretation as his goal, however, Bourdieu is not only making an empirical and theoretical argument against the relative autonomy of culture and the authenticity of communication. He is making an epistemological point about the nature and possibilities of science, one which turns out to be rather orthodox in effect. At first glance, of course, Bourdieu's position on science is anything but an orthodox one. He argues (e.g. Bourdieu et al. 1991a [1968] and, more recently, Bourdieu in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 224–60) that the social scientist must never base generalizations upon raw empirical facts, upon social processes as they appear in common sense. Social facts must be worked up, distanced, theoretically reinterpreted, and put into a reflexive and historical frame. It is in this anti-empiricist vein that Bourdieu introduces the ideologically critical intent of his sociology, frequently referring to the unmasking and liberating implications that differentiate his method of 'socio-analysis' from a merely positivist sociology that has mere explanation as its principal goal. Thus, Bourdieu's empirical studies on education were not aimed simply at the empirical, but are intended also to be ideological – liberating and demystifying – in their effect. They are not only an explanation of how ideas serve class, but an 'unmasking of cultural privilege' that 'destroys the justificatory ideology which enables the privileged classes . . . to see their success as the confirmation of natural, personal gifts' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979: 71). Similarly, in a recent retrospective look at his early *The Love of Art*, Bourdieu (1993: 265) warns that 'reading this book as a simple, self-contained description of the composition of the European museum-going public . . . is to reduce the real object of research . . . to the apparent object as [the positivist] tradition . . . defines it.' To the contrary, he attests (*ibid.*), 'this study had something more at stake, at the same time more important and more invisible.'⁴⁰

This avowedly critical and supra-empirical ambition raises the problem of justification: on what grounds can the truth of normatively critical observations be sustained? The Frankfurt School argued that its critical thrust derived from an immanent historical reason, a Hegelian position that rejected objectivity in the empiricist sense. For his part, Habermas posits the normative counterfactual of free speech

and the evolutionary development of moral reason. These resorts are not available to Bourdieu because, like Marx himself, he insists on defining his critical perspective as empirical science.

In fact, Bourdieu tries to establish the truth value of his critical evaluations in two different ways, vacillating between social reduction and disciplinary conceit (cf. Frow 1987: 72). In the first mode, which certainly squares with his theory of the social determination of ideas, Bourdieu falsifies social scientific ideas – typically, competing theories that are different from his own – by arguing that they have been warped by the material circumstances within which their authors were forced to write. In this mode Bourdieu continually points to the 'ideological' rather than 'scientific' dimensions of others' work. He even extends this method of truth-by-ascription to the work of Marxists thinkers with whom he disagrees, as when he lampoons Balibar and his structural-Marxist associates as 'prophets' or 'priests' (Bourdieu 1975b: 68).

But it is one thing to argue for the determination of thought by social structure when one studies the consumption behavior of status groups and quite another to apply this reductive and highly restrictive conception to the behavior of scientists, and ultimately, of course, to oneself. For such a sophisticated theorist, Bourdieu seems peculiarly unaware of the vulnerability of his position, which is undermined by the vicious circularity that confronts every radical exercise in the sociology of knowledge. If Bourdieu can dismiss structuralism as the 'professional ideology' (IOW: 31) of anthropologists, for example, how can he attribute to his alternative position any higher degree of interest-independent truth? Geertz (1973) called this self-contradictory epistemology 'Mannheim's paradox,' and it is certainly a dilemma from which this dimension of Bourdieu's theorizing has never been able to escape. Thus, while Bourdieu presents *Homo Academicus*, his most systematic and radical exercise in the sociology of scientific knowledge, as 'sociological-self-analysis . . . which owes and concedes nothing to self-indulgent narcissism,' one which will allow 'the scientific subject [to] gain a theoretical control over his own structures and inclinations' (HA: xii), he never does make an effort, here or elsewhere, systematically to apply such analysis either to the structures that, according to his own theories, must be producing his own work, or, much less, to his own scientific *habitus*, or inclinations. To the contrary, Bourdieu naively suggests that his application of this radical historicizing method to academic work actually allows him, as the practitioner, to escape from its historically relativising effects.⁴¹

By turning to study the historical conditions of his own production . . . the scientific subject can gain a theoretical control over his own structures and inclinations as well as over the determinants whose products they are, and can thereby gain the concrete means of reinforcing his capacity for objectification . . . In making a scientific analysis of the academic world . . . and applying it to sociological study itself [one] demonstrate[s] that sociology *can* escape from the vicious circle of historicism and sociologism, and that in pursuit of this end it need only make use of the knowledge which it provides of the social world in which science is produced.

(HA: xii-xiii, original italics)

It may be some sense of this conundrum that accounts for the fact that one also finds in Bourdieu's work the thoroughly conventional claim that validity rests upon a scientific objectivity rooted in disciplinary autonomy. 'Sociology claims an epistemological privilege,' he writes (HA: xiii), because it 'reinvest(s) in scientific practice its own scientific gains.'

Marx suggested that, every now and then, some individuals managed to liberate themselves so completely from the positions assigned to them in social space that they could comprehend that space as a whole, and transmit their vision to those who were still prisoners of the structure. In fact, the sociologist can affirm that the representation which he produces through his study transcends ordinary visions, without thereby laying claim to such absolute vision, able fully to grasp historical reality as such. Taken from an angle which is neither the partial and partisan viewpoint of agents engaged in the game, nor the absolute viewpoint of a divine spectator, the scientific vision represents the most systematic totalization which can be accomplished.

(HA: 31)

Because disciplinarity provides the analyst with distance from the conservative ideological pressures of the social environment, Bourdieu warns against interpretive methodologies that encourage a merely subjectivist slant. He insists that reconstructing meaning via interpretation is subordinate to establishing explanation via correlation and cause. Rejecting the postpositivist idea of a theory-laden, recursive, hermeneutic, and tradition-oriented social science, he denounces as 'theoreticism' and 'scholasticism' the notion that conceptualization and theory-building – much less verification or falsification – are carried out with any significant degree of independence from empirical work (Bourdieu in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 161, 224).

In fact, Bourdieu has recently tried to defend the central concepts of his corpus by arguing that they are empirical rather than theoretical in

intent. 'As I have said hundreds of times I have always been immersed in empirical research projects, and the theoretical instruments I was able to produce in the course of these endeavors were intended not for theoretical commentary and exegesis, but to be put to use in new research' (Bourdieu 1993: 271). Insisting that his 'theoretical elaborations' have been devoted exclusively to the task of developing a 'method' for empirical research, Bourdieu argues that they should be viewed not as 'theoretical treatises' but as practical guides for research that 'put forth so many programs for work, observation, and experimentation.' Rather than 'endlessly repeating commentaries and somewhat monotonous criticisms of habitus or some other concept of my making,' he would, in fact, prefer 'comprehension through use.' This preference, of course, is not surprising in itself. What theorist would not prefer to have his concepts used in empirical research rather than criticized in theoretical debates? What is surprising is that Bourdieu actually seems to believe that his concepts deserve to be treated in this way because they were not derived from abstracting ideas or traditions but from the investigation of empirical reality as such. A better indication of his ambivalent yet nonetheless deep commitment to an empiricist realism would be hard to find.

Indeed, despite his rejection of a scientific sociology of brute facts, and his adherence to a strong program in the sociology of knowledge, Bourdieu's empirical studies are inspired by an empiricist belief that theories can be conceived as covering laws which can be validated or falsified by disciplined and continuous confrontation with empirical facts. Bourdieu sees his theories not as presuppositionally bound and interpretive in intent, but as abstractions that are objective and universal in scope. He describes himself as 'armed with a knowledge of the structures and mechanisms . . . common to all societies' and, therefore, as 'propos[ing] a constructed model that aims at universal validity' (Bourdieu 1993: 272, original italics; cf. Bourdieu 1994: 9 and HA: xii). These universal models establish correspondence rules between propositions and categories of facts, which in turn are tested by comparing them with causal relationships in reality itself.

Yet, just as the sociology-of-knowledge solution to the problem of critical objectivity led to Mannheim's paradox, this objectivist approach generates problems of authorial exceptionalism as well. For certainly Bourdieu would not argue that *most* practicing social scientists have achieved a critical distance from society. How, then, does one differentiate between sociology as a general discipline and the specific type of sociology – the socio-analysis – practiced by Bourdieu? Bourdieu can offer no explanation. Why is his own thought

exempted from the vitiating pressures for irrational distinction and field-dependent strategization to which he routinely attributes the work of others, the conformist and conservative academics who form the subjects, or objects, of his empirical work? Why are the observations that emanate from his own sociological work more critical, and thus more true, than those of any other practitioner of social science?

Is it his sense of the failure of both these efforts to establish the objectivity of critical theory that leads Bourdieu to his periodic claims for a reflexive sociology (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, *passim*; Bourdieu 1993: 274), to the suggestion that he and his co-workers have somehow managed to separate themselves from the conservatizing social domination of knowledge, in both its social and academic forms? To be a reflexive and critical intellectual, Bourdieu acknowledges, means that one has succeeded in freeing one's habitus from its initial social moorings and from the binding distortions of the academic field. But how can Bourdieu explain this freedom, which runs so directly contrary to the entire thrust of his theoretical work? At certain points, in fact, he seems to acknowledge its residual status as an unmoved mover, talking simply about the unpredictable 'awakening[s] of consciousness' (Bourdieu 1988a: 6; cf. *IOW*: 145) that occasionally allow the formation of tiny but important groups of radical intellectuals. More typically, however, Bourdieu links reflexivity to a variation on the theme of disciplinary conceit. Once socio-analysis provides information about the coerciveness of social forces, knowledgeable actors can free themselves from their effects. While 'it is not the sociologist who . . . invents the laws that human practices obey[,] this knowledge gives the sociologist the theoretical mastery of the social determinations of knowledge that can be the basis for the practical mastery of these determinations' (Bourdieu et al. 1991a [1968]: 24-5; cf. *HA*: xiii).

It offers the sociologist (and to all others through him or her) the possibility of consciously grasping, so as to choose to accept or to reject . . . the probable stances assigned to him or her by virtue of the definite position he or she occupies in the game that he or she claims to analyze.

(*ibid.*: 25)

But it is, of course, just such an ability – the ability of 'consciously grasping' in order to make an independent choice – that Bourdieu's theory of action, order, and field has so systematically denied. It is easy to understand how an ideological myth that ascribes ineluctable power to external forces can inspire heroic movements of reflexivity, resistance, and liberation. It is very difficult to understand how a scientific theory that posits a determinate relation between subjective

dispositions and objective structures – holding that the former reproduce the latter – can explain the critical ability to choose or reject structural positions in anything but an ad hoc and thoroughly residual way. Indeed, in his more systematic writings about the scientific field, Bourdieu goes out of his way to deny the suggestion that critical social science is a product of a reflexivity vis-à-vis social structure. To the contrary, he insists that radical thinking, like all other kinds of thinking, must be seen as a strategic calculation for domination, one that is determined by, and linked to, the stratified structure of the scientific field.

The strategies of [scientific] agents are in fact determined, in their leaning more either toward (scientific and social) subversion, or toward conservation, by the specific interests associated with possession of a more or less important volume of various kinds of specific capital, which are both engaged in and engendered by the game.

(Bourdieu 1991c: 7)

At another point, Bourdieu (1975: 40) calls "radical" ideology 'a thinly euphemized expression of the interests of those dominated in the scientific field.' Far from indicating a distance from habitus and social structure, radical ideology actually represents compliance:

I continue to believe that as much as, if not more than, conservatism, campus radicalism remains one of the main obstacles to the genuine breaks that social science must make . . . insofar as it allows certain intellectuals to give the appearance of radical critique to the most comfortable submission to intellectual conformity and, thereby, to a particularly well-hidden form of conservatism.

(Bourdieu 1993: 270)

When Bourdieu attempts to explain his own work, he is caught between reduction, which would eliminate his very distinctiveness as a social thinker, and reflexivity, which, while acknowledging this distinctiveness, would fail to explain it in a 'Bourdieuian' way. In one recent autobiographical account, for example, he describes himself as a 'class defector' because, from the very beginning of his years at the prestigious Ecole Normale Supérieure, he was critical of the structures of the intellectual field that such prestigious *grandes écoles* legitimate and dominate. On the one hand, he attributes this class defection to his radical disposition, 'to a particularly sharpened and critical intuition' (*ibid.*: 269). On the other hand, he explains his radicalism by pointing to social structure, to the asymmetry between the demands of such

Parisian elite institutions and his own more humble social origins, which had formed his initial habitus in an entirely different way:

If I was able, in a way which seems to me to be rather 'exact,' to objectivize the field that I had just entered, it was undoubtedly because [of] the highly improbable social trajectory that had led me from a remote village in a remote region of southwestern France to what was then the apex of the French educational system.

(ibid.)

In the end, however, Bourdieu cannot allow himself to be explained in such a structural way. The highly improbable social trajectory did not, in fact, determine that his thinking would go in a certain direction; it merely 'predisposed me,' he says (ibid.). Disposition and predisposition, of course, are not at all the same things. One leads to action, the other to a consciousness about the possibility of doing so.

Bourdieu cannot explain his own reflexivity, much less that of others, because he can acknowledge neither the cognitive presuppositions that inform his writing nor the immanent, critical, often utopian strains that inform so much of modernist social science. These presuppositions and ideological strains simultaneously enhance and fundamentally alter the kind of decentering distance that disciplinarity provides. It is not only, or even primarily, disciplinary objectivity that provides sociologists with their critical stance, but rather moral judgments about the normative inadequacies of the empirical world, judgments that are in important ways independent of the structural positions these scientists hold. This capacity for critical judgment is rooted in a socially produced self that is not merely a habitus but actually provides an individualizing point of view, and it is informed by a cultural tradition that has made distanciation, dissatisfaction, and the search for justice some of its central themes. Bourdieu cannot thematize these foundations of critical science, despite the fact that his own presuppositional and ideological commitments are plain to see. Because he cannot do so, he fails to achieve the self-critical reflexivity that is so necessary if emancipatory social theories are to avoid, in their turn, either domination or deceit.

Politics without Civil Society: Domination and Fragmentation in a Society of Fields

In his empirical studies Bourdieu has written about a great many things, and in the short space of an essay I cannot pretend to have

examined any of them in the detail they deserve. Yet, in trying to gain some overall perspective on his vision of contemporary society, what may be most important are those things about which Bourdieu has said hardly a word. What we do not find in Bourdieu is the acknowledgment of the empirical, much less the moral, significance of formal democracy, an idea of the meaning or significance of civil society, a conception of the public sphere. We have, instead, an image of a vertical society, of society equated with stratification, with struggles dictated by scarcity and regulated by the egoism of supply and demand. There is no horizontality, neither cross-class solidarities nor national identities which provide opportunities for inclusion, much less any conception of an institutionalized ideal of civility or universalism.⁴² There is no conception that religious faith, even in its most devout or radical forms (e.g. Khosrokhavar 1993), is anything other than an instrument for using status in the metaphysical world to gain capital in the earthly one. There is scarcely any attention to how structures of ethnicity (e.g. Wiewiorka 1993), gender (e.g. Bloch 1993) or region (e.g. Entrikin 1991; Friedland and Boden 1993) can establish communities and identities that can counter the manifest or hidden injuries of class.

Because there is no sense of a specifically political realm, much less a substantially moral one, in Bourdieu's conceptual armory there is no way to distinguish, in moral or political terms, an authoritarian from a democratic order, an inegalitarian democracy from a more socially just one, or even a fascist society that strives for distinction from a totalitarianism of a leftist kind. It is hardly surprising that, when Bourdieu recently tried formally to define 'the state,' he so intertwined symbolic and material violence that democracy in any substantial sense became impossible to conceive. Announcing that he had 'transformed' the 'famous formula of Max Weber,' Bourdieu (1994: 107, italics added) declared that the state monopolizes 'the legitimate useage of physical *and* symbolic violence.' Why did Weber, by contrast, deliberately conceptualize the state's monopoly of power in terms of physical violence alone? Because, in direct contrast with Bourdieu, he wanted to emphasize that, despite the extraordinary growth in power that the modern state represented, the mental structures of the dominated continue to occupy a separate space. According to Weber, the principles of legitimation are independent both of dominated and dominator alike. Whether states or leaders are understood as acting in a manner consistent with these principles is not something, Weber insisted, that can be determined in advance. The assumption that state power controls symbols and meanings is precisely what Weber tried to

avoid when he declared political legitimacy – whether charismatic, traditional, or rational-legal – to be socially contingent. Legitimacy is something that may or may not be conferred on power by those subject to it. If it were otherwise, if power assumed the mantle of authority by definition, it would be impossible to define political opposition and democracy in a sociological way. But this, of course, is precisely the point of Bourdieu's work.

This work has spanned a period during which progressive intellectuals went from ignoring the repressive aspects of Soviet life to participating publicly in support of the dissent that played an increasingly important role in its demise, as the shifting attitudes and actions of an intellectual like Foucault clearly show (Eribon 1991). It is, therefore, not merely an ideological issue but a question of basic theoretical and empirical interest to ask why there is scarcely any reference in Bourdieu's theoretical or empirical studies to the sharply different form of repression that occurs in the Communist version of what Weber called the rational form of legitimate domination. On the few occasions when Bourdieu does refer to domination in Communist societies, indeed, he does so in order to relativize it, downplaying the differences in authority between what he calls 'formally democratic' and Communist regimes. He treats Communist party *apparatchiks*, for example, as no different from representative elites in democratic countries, such as priests, government officers, social movement leaders.

When a [Communist] apparatchik wants to make a strong ideological point, he moves from I to we. . . . In the 'I' of the representative, the particular interest of the representative must be hidden behind the purported interest of the group. The representative must 'universalize its particular interest,' as Marx said, in order to pass it off as the interest of the group.

This, of course, is precisely the same kind of self-aggrandizing 'officializing strategy' that Bourdieu so consistently attributes to social groups in capitalist democratic societies, whether liberal or conservative, egoistical or seemingly altruistic. While this broad-brush insistence on the repressive elements in democratic capitalist societies is the common stuff of humanistic social criticism, the systematic, sweeping, and corrosive quality of the picture Bourdieu paints seems much more to reflect the kind of 'anti-humanism' that was so self-consciously championed by Althusser in his philosophical attacks on the 'humanistic Marxism' of thinkers like the early Lukács, Gramsci, Fromm, and Kolakowski.⁴³

The most vivid illustration of Bourdieu's persistent relativising of the differences between dictatorship and democracy can be found in a

lecture he delivered in East Berlin on October 25, 1989. This discussion, later reprinted as a brief essay (Bourdieu 1994: 31–5) in *Raisons pratiques*, represents his only systematic discussion of Soviet-style societies. In the midst of what was certainly one of the most dramatic periods of political emancipation in recent history, this theorist of practical action insisted that state Communist societies represent merely a variation on the domination that marks all developed societies. When Bourdieu gave this lecture it was only a few weeks after East Germany's religiously inspired 'New Forum' protest organization emerged out of nation-wide protests against the Communist government's efforts to celebrate its fortieth anniversary; only one week after protestors outside East Berlin's City Hall angrily shouted 'Give us free elections!' in the faces of the city's party leaders; and only two days after hundreds of thousands of East Germans marched through the streets of Leipzig demanding legalisation of opposition movements (Gwertzman and Kaufman 1990: 159–70). Yet, Bourdieu developed a sociological model of state communism that made no reference to such issues as free assembly or voting, much less to the suppression of critical public opinion or to social movements.

Confusing meta-methodological arguments about nomological versus interpretive science with political arguments about justice, Bourdieu begins by stressing his commitment to a 'universal model' of society that, while 'accounting for historical variation,' does not mistake such variation for a difference in type.* Social scientists must 'break with the propensity for substantialist and "naively realist" thought,' he asserts, for instead of distinguishing the fundamental 'relations' or 'structures' of societies, such a hermeneutical approach focuses only on 'the phenomenal realities in which they manifest themselves.' Despite the fact, in other words, that state communist and democratic capitalist societies seem different, when one looks beneath the surface at the fundamental relations of these societies one discovers that they are basically the same. In each, there is 'the same opposition between the dominant and dominated,' a relation that 'at different moments can be inscribed in phenomenologically different practices.' What determines these surface differences is, of course, the 'different kinds of capital' distributed in different societies. Whereas private, economic capital dominates the other forms in French society, in Soviet-style societies, 'where the other forms of capital are more or less completely controlled,' political capital becomes the dominant form.

* The following quotations are all from Bourdieu 1994: 31–5.

Who or what exercises this control over non-political capital is not Bourdieu's concern. This is a political question; he is concerned only with the broadly economic. Not politics and power but capital and its distribution are what interest him. To understand institutional processes in Soviet-style societies one need only develop an 'indicator of political capital' focusing on hierarchical position, social background, and political lineage. Yet, are there not fundamentally important institutions and processes other than various forms of capital, whether in its political, economic, or cultural shape? What about voting, public opinion, and the right to create social movements? Bourdieu goes so far, in fact, as to suggest that Scandinavian-style social democracy represents merely a less radical variation of Soviet societies. Because social democracies also centralize political capital, they too must be seen as 'patrimonial,' as based on a social form 'that assures to its owners a form of private appropriation of public goods and services.' In the Soviet 'variants,' this patrimonial form has simply been pushed to its 'limit.'

My point in this discussion must not be misunderstood. I am not at all suggesting that, either in his political or his personal *practice*, Bourdieu does not distinguish between social control in fascist, communist, and democratic regimes, much less that he is morally sympathetic to authoritarianism in any of its forms. To the contrary, in his personal and political life Bourdieu has offered moral witness against social degradations of many different kinds (e.g. Bourdieu et al. 1993); he has defended the rights of 'bourgeois' intellectuals like Salman Rushdie; he has participated in committees to defend 'elite' secular intellectuals in an Algeria threatened by fundamentalism; he has helped organize an international parliament of intellectuals to protect human rights. My point, in fact, is a very different one. While Bourdieu may embody universalism in his concrete practices, he cannot explain universalism in a theoretical way.

In the earliest work of his theoretical maturity (OTP: 167-8), Bourdieu insists on the importance of distinguishing between the Heideggerian 'doxa' and the liberal notion of 'opinion.' To have a doxic relation to the world is to be habituated to it, to respond to it in an automatic, unthinking, unreflective way. Opinion, by contrast, implies consciousness, deliberate reflection, ideology. Doxa suggests 'a perfectly closed world . . . which has no place for *opinion* as liberal ideology understands it' (OTP: 167, original italics). We have earlier seen how central this doxic conception of habitus is to every element of Bourdieu's work, how he insists that even strategization must assume an unconscious, unreflective form. What we can now understand is

that this position also has political and normative force. Despite the ambiguities of his writings on a critical science, Bourdieu's project is, in fact, to negate the notion of reflexivity that lies at the center of the liberal democratic project. While occasionally acknowledging the heroic scientist or the rebellious free thinker, Bourdieu devotes himself primarily to demonstrating the very impossibility of critical thought. The category itself seems to defy the notion that action always derives from a practical base.

As soon as he reflects on his practice, adopting a quasi-theoretical posture, the agent loses any chance of expressing the truth of his practice. . . . Simply because he is questioned, and questions himself, about the reasons and the *raison d'être* of his practice, he cannot communicate the essential point, which is that the very nature of practice is that it excludes this question.

(LOP: 91)

Without supposing the capacity for exercising some independent, if historically conditioned, form of universalism or rationality, there can be no conception of the public realm, a notion which is certainly a prerequisite for any theory of democracy. An arena of discourse, responsiveness, narration, and interaction, the public is composed of institutions that center on opinion and that are to one degree or another independent vis-à-vis the demands of other spheres (Alexander and Smith 1993; Calhoun 1992; Cohen and Arato 1992). Bourdieu insists, by contrast, that it is 'the very notion of "personal opinion" that "needs to be questioned" (D: 398). Why? Precisely because this notion "accepts a political philosophy which makes political choice a specifically political judgment [and] which credits everyone with not only the right but also the power to produce such a judgment.' The problem with 'public opinion' is that the notion 'is rooted in the rationalist belief that the faculty of "judging well" . . . of discerning good from bad . . . is a universal aptitude of universal application' (ibid.).

Bourdieu ferociously opposes the very idea of public opinion and the democratic possibilities it presents. He insists '*l'opinion publique n'existe pas*' (public opinion does not exist), at least 'under the form that is given to it by those who have an interest in affirming its existence' (Bourdieu 1980: 200; cf. Bourdieu and Champagne 1989). For Bourdieu, nineteenth-century salons were not, as many historians of civil society have suggested, milieux for public discussion and political debate, but circles of snobbery that functioned simply to allow the circulation and monopolization of market distinction (LOP: 137). Twentieth-century opinion polls do not take the measure of the public, exerting thereby a constraining political force, but are profit-making

vehicles upon which 'market constraints' have had 'devastating effects' (IQW: 171; cf. Champagne 1993: 263-4). Newspapers neither narrate the social (Sherwood 1994) nor crystallize opinion; they are mere media for 'expressing' the struggle between dominant and dominated factions of the ruling elite (D: 451-2). Public-oriented statements are simply officializing strategies, according to which 'particular interests [are transmuted] into "disinterested", collective, publicly avowable, legitimate interests' (LOP: 109). Politics itself is nothing other than the 'authorized speech of status-generated competence' (ibid.: 413), speech that produces responses 'compatible with the practical premises of a practical relation to the world' (ibid.: 418). An interviewer once remarked to Bourdieu that 'in your work, you have no room for universal norms.' Bourdieu responded in a revealing way:

Instead of wondering about the existence of 'universal interests', I will ask: who has an *interest* in the universal? Or rather: what are the social conditions that have to be fulfilled for certain agents to have an interest in the universal?

(IQW: 31, italics added)⁴⁴

Is it any wonder that Bourdieu dismisses public struggles on behalf of 'the people' as merely symbolic strategies designed only to profit social movement leaders themselves (ibid.: 150-55)? No doubt this disparaging position reflects the disillusionment experienced by so many on the French left with the orthodoxy of the French Communist Party. Nonetheless, theorizing social movement leaders, in principle, as egoistical symbolic strategists has fundamentally conservative, anti-political ideological implications. Would Bourdieu dismiss Gandhi or Martin Luther King in the same way? What about Jesus or, perhaps more to the point, Karl Marx himself?⁴⁵ Bourdieu devalues and degrades the achievements of those who succeed in gaining mobility, dismisses the working class as lacking developed taste and political rationality, mocks the efforts of social reformers, and is extraordinarily pessimistic about the possibility of creating a better, more just society.⁴⁶ One is justified in asking: What kind of critical theory is this?

Bourdieu's writing about the public is so impoverished that it makes one nostalgic for the utopian sincerity of Habermas, whose work (e.g. Habermas 1989 [1962]) underlines the fundamental importance of the public sphere despite its failure to conceptualize how one is actually constructed. Habermas has struggled against the cynical, instrumentalizing strain in Marxist action theory in order to open up a space for sincerity and authenticity in human relations,

qualities that he quite rightly understands as crucial in the conception and institutionalization of a good society. Because of Bourdieu's determination to reveal the pervasiveness of egoism, by contrast, his theory is not only incapable of recognizing the nonstrategic elements in modern societies,⁴⁷ but it is unable to provide the conceptual resources for explaining how a good society could come about. His political writing makes us wonder just how theorists like Parsons and Durkheim, Tocqueville and Dewey, Weber and Simmel – or, in our own time, thinkers, like Rawls, Walzer, and Boltanski and Thevenot – could possibly be writing about the same world as he.

When Marxism emerged in the nineteenth century, it was theoretically inadequate, but its insight into the exclusions and inequalities of early industrial capitalism made it much more empirically right than it is today. A lot has happened in the hundred years since, as the middle and working classes in the more developed countries have gained not only civil but political and social rights. As central elements of socialist reform became institutionalized inside of Western capitalist countries, the Marxian version of anticapitalism began to lose its power as a mass ideology. It has only been more recently, of course, that the power of Marxism has also begun to disappear in the East, as the social and ethical implications of a theory that denied the very idea of an independent public life became obvious to all.

History seems to be moving in a different direction than it did during the years of the intellectual and political formation of Pierre Bourdieu. His theory was crystallized by the sixties, by a New Left philosophy and social science that sought to revive and transform Marxist social theory and that negated bourgeois society in its democratic form. Yet, while those days are over, the social theory produced by this generational social upheaval remains with us still. In English-speaking countries, in fact, it has become hegemonic in the intellectual sphere even as the social conditions that produced it, along with its popular support and political significance, have all but disappeared.

This symbolic power cannot be explained by economic forces, nor can it be understood as a strategy for distinction, no matter that it so often and so effectively fulfills this very task. The influence of Bourdieu's theory, rather, must be attributed to specifically theoretical reasons. Neither Bourdieu nor many of his enthusiastic readers seem to understand what a multidimensional social theory actually requires; how individual action and its social environments can be interrelated without reduction; how ideal and material dimensions can be brought into play without sacrificing their autonomy and reducing one to the other; how macro can be linked to micro without committing the

fallacy of assuming that the fit between them is entirely neat. Only a theory that is more analytically differentiated than Pierre Bourdieu's can come to grips with the empirical differentiation of the societies in which we live today, with the new possibilities for freedom and solidarity these societies offer, and with the gut-wrenching social conflicts and new forms of domination that so often are its result.

Appendix: A Note on Intellectual Chronology

In this discussion, I have emphasized the internal contradictions in Bourdieu's work and his theoretical strategies to resolve them. I have treated Bourdieu's *œuvre*, for the most part, as a whole larger than the sum of its parts, and I have interpreted the various parts as responses that Bourdieu has made to exigencies of theoretical logic, to pressures on his general theory that follow ineluctably from certain presuppositional commitments.

Yet, within the limits of such overarching cognitive constraints, theorists retain significant leeway. Faced with the strains imposed by a particular presuppositional position, one may struggle to maintain consistency or one may introduce contradictions by proposing supplemental lines of analysis that differ from this overarching position. Another alternative, of course, is to jettison the overarching position altogether. This choice is not at all uncommon in the biographies of major theorists, but it is rarely acknowledged by them as ever having occurred. One thinks here of what Althusser called the *coupure* between early and late Marx and of the striking shift in perspective that characterized Durkheim's later work.

As we have seen, Bourdieu actually engages in each of these strategies. Arguing for the consistency and strength of his overarching theoretical positions, he has continually presented his mature work as fundamentally 'materialist' and practical in scope. Yet there can be no doubt that he is also sensitive to the limitations of such an orienting position. He responds to these by formulating camouflaged 'normative correctives' orthogonal to his central tenets; at the same time, he undermines these suggestions by introducing complex concepts that circle back toward his 'materialism.' These conflicts in self-representation are exacerbated by the fact that Bourdieu (LOP: 1-2.2) sometimes describes himself as having undergone an epistemological break, as moving from a more cultural to a more materialistic and agentic structuralism during the early part of his career. Until as late as 1963, he asserts, he was a 'blissful structuralist' (*ibid.*: 9).

These claims and counterclaims in Bourdieu's own account of his *Bildung* are important to sort out, for they offer authoritative characterizations that contradict some of the interpretations I have made here. This sorting out is made all the more difficult because Bourdieu's insistence on the verisimilitude of his studies leads him to describe every change in his perspective as cumulative and inductive. He presents himself as having been compelled to give up on normative structuralism, for example, because he observed certain undeniable social facts

(LOP: Introduction; IOW: first interview). Thus, he argues that it was his empirical discovery that only a tiny percentage of marriages followed the normative rules which forced him to break with structuralist theory (LOP: 15–17; IOW: 20). In fact, his confrontation with anthropological structuralism developed over an extended period, and his changing relations with this approach were less reflections of his empirical findings than social and intellectual mediations of them.

Bourdieu's reconstruction of his intellectual biography, then, like virtually every other autobiographical account that intellectuals produce, represents a post hoc revision that serves his intellectual interests in contemporary time. Not only has he never been a purely empirical 'scientist' in the narrow sense in which he so often employs this term, but, in fact, he has never been a symbolic structuralist, blissful or otherwise. There have been four phases of Bourdieu's theoretical development, none of which is structuralist in form or content. It is the strikingly different character of these phases that one must keep in mind when efforts are made to substantiate this or that interpretive claim about Bourdieu's work.⁴⁸

(1) Bourdieu's first book (1958) – which constitutes the first five chapters of *The Algerians* (1962c) – is an ethnography drawn from secondary sources that brought together decades of North African anthropology. Its interest derives primarily from the fact that it was written not from within a structuralist framework but from a structural-functionalist one that fit squarely within the tradition of British social anthropology. To my knowledge, this initial starting point has never been discussed either by Bourdieu or by his interpreters. Yet, it forms an extremely interesting counterpart to the work that follows, suggesting some remarkable shifts. For example, whereas in the later writings Bourdieu persistently identifies collective obligations as profit-taking strategies, in *Sociologie de l'Algérie* (1958) he stresses the importance and indivisibility of solidarity. In the following, for example, he sees profit-making pacts and solidarity as mutually supporting.

[Because the economy and farming are harsh] there has been a wide development of pacts . . . which are mutually profitable. [A]s if to counteract his powerlessness in regard to things, man had no other recourse than to develop association with other men in a luxuriant growth of human relationships.

(1962c: 2)

Bourdieu also speaks in this early work of 'spontaneous solidarity' (ibid.: 12), insisting that it is mechanical solidarity motivated by altruism and collective obligation that creates adherence to Kabyle norms.

Adhesion to the injunctions of the group is assured by the sentiment of solidarity that is indissociable from the feeling of real fraternity, the sentiment of existing only in and through the group, of existing only as a member of the group and not as an individual in his own right.

(ibid.: 20)

(2) In what seems to have been an abrupt abandonment of the position that underlay his first book, Bourdieu entered into an important but highly compressed Sartrian phase between his originating orientation and the more orthodox, quasi-Althusserian Marxism of the decade that stretched between 1963 and 1972, the date when the run-up to *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1976), *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (1972), was published and a new theoretical period initiated. This Sartrian phase emerges first in 'Révolution dans la révolution' (Bourdieu 1961), which was more or less republished as the final chapter in *The Algerians* (1962c), and is full-blown in 'Les Sous-prolétaires algériens' (Bourdieu 1962a) and 'Les Relations entre les sexes dans la société paysanne' (Bourdieu 1962b), both of which appeared in Sartre's journal, *Les Temps Modernes*.

Once again, to my knowledge, this second early phase of Bourdieu's development has never been mentioned, either by the French sociologist or by his interpreters. It left, however, a profound mark on Bourdieu's thought and seems to have been vital in providing a transition to the phenomenological and action theory elements that so marked his later work. Sometimes this influence can be seen in very specific ways. In *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (Bourdieu et al. 1963, drawing upon the findings in Bourdieu 1962c), for example, Bourdieu's discussion of the 'modern apartment' recalls the very terms Sartre employed in *Nausea* and *Being and Nothingness*.

As a tool, that is, a material object prepared for a certain use, it announces its future and the future use that one can (and must) make of it if one wants to conform to the 'intention' it contains. . . . It presents itself both as the site of demands to be satisfied and as an alien space to be cleared, humanized, in other words, possessed – and a space which resists.

(Bourdieu et al. 1963: 85)

This phase of Bourdieu's work is radically different from the first and third in that it reflects Sartre's phenomenological-Marxist attention to concepts like alienation, domination, consciousness, and liberation. It also differs from the third, much more traditionally Marxist phase of Bourdieu's writing by the relatively small roles played in it by the concepts of class and mode of production, and by

the importance it places, instead, on the violent conflict between colonizer and colonized as the motor source of historical change and consciousness. It was the latter, much more Hegelian approach, of course, that also characterized the highly innovative studies of colonialism by Sartre's followers, Fanon and Memmi. One finds in Bourdieu's writings from this period the same left-existential emphasis on justice, inferiority, self-identity, and even solidarity. For example:

The discovery that the dominant caste can be held in check and that the order over which it reigned can be shaken led the Algerian to set a higher value on his situation. He no longer felt ashamed of the inferiority of his own situation; he rather regarded as scandalous injustice all that he formerly endured. . . . The feeling of being engaged in a common adventure, of being subject to a common destiny, of confronting the same adversary, of sharing the same preoccupations, the same sufferings and the same aspirations, widened and deepened the sentiment of solidarity.

(Bourdieu 1962c: 161-2)

It is important to recall, as well, that Bourdieu's later 'enemies' – structural anthropology and rationalistic behaviorism – are the very ones that Sartre placed himself against in his own neo-Marxist period, the phase which culminated with the *Critique of Dialectical Reason: Theory of Practical Ensembles* (1976, composed during the 1950s and 1960s). The confrontation between Sartre and Lévi-Strauss was certainly a dominant one in French thought during the 1950s and early 1960s, and Bourdieu closely follows Sartre in the language of his attacks on structural anthropology. Bourdieu's ambitions to restore intentionality to the actor and the meaningfulness of her world also recall Sartre's, although in my view, as I have suggested above, he was markedly less successful than his intellectual mentor in achieving these aims.

(3) The third phase of Bourdieu's work emerges as he incorporates, during the more politicized and intellectually revolutionary period of the 1960s, central categories of the more orthodox, structural-Marxist approach to capitalist society. With these writings, Bourdieu achieves a working theoretical perspective that in important respects does not change throughout the rest of his career. This perspective brought together elements from the praxis theory of Sartre and the early Marx, semiotic references to codes, structural-Marxist class and institutional ideas, and the idea of habitus as the embodiment of objective conditions. Despite what appears to be the eclecticism of this ingestion, and its clearly 'revisionist' ambition, Bourdieu's working theory during this phase was still much more traditionally

neo-Marxist than the body of work that began to appear later, in the early 1970s. This 'orthodoxy' is particularly clear when Bourdieu treats empirical topics to which he will return in his fourth stage, for example the work on education, photography (Bourdieu et al. 1965), and art (Bourdieu et al. 1991b [1969b]).

(4) The fourth phase began around 1970 and seems to have reached full clarity only with the English publication of *Outline of a Theory of Practice* in 1977. It is characterized by an increasingly explicit and polemical confrontation with Marxism (not Marx), attacks which did not appear in the third period; by an increasing emphasis on 'practice,' habitus, and the body; and, in general, by the concerted effort to produce an entirely new, highly generalized, theory of society. Whereas Bourdieu himself insists that his increasing emphasis on 'fields' represents a new and important departure in his work – a fifth phase, as it were – I have expressed my doubts about this claim above. 'Field' was a fairly pronounced emphasis throughout the fourth phase of Bourdieu's work. Indeed, as I have suggested in the body of this essay, despite its high originality Bourdieu's theorizing in this fourth and last phase remains a variant of neo-Marxist cultural theory rather than a genuine break. It is a reconstruction of the Marxist tradition, not the creation of a new one.

I indicated in the opening paragraphs of this essay, however, that such an interpretation has been steadfastly denied by Bourdieu's admirers, who point to the absence of Marxist political cant; the nonexistence of Marxian categories such as an economically driven developmental logic; and the criticisms Bourdieu himself continually makes of Marxism in its vulgar and reductionist forms. Bourdieu is supposed to have made a clean break with Marxism with the 1977 publication of OTP, the theoretical manifesto that, it is argued, actually had been published in French five years earlier, in 1972, and which, even then, had merely articulated the theory that had underlain Bourdieu's empirical studies for many years before. This retrospective claim for continuity lends support to the substantive briefs for the originality and independence of Bourdieu's later, reconstructed theory.

This claim does not sustain a comparison of the actual texts. While Bourdieu's 1977 OTP has a title that directly translates his 1972 *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*, and while his close collaborators have stated that the second, English book with this title is, in fact, no more than a translation of the earlier one in French,⁴⁹ this is not the case. *Esquisse* is a transitional and very ambiguous work. On the one hand, there are indeed important continuities between this earlier

'Outline' and the one that appeared five years later; on the other, it differs from the later OTP in highly significant ways.

What *Esquisse* reveals is that Bourdieu's fourth theoretical phase emerged from within, and in its origins was thoroughly intertwined with, the more Althusserian framework of his third. While the chapter of the 1972 book which is actually entitled 'Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique' does contain theorizing of the type that informs his later work, it is placed only at the end of that book, behind three ethnographic chapters. Much shorter than OTP and denuded of much of its empirical data, the chapter 'Esquisse' assumes here the modest character of a methodological and epistemological discourse rather than a new and original theory of society. In the earlier chapters of the book, moreover, Bourdieu is careful to explicitly indicate the continuities between his new thinking and the more Althusserian approach that he had employed up until that time. In his 'Foreword' to the book, for example, he provides an Althusserian gloss by speaking in language that evokes Althusser's (1970) theory of ideology. He suggests that *Esquisse* avoids the straw man of vulgar materialism by emphasizing that imaginary lived relations are essential to reproducing objective structures. One passage from this discussion is worth quoting in full.

If the ultimate principle of the entire [Kabyle] system obviously resides in a mode of production which . . . by virtue of the more or less (even distribution of land (in the form of small fragmented and dispersed properties) and the weak and stable instruments of production . . . excludes by its own logic the development of productive forces and the concentration of capital – almost the entirety of the agricultural produce enters directly into the consumption of its producer – it is no less true that *the ideological transfiguration of economic structures in the taxonomies of mythic discourse or ritual practice contributes to the reproduction of the structures consecrated and sanctified in this way. [If] to account for the fact that a social formation is locked into a cycle of perfect reproduction one is content to invoke the negative explanations of an impoverished materialism, such as the precariousness or stability of the techniques of production, one forbids oneself from understanding the determinate contribution that ethical and mythical representations can bring to the reproduction of the economic order of which they are the product, through favoring the misrecognition of the real basis of social existence.*

(Bourdieu 1972: 12, italics added)

While Bourdieu's later analysis of Kabyle marriage strategies – the third of the ethnographic chapters – is conducted largely in the model of exchange theory, he frames its conclusions in a similarly neo-Althusserian mode.

Objectively oriented toward the conservation or augmentation of material and symbolic capital . . . marriage strategies are part of a system of strategies of reproduction, understood as the ensemble of strategies through which individuals and groups tend to *objectively reproduce the relations of production associated with a determinate mode of production.*

(ibid.: 127, italics added)

Even the discussion in the 'Esquisse' chapter itself is concluded on a resoundingly materialist note.

Symbolic capital produces . . . its own effects to the extent that . . . it dissimulates the fact that *the material forms of capital are at its root and, in the final analysis, the origin of its effects.*

(ibid.: 243, italics added)

By the time of the publication of the English version of 'Outline' in 1977 these sorts of highly visible passages directly appealing to Marxist terminology – references to the 'last instance' primacy of the productive mode and equations of symbolic relations with the relations of production – were largely expunged, although by no means entirely eliminated. The 'survivals' that remain tend to be located in the depths of a text (e.g. Bourdieu 1977: 59–60, 188) rather than in key opening and closing statements.

In the preceding more or less historical discussion of the contingent sources of Bourdieu's work, I am not trying to explain the nature of his theorizing, much less evaluate it. To do so would be to repeat the very errors I have criticized Bourdieu himself for making. Rather, I am employing historical and contingent factors to describe shifts in the forms of his theorizing. Unless one distinguishes the forms of his theorizing from its more basic theoretical logic, one may mistake the trees for the forest. At the same time, one must not mistake the forest for the trees. There are significant shifts in Bourdieu's theorizing; yet, at least after the early 1960s, these should be seen as variations on the same chord structure rather than shifts in the theory's key, much less as the creation of theory in a fundamentally different – e.g. an atonal – mode. Whether or not he or his students realize it, even in his later works '*tout se passe comme si*' Pierre Bourdieu remains the leading neo-Marxist critical theorist of the day.

As this discussion suggests, rather than seeing Bourdieu's *Bildung* as having been induced by the accumulation of purely empirical discoveries, it would seem more plausible to link these shifts to theoretical discoveries and reconsiderations which were highly affected, although in no sense determined by, shifts in the social, theoretical, and

ideological environments of French intellectuals: from the relatively quiescent mid-1950s; to the Algerian War period of the late 1950s and early 1960s, which brought Sartre particularly into a new political prominence; to the 'sixties,' a highly politicized, quasi-revolutionary period; to the later 1970s and beyond, a period marked by severe intellectual disappointment with the failure of the radical movements, by the rise of post-Marxist theorizing, particularly from Foucault, and by a growing neo-Weberian and neo-functionalist emphasis on the differentiation and pluralization of society. In thinking about the last two phases of Bourdieu's development, in other words, it seems likely that the intensification and subsequent diminution of revolutionary activities and aspirations, which corresponded to the rise and fall of the popularity of Marxist theorizing, had highly significant effects.

Finally, one must acknowledge that for English readers: there are additional difficulties in essaying the discontinuities in Bourdieu's development, not only because of the lack of complete translations but also because of often very large discontinuities in publication dates between French original and English translation. One particularly striking example will have to suffice. *Algeria 1960* (Bourdieu et al. 1979), while being published some two years after OIP, during Bourdieu's later, fourth period, actually consists of three strikingly different essays that had been composed in different, earlier phases of his development: (1) 'The Disenchantment of the World' appeared first, in a longer form, in *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (Bourdieu et al. 1963), that is, at the height of Bourdieu's second, Sartrian period; (2) 'The Sense of Honour' is noted (Bourdieu et al. 1979: 95) as having first come out in 1966 in an 'earlier English version,' that is, during Bourdieu's third, Althusserian phase; (3) 'The Kabyle House' was initially written for a book of essays dedicated to Lévi-Strauss (Bourdieu 1970), appearing also in *Esquisse* in 1972, both dates belonging to the transitional period segueing into the final phase.

Notes

1. In the Anglophone world this influence is so obvious as to scarcely require documentation, viz. the rate of new translations, the growing number of theoretical commentaries, and the increasing use of Bourdieu's perspective in various kinds of empirical work. These Anglophone treatments have been largely positive and supportive of Bourdieu's own understanding, although there have been a number of critical treatments as well. The situation is more complicated in France, where Bourdieu seems at once omnipresent and *passé*. Leading theorists and researchers will suggest, in private, that Bourdieu is the 'last Marxist in France,' that his ideas are increasingly irrelevant to the very decided turn to interaction, agents, experience, and cultural communication

that has marked French social theory and sociology in the last fifteen years. While these opinions are very rarely exposed in print, Chazel's (1994: 152) remark that 'the principal concerns of the Bourdieu camp hardly seem in tune with the evolving trends' is in this regard emblematic. In public, however, Bourdieu's position is entirely different. He is a dominant intellectual both within the specialized domain of social science and outside it. This commanding position could not be better indicated than by quoting from the preface of a recent collective volume devoted to Bourdieu's work:

The majority of sociologists questioned during a recent investigation – both researchers and university teachers – considered *Distinction* to be one of the 3 great books in their discipline, after Durkheim's *Suicide* and Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. . . . For those who are capable of expressing an opinion on the question, sociology is Bourdieu – in France in any case.

(LASA 1992: 9–10)

Indeed, outside of a small number of neo-liberal critics in philosophy (e.g. Ferry and Renaud), there has been scarcely any critical commentary on Bourdieu in the French language – 'the oeuvre of Pierre Bourdieu, up until now, has scarcely been discussed' (ibid.: 9). In fact, if one excludes introductory material whose purpose is pedagogical, there exist less than a handful of articles, one ten-year-old book (the collective volume *L'Empire du sociologue*, Paris: La Découverte, 1984), and the 1992 LASA collection itself. By contrast, there has appeared, in French, a fair amount of sympathetic discussion, most of which has appeared in *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, the journal organized by Bourdieu and his associates which has also been a primary site for publishing applications of Bourdieu's theory.

2. In Bloom's (1973) study of poetic influence, he recognized that great poets 'cite' only figures whose effect on their work was relatively slight, typically ignoring the poets upon whose style their own work is most greatly in debt. In their critical study of Bourdieu, two French philosophers have argued, indeed, that 'one must not underestimate the role played by the strategy of constantly denying the model, which is among the conditions that made the survival of . . . these [Marxist] currents possible' (Ferry and Renaud 1990: 75). Ferry and Renaud contend that the opposite is true and make a strong case for the epistemological relationship between Bourdieu and Althusserian structuralism.

French Marxism continues to play a role in intellectual life [in France], despite the current state of crisis within Marxism. It maintains its vitality primarily through the work of Bourdieu. Althusser, and even the work of his disciples, seems very dated, irresistibly recalling a recent but evolved past, like the Beatles' music or the early films of Godard. . . . It is the development of Bourdieu's work that undeniably represents the only really lively manifestation of the Marxist 'sensibility' [today].

(ibid.)

3. The most important of these efforts, it must be stressed, have always depended upon establishing significant linkages between Marx's original ideas and competing, typically more contemporary approaches that have insisted on the integrity of moral or expressive action and/or on the relative autonomy of symbolic forms. Weber, Freud, Husserl, Heidegger, Saussure, Durkheim, and Parsons – the central ideas of each of these thinkers have been drawn very heavily into the complex and ambiguous strains of the neo-Marxist tradition (cf. Alexander 1982b). As we will see, Bourdieu's work is no exception.

4. While I very much agree, therefore, with Ferry and Renaud's argument that Bourdieu's theory must be linked to the neo-Marxism of the 1960s, I would suggest that they do not do justice to what is, after all, an authentically reconstructionist impulse in Bourdieu's work. It is just this impulse, as we will see, that creates the complexity and the contradictions of his thought.

5. No doubt it is this commitment to synthesis that has also earned for Bourdieu's efforts considerable sympathy from thinkers (e.g. Taylor 1993) whose interests are markedly outside his particular theoretical domain.

6. Despite the 'systematic' nature of this theoretical analysis of Bourdieu's work, it is important also to understand his theory as a historical project, as a *Bildung*. The following discussion refers occasionally to this developmental aspect. Bourdieu's first published work (Bourdieu 1958), for example, was framed in the structural-functional terms of British social anthropology, and in the years after he came under the influence of Sartre's historical anthropology. Such biographical facts may surprise readers, not only because they contrast with Bourdieu's own sharp criticisms of both tendencies – 'breaks,' after all, are not entirely unfamiliar to any student of social thought – but because they conflict with Bourdieu's understandable tendency to present the history of his own theoretical development in cumulative terms. In the Appendix, I make a brief effort to reconstruct the 'historical' dimension of Bourdieu's theorizing.

7. When referring to the works most frequently quoted in this essay, I employ initials rather than the traditional bibliographic citation. These are: *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu 1977) – OTP; *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1984) – D; *The Logic of Practice* (Bourdieu 1990a) – LOP; *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu 1988a) – HA; *In Other Words* (Bourdieu 1990b) – IOW. All other references will be in the traditional bibliographic format. Unless otherwise indicated, I quote from the English translations of these works without retranslation.

8. This reference to communication calls to mind the obvious yet nonetheless extremely revealing contrasts between Bourdieu's reconstruction of neo-Marxism and Habermas's, which gives communicative action such pride of place (cf. pp. 192–3, below). Habermas conceptualizes symbolic language, and culture more generally, as opening up the possibility for a form of authentic communication aimed at establishing mutual respect. Yet, while Habermas has a normative framework for evaluating meaning, he has no sociological theory of culture at all. This Bourdieu certainly has, despite the debilitating problems I will discuss below. If Bourdieu has been extremely reluctant to associate himself directly with the Marxist tradition, Habermas – certainly the most important critical theorist in the philosophical world – has been much less so, despite the enormous critical oeuvre he has mounted against it. See, e.g. Habermas's recent remark 'I am the last Marxist' (1992: 469).

9. I say 'earlier' because it seems possible that Bourdieu's formulations of his objections to the structuralist suppression of reflexivity were inspired by Garfinkel's, despite the impression given by Bourdieu (e.g. OTP: 21). Garfinkel's book-length statement of ethnomethodology appeared in 1967, and several well-known essays had been published earlier. Bourdieu's book appeared in France in 1972. At the same time, it must be said that theorists throughout the social sciences were discovering the later Wittgenstein (1968) in the 1960s, encounters that surely could have inspired similar critiques of structuralism and briefs on behalf of 'practical action.' Garfinkel (personal communication) and Bourdieu (IOW: 9) both acknowledge the strong impact on their thinking of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.

10. *Parole*, generally translated as 'speech,' plays a role in structural linguistics that is the equivalent of 'contingency' in the theory of action. *Langue*, translated as 'language,' plays a role that in language theory is equivalent to 'structure.'

11. Contrary to the self-presentation quoted above, in which Bourdieu traces 'habitus' to his effort to carve out a role for agency in his battle with semiotic and Marxist structuralism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the term seems actually to have appeared much earlier in his work (1962b: 322), where it already carried connotations of a decidedly deterministic kind. The notion that the self is merely an internalized reflection of economic circumstances also broadly informed a contemporaneous discussion (Bourdieu 1962c). Here, in an argument that is curiously parallel to the 'culture of poverty' writings that emerged earlier among American anthropologists committed to modernization theory, Bourdieu analyzes the social psychology of the Algerian proletariat as a reflection of the uncertainty of their labor market and the powerlessness

of their social position more generally. This objective situation produced an 'apathy and fatalistic resignation' (ibid.: 327) that convinced them it was 'vain to struggle against an all-powerful evil' (ibid.: 331), predispositions which spiralled back to reinforce the determinism of class position. This emphasis on passivity vis-à-vis external conditions is in tension with the existential Marxism that also played a strong role in Bourdieu's thinking during this period (see Appendix).

12. I will discuss the 'homology' concept at greater length below.

13. Given Bourdieu's own confusion about the differences between 'relative autonomy' and 'determinism in the last instance,' it is not surprising that his sympathizers, in their own attempts to defend his work, often simply repeat his mistakes. Wacquant (in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 10–13), for example, argues that Bourdieu transcends 'dualities' by converting 'seemingly antagonistic paradigms into moments of a form of analysis designed to recapture the intrinsically double reality of the social world.' In the first moment of Bourdieuan analysis, Wacquant observes, 'we push aside mundane representations to construct the objective structures[,] the distribution of socially efficient resources that define the external constraints bearing on interactions and representations.' In the second moment, 'we reintroduce the immediate, lived experience of agents.' While claiming that the duality of structure/meaning has been abolished, in other words, Wacquant, like Bourdieu himself, actually insists on their hierarchical relationship: 'It should be stressed that, although the two moments of analysis are equally necessary, they are not equal: epistemological priority is granted to objectivist rupture over subjectivist understanding.'

Wacquant presents this reductionist model as a 'reformulation and generalization' of Durkheim and Mauss's argument in *Primitive Classification* (1963 [1903]) and, indeed (cf. Alexander 1982b), in that early effort to understand social representation a significant element of the mechanistic determinism of Durkheim's early and middle periods remains. As Durkheim's thinking about culture continued to develop he emphasized more clearly its relative autonomy, elaborating a theory of the internal dynamics of representations and of the role they played in stimulating rituals and structuring solidarity. Yet, even in Durkheim's later masterwork, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, the relationship between morphology and representation remains a mechanistic one in the approach to the sociology of knowledge.

Wacquant is dissatisfied with *Primitive Classification*, not because it is too mechanistic, but because its theory of morphological determination is not as elaborated as the one developed by Bourdieu. He (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 13) criticizes Durkheim and Mauss's analysis because, while embracing 'the social determination of classifications,' it 'lacked a sound causative mechanism' for actually explaining them. Wacquant believes that Bourdieu has done just this; he has shown that 'social divisions and mental schemata are structurally homologous because they are genetically linked: the latter are *nothing other* than the embodiment of the former' (ibid., italics added). Wacquant is right. In Bourdieu's work, the concept of homology (see below) indicates not relative autonomy but genetic linkage, a kind of mimetic overlapping, or molding, of superstructural dispositions and fields over the economic base.

14. Bourdieu has occasionally pointed to Panofsky's path-breaking art historical studies as a source for his habitus concept, yet Panofsky certainly himself did not dehumanize or strategize motivation in a similar way. To the contrary, despite his historical and sociological understanding of dispositions he stressed their moral and relational elements. 'The concept of *humanitas* as a value,' Panofsky (1955: 1–2) writes of antiquity, 'meant . . . the quality which distinguishes man, not only from animals, but also, and even more so, from him who belongs to the species *homo* without deserving the name of *homo humanus*, from the barbarian or vulgarian who lacks . . . respect for moral values [and] learning.' If we consider Bourdieu's (1985) suggestion that his habitus theory is derived in part from Thomist thought, we can observe the same kind of contrast. For Aquinas, the soul, the will, and the intellect possess a relative autonomy from the body (Anderson 1953). Is it any surprise, then, that the Thomist theory of education and childhood development – with its emphasis on the development of the personality

and moral sensibility – closely parallels that of Piaget? As one scholar puts it: 'To St Thomas Aquinas this power of man's detectability and plasticity is based on his power of abstraction. It is psychic, not neural' (Fitzpatrick cited in July 1965: 80).

15. Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony is the only major neo-Marxist approach that largely escapes such reduction. Conceptualizing socialism as a counterhegemonic quasi-religious power that challenged the ability of capitalist ideology to motivate voluntary adherence to bourgeois society, Gramsci understood relative autonomy because he was nurtured on Crocean idealism and used the Catholic religion as his model for cultural power. This emphasis was one reason that Gramsci's work became such an important polemical target for Althusser, whose conception of relative autonomy always insisted that the economic structure was determinate 'in the last instance.' Althusserian ideas had a formative effect on the third stage of Bourdieu's work, from the early 1960s to the earlier 1970s, and their impact certainly remains visible in the very different, mature theory that has developed since.

16. The body theory of Foucault reveals the same welcome empirical emphasis and the same theoretical problems. The profound similarities between the social theories of Bourdieu and Foucault have not been emphasized in the critical literature, despite the fact that the friendship between them is well known (Eribon 1991: 298–308). If Foucault is the principal model for poststructuralism in history and social philosophy, Bourdieu is the model for the power/knowledge link in the social sciences more narrowly conceived. Bourdieu, of course, remains much more traditionally Marxist than Foucault, and he seems to possess neither the late Foucault's sensitivity to the oppressiveness of noncapitalist, totalitarian power, nor his late-flowering interest in anti-authoritarian counterdiscourses.

While Bourdieu does not often refer to Foucault (but see HA: 63), those who are associated with him clearly see in Foucault's emphasis on the destructive nature of internalized mental structures a kindred theoretical spirit. In Boschetti's praise for Foucault, for example, one sees clearly the link she is making between his ideas and the theory of Bourdieu.

[Foucault] never ceased to struggle for the progress of truth and justice, practising and organizing a new kind of resistance to power which is conceived above all as a struggle against internalized power in the form of mental structures.

(Boschetti 1992: 89)

17. In a penetrating critical evaluation of the subjective dimensions of Bourdieu's work, Axel Honneth writes in a similar vein:

The concept of 'habitus' ... depends on a reductionist model of representation. Because Bourdieu applies it only to the collective perceptual schemata and orientational models ensuring that the economic constraints and chances of a collective life situation are translated into the apparent freedom of an individual way of life, he cannot develop any theoretical sensitivity to otherwise embedded everyday cultural meanings, nor to their expressive or identity confirming elements.

(Honneth 1986: 61, italics added)

The comparable observation by Schatzki (1987: 133–4), while simplistic in its equation of critical rationality with a theoretical emphasis on conscious thought, is also worth quoting:

On Bourdieu's account, conscious thinking cannot produce action. Only subconscious processes, together with bodily dispositions, achieve this. ... Thought, in other words, is a mere accessory to behavior. That it phenomenologically appears to people that they sometimes orchestrate their behavior according to what they think, is an illusion. ... Human beings, therefore, are at the mercy of the habitus inhabiting them ... and conscious reflection offers no avenue for escaping its embrace.

18. It might be remarked, in this context, that by exclusively emphasizing trust rather than differentiation in the ego's early socialization, Giddens's (1984) theory of the self distorts the Eriksonian approach upon which it ostensibly relies.

19. During this highly compressed Sartrean phase (see Appendix) – the same period when Bourdieu first introduced the notion of habitus – Bourdieu occasionally offered strong arguments for a more independent self which sustained a real reflexivity. Consider, for example, Bourdieu's discussion of the heavy bearing and clumsiness of the male peasant, which ill-equipped him to participate effectively in the dances that provided the opportunity for meeting potential wives in post-traditional societies. While Bourdieu insists, in the first place, that this heaviness results from the internalization of the peasant mode of production and social structure, he goes on to argue that it was not simply the clumsiness itself but the peasant's reflection on his clumsiness that really got in the way of marriage. 'He is embarrassed about his body and in his body', Bourdieu writes. It is 'because he knows [saisit] himself in this way that the peasant has 'an unhappy consciousness [*une conscience malheureuse*]' (Bourdieu 1962b: 324). Bourdieu concludes, in fact, that the peasant's 'social and economic condition affects the marriage situation principally via the mediation of consciousness' (ibid.: 325). This phrase, 'unhappy consciousness,' comes from Hegel's discussion of the master-slave relationship in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, a discussion that Kojève injected so forcefully into the French reading of Marx in the 1930s and 1940s and which became central to Sartre's generation of neo-Marxist intellectuals.

20. 'While the mediation of the habitus can be effective in so far as it is self-modifying in response to practical reality, it is in fact illusory, at least as far as the actor is concerned, since he is credited with no real autonomy. Only the deficiency of these habituses, that is to say the extent to which they lag behind present reality, allows us to escape the dominant logic of reproduction, and it is only in this indirect way, and therefore to a very limited extent, that the habitus can be regarded, *stricto sensu*, as a "principle of invention"' (Chazel 1994: 152).

21. I discuss Bourdieu's field theory in a separate section, below.

22. The use of the phrase 'in the last analysis' in the founding theoretical work of Bourdieu's mature period (see Appendix) is telling, for it illustrates in a concrete and textual manner the strongly neo-Marxist dimension of his causal frame. In the neo-Marxist tradition the phrase derives from Engels's 1962 [1890] famous 'Letter to Bloch,' in which Marx's surviving co-author sought to defend the historical materialism that he and Marx had created against charges of monocausality. Engels did so by insisting that he and Marx had recognized that in any historical situation there were a plurality of different kinds of historical forces in play, that they had only insisted that economic and class factors were determinate 'in the last instance.'

23. In the following discussion I employ the terminology from *Action and Its Environments* (Alexander 1988b: 301–33), which suggests that action-processes can be seen as simultaneously involving strategization, typification, and invention. These processes articulate with the more structured 'environments' of action; the internal environments are personality and culture, the external are the actors and institutional domains of the social system (Cf. Alexander 1995b).

24. In this battle with Mauss's ghost, Bourdieu's situation parallels that of many other cultural materialists in anthropology, for whom Mauss's gift theory has also been the bogeyman. In his early, Marxist period, for example, Sahlins (1972: 149–85) devoted a seminal essay to providing a Marxian interpretation of the *hau* of the gift. In a manner that is similar to Bourdieu's, Sahlins condescendingly rebukes Mauss for mystifying what is, after all, merely an overtly instrumental act: 'The Maori [tribe] was trying to explain a religious concept by an economic principle, which Mauss promptly understood the other way around and thereupon proceeded to develop the economic principle by the religious concept' (ibid.: 157). In the most ambitious and sustained French criticism of Bourdieu, Caillé (1992) employs an anti-exchangist perspective inspired by Mauss.

25. Which is precisely the opposite move to the one Boudon has recently made in

his intriguing effort to escape from the contradictions of rational choice theory. Boudon (1993) insists that actors consciously conceive of themselves as rational – as having ‘good reasons’ – but he acknowledges that the unconscious motivations and inspirations of action are rooted in the moral order.

26. The reasoning in this paragraph draws from the arguments about theoretical logic developed in Alexander (1982a). I take the liberty here of quoting directly: ‘Whether or not an element functions as condition is not determined by its corporeal nature, for an ideal element may function objectively if the sanctions that sustain it make it stand in relation to the actor as an unmovable force. In this case, the actor adopts toward it an instrumental motive, treating it as an [objective] condition rather than an end in itself’ (ibid.: 189).

27. Elster (1990: 90) gets at this vulgar functionalism when he criticizes Bourdieu’s ‘incessant use of the phrase “*tout se passe comme si*”’ (everything happens as if) in order to suggest that action consciously guided by a personal strategy seems virtually always to lead to an outcome that is functional for the powers that be. While Elster finds functionalism at work, Bourdieu himself insists that the reasons for this coincidence between action and systemic result can be found in the fact that actions are unconsciously strategic, permeated by a kind of omniscient rationality. Indeed, arguments that individual rationalities lead to appropriate system outcomes is a vice often exhibited by theories that employ ideas of rational choice. See, in this regard, Edles’s (forthcoming) criticism of the plethora of rational choice approaches to democratic transitions in Latin America and Europe, which attribute the success of the transitions to the far-sighted cooperative pacts made by rational, forward-looking elites.

28. DiMaggio’s (1979: 1468–9) sarcastic observation does not seem entirely misplaced: ‘Capitals proliferate: in addition to economic, cultural, and symbolic capital, we have linguistic capital, social capital, academic capital, scholastic capital, credentialled cultural capital, capitals of authority and of consecration, university, scientific, and artistic capital. No doubt there are others.’

29. Van den Berg (1991: 14–15) has emphasized precisely this proximity to Weberian closure theory in Bourdieu’s recent work, arguing from this proximity that his field theory signifies no real theoretical innovation.

Bourdieu’s depiction of kinship relations as outcomes of, and resources in, struggles between groups and individuals is in fact indistinguishable from accounts that neo-Weberian conflict theorists would give. . . . Oddly enough, Bourdieu seems less than fully conversant with this tradition even in the area of stratification theory which is, after all, his own principal speciality. . . . It is as though such rather standard fare of stratification theory as . . . ‘labour aristocracy,’ ‘credentialism,’ and ‘occupational licensure,’ or (neo-)Weberian concepts like social closure, exclusion and usurpation . . . were entirely new to Bourdieu.

This conflation of Bourdieu’s field theory with the closure approach overstates the case, however, as I indicate below.

30. Despite these clear signals from Bourdieu, and the fairly straightforward arguments for reductionism he makes in most of his texts, there are social scientists who continue to view field theory merely as describing a kind of indeterminate ‘interdependence’ between social spheres rather than a form of determinant dependence. For example, Ringer (1992) presents his work on the history of French intellectuals as being informed by Bourdieu’s model of the intellectual field. Yet there is virtually nothing in his nuanced empirical account of the historical formation of the French academy that betrays the influence of field theory in its strong form. Indeed, there is much in Ringer’s account that contradicts Bourdieu’s field theory.

31. In his criticisms of Goldmann’s use of homology, the neo-Marxist literary critic Fredric Jameson attacks the concept for implying ‘structural parallelism.’

What is unsatisfactory about this work of Goldmann’s is not the establishment of a historical relationship among these three zones or sectors, but rather the simplistic and mechanical

model which is constructed in order to articulate that relationship, and in which it is affirmed that at some level of abstraction the ‘structure’ of the three quite different realities of social situation, philosophical or ideological position, and verbal and theatrical practice are ‘the same.’

(Jameson 1980: 43–4)

32. Anne Kane’s (1991) conception of analytic and concrete autonomy is the best recent discussion of the complex possibilities involved. She argues that it is necessary to recognize two kinds of autonomy in order to gain a thorough understanding of culture and society relations. The analytical autonomy of culture means that it possesses an internal structuration that is different and cannot be adduced or deduced from either social or psychological structures. Yet to recognize analytic autonomy in culture is not to specify what its relationship to social system institutions and process will be. This must be determined empirically for each specific historical relationship, although, given the analytic autonomy of culture, the causal relation can never be simply one-way. Cf. Alexander (1988b).

33. It should be added that these studies are also highly redundant, a major problem that has been somewhat obscured by the fact that, until recently at least, many French works were not translated. When the entirety of Bourdieu’s corpus is examined, however, it is apparent that Bourdieu and his co-authors plow the same ground in a number of different books, often taking over entire chunks of text and manipulating the same, or very familiar, samples of data, and coming up with what appear to be virtually similar results. Thus, there is not one book on mass education, on higher education, on consumption, on aesthetics, but two or more on each of these empirical domains reiterating the same themes and findings. This puzzling redundancy is true for the two major theoretical works as well. *Logic of Practice*, published eight years after *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, is eerily similar to it. In Caillé’s (1992: 187) words, ‘*Le Sens pratique* [LOP] en est la reprise directe.’

34. By emphasizing the role that the structuralist approach to class plays in Bourdieu’s empirical analysis of fields, I am aware that this seems to contradict the author’s own insistence that he has rejected the substantialist approach to class for a constructivist one. It is true that Bourdieu eschews the tendentious discussions of just what specific structural properties define class position and focuses more on processes involved in status and class consciousness. At the same time, as will become clear below, Bourdieu’s class understanding is by no means antistructural. His analyses of class behavior extrapolate from arguments about the distribution of resources to different strata, and class actors can reconstruct the position they are given by society only to the degree that shifts in their external material environments allow them to do so. If classes do not become ‘actors’ in his theory, it is not so much because Bourdieu has adopted a constructivist approach to class as it is because in his theory he allocates such small space to political and public life, as I will suggest in my concluding section, below.

35. As Ferry and Renaud emphasize, what Bourdieu objects to in the Marxist approach to ideas is that ‘in the Marxist tradition class interest has too often been defined *without mediation, directly or brutally*’ (1990: 77, italics in original). Their argument that Bourdieu’s ‘sociology is less a break with the Marxist practice of reducing behaviors to the class interests that they are supposed to explain than merely a more subtle variant of the same practice’ (ibid.) is right on the mark.

36. The very distinctiveness of educational processes, in other words, the very difference in their feeling and texture from economic relationships, is precisely what allows this field to play its fundamentally reproductive role in capitalist society. What better example can one find of how Bourdieu emphasizes the autonomy of the field in order, paradoxically, to demonstrate the overarching control of the larger system?

37. ‘It is curious,’ Caillé writes (1992: 155), that ‘Bourdieu never directly confronts . . . the classical question of social mobility’:

Everything in his analyses leads one to suppose that such mobility is either virtually zero, or else contrived and irrelevant. One is entitled to ask, indeed, what would remain of Bourdieu's sociology if upward mobility were not reduced to such a tiny stream.

(ibid.)

38. While there have been penetrating critiques of Bourdieu's early work by specialists in education (e.g. Halsey et al. 1980), representatives of 'the American school' of stratification have not yet made an effort to evaluate systematically his quantitative findings or the empirical claims of his stratification theory more generally.

39. Lamont's criticism of Bourdieu's theory goes, in fact, well beyond this specific empirical point. Indeed, the broader conclusions she draws from her empirical findings on the status criteria employed by upper-middle-class managers in France and the United States – see particularly the section 'Differentiation, Hierarchy, and the Politics of Meaning' (Lamont 1992: 177–88) – are presented as falsifying some of the central tenets of Bourdieu's perspective on symbolic behavior and stratification, which in certain other respects Lamont makes use of herself. These conclusions confirm many of the criticisms which I have developed here on more theoretical grounds. Lamont shows, for example, that moral judgments about such things as honesty and altruism are employed almost as often by the French – and more often by the French outside Paris – as are aesthetic judgments that emphasize mastery over high culture. More generally, and more importantly, she shows that Bourdieu's perspective makes it impossible for him to explain why so many of the most important cultural judgments made even by high-status social actors are unrelated to their position in the stratification system. Rather than efforts to draw invidious distinctions or to legitimate domination, Lamont shows, cultural evaluations often are motivated by efforts to maintain individual integrity or even to extend solidarity across group lines. On these grounds, she concludes, Bourdieu's understanding of the 'field of power' as a zero-sum game is inadequate.

40. In terms of recent disputes in Anglo-American discussions in epistemology, Bourdieu is adopting a 'realist' position, which is typically presented as differentiated not only from a relativist position but also from a positivist one that is supposedly content with law-like descriptions of the visible surface of the social rather than seeking to explain deeper, less visible structures, in a supposedly more radical way. This distinction, typically advanced by the very authors who call themselves realists, is a fuzzy one, however; it conflates epistemological claims – generally valid ones – with ontological and moral issues about the particular nature of the social world. This conflation produces in much of the realist tradition the kinds of problems of justification I refer to below.

41. Is it an awareness of the contradictions of this position that later induced Bourdieu to suggest that in writing *Homo Academicus* he was, despite appearances to the contrary, actually applying his method to himself?

The harshest and most brutally objectifying analyses [in HA] are written with an acute awareness of the fact that they apply to he who is writing them. And, moreover, with the knowledge that many of those concerned by them will not think for one moment that the author of this or that 'cruel' sentence bears it along with them. Consequently, they will denounce as gratuitous cruelty what is in fact ... a socioanalysis. (I have in mind here several passages which separated me from some of my best friends. I have had ... very dramatic clashes with colleagues who perceived very accurately the violence of the objectification but who saw a contradiction in the fact that I could objectify without thinking of myself, while of course I was doing it all the while.)

(Bourdieu in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 63)

It is one thing, however, to be 'thinking of oneself' when one is objectifying others' work by reducing them to a position in the academic field, and quite another to write about one's own work, publicly, that way. This is precisely Mannheim's paradox, the very revealing inconsistency in the situation of those who practice a strong program in

the sociology of knowledge: no sensible person – one who wishes his or her work to be taken as cognitively valid – would present his or her own work in the same way.

42. 'What disappears completely [in Bourdieu's theory], and this is rather strange for one who appeals to the sociological tradition, is any representation of the social totality – even the least trace of it – in which fields and actors are necessarily joined. [It is] as if this totality were emptied of any capacity for transcendence vis-à-vis fields and actors, as if it merely had the status of a material reality [which was] reducible to the calculus of material interests by actors defined by their material practice alone. Nothing is more striking, in Bourdieu's work, than the absence of any analysis of collective entities like "society," "nation," "democracy," etc. Entities like these must exist first in the mind and in the subtle layers of language – in symbolic form, in other words – before having the power to be crystallized in objects and practices' (Caillé 1992: 218).

43. That Bourdieu does not distinguish the specifically political, much less the democratic, was no doubt at the root of the intellectual enmity that the older Raymond Aron publicly expressed toward his former student. Although he never evokes Bourdieu's name, could Aron have been writing about anybody else in the despairing *cri de coeur* that marks the conclusions of his *Memoirs*?

In an age dominated by ideas of liberty and equality, sociologists belong more than ever to the school of suspicion. They do not take at face value the language that social actors use about themselves. The boldest or most pessimistic, no longer possessing an image or a hope of the good society, consider their own with merciless severity. . . . Marxism no longer plays the role of crushing democratic-liberal regimes under the utopia of the classless society or the example of Soviet reality. [But] it may help to foster a kind of nihilism. By insisting on the arbitrary nature of values and the inequality of interpersonal relations in communities that are, in relative terms, the least tyrannical, one ends up by not recognizing the most obvious facts: although modern society reproduces itself – it would not be a society if it did not reproduce itself – it is changing more rapidly than all past societies. And the liberal order remains different from the tyrannical order offered to us by the Soviet Union. Whoever sees only a difference in degree between the ideology of the state in Moscow and 'symbolic violence' in Paris, blinded by 'sociologism,' finally obscures the fundamental questions of the century.

(Aron 1990: 481–2)

44. There is actually one moment, in a discussion of what he calls 'the peculiar history of reason,' where Bourdieu acknowledges that universalism exists. He insists on explaining it, however, as a functional effect, a by-product, of strategic behavior, not as an actually existing social fact.

Under certain conditions, that is, in certain states of this field of struggles for symbolic power that indeed is the scientific field, these strategies produce their own transcendence, because they are subjected to the crisscrossing censorship that represents the constitutive reason of the field. [In this way,] the anarchic antagonism of particular interests is converted into a rational dialectic . . . where the war of all against all transcends itself through a critical correction of all by all. . . . Reason realizes itself in history only to the degree that it inscribes itself in the objective mechanisms of a regulated competition capable of compelling interested claims to monopoly to convert themselves into mandatory contributions to the universal.

(Bourdieu 1991c: 20–22)

Or, as he has recently put the issue in a succinct way: 'The profit from universalisation is without doubt one of the historical motors in the progress of the universal' (Bourdieu 1994: 132).

45. It is revealing to contrast Bourdieu's work in this regard with that of the other French social theorist in his generation to whom he is most often compared – Alain Touraine. Because Touraine's attention to agency is much more substantial and explicitly humanistic (cf. Dubet 1994), it is natural that he would pay so much more attention

to the creative role and significance of social movements. It follows, as well, that he gives more theoretical respect, and empirical attention, to social resistance against authoritarian societies (e.g. Touraine et al. 1983), and to democracy itself (Touraine 1994). For a more recent discussion that highlights the positive and critical role of social movements and their leaders, and which does so specifically by emphasizing the role of culture rather than strategy, see Eyerman and Jamison (1991).

46. For example, speaking to East German intellectuals and students in the midst of the exhalation of '89', Bourdieu tries to undermine the sense that the participants were heroes; he negates the possibility of idealism in principle and reduces their motives to base self-interest. 'Everything leads one to believe,' he argues (1994: 34-5), 'that the changes that have occurred recently in Russia and elsewhere find their principle in the rivalries between the owners of political capital ... and the owners of scholarly capital.' Bourdieu describes the latter group as 'the most inclined to impatience and to revolt against the privilege of the owners of political capital.' Those who own scholarly capital, moreover, have succeeded precisely because they were clever enough to turn against the Nomenklatura 'the [very] professions of faith, both egalitarian and meritocratic, which are fundamental to the legitimacy it claims.'

47. '[H]abermas's] "ideal speech situation" becomes a reality when social mechanisms of communication and of exchange are established, mechanisms that impose the unrelenting censorships of well-armed criticism, often through the quest for domination, and outside of any reference to moral norms' (Bourdieu 1991c: 21).

48. I should stress here that this account - which is preliminary and highly schematic - draws only from published papers and autobiographical accounts. I have had no access to Bourdieu's private ideas or interests insofar as these are not reflected in his published work. While it is perfectly possible that the public and private Bourdieus are, in fact, very different, it remains useful to reconstruct the public work, since it is this which forms the basis not only for Bourdieu's statements about his *Bildung* but for those of others.

49. In the first lines of his 'Translator's Foreword' to OTP, Bourdieu's long-time translator, Richard Nice, offers this highly ambiguous testimony:

Outline of a Theory of Practice was first published in French in 1972 (*Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*). However, this English text incorporates most of the changes which Pierre Bourdieu has made since then ... [in addition] the order of exposition is recast, and partly (for reasons of space, the ethnographic chapters with which the French edition opens have been curtailed.

(OTP: vii)

In the 'Bibliography of the works of Pierre Bourdieu, 1958-1988, compiled by Yvette Delsaut' (IOW: 199-218), OTP is listed in the 1972 section (ibid.: 205) as one of the multiple translations of *Esquisse*.

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