

The strength of weak programs in cultural sociology: A critique of Alexander's critique of Bourdieu

David Gartman

Published online: 14 July 2007

© Springer Science + Business Media B.V. 2007

Abstract Jeffrey Alexander's recent book on cultural sociology argues that sociologists must grant the realm of ideas autonomy to determine behavior, unencumbered by interference from instrumental or material factors. He criticizes the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu as "weak" for failing to give autonomy to culture by reducing it to self-interested behavior that immediately reflects class position. However, Alexander's arguments seriously distort and misstate Bourdieu's theory, which provides for the relative autonomy of culture through the concepts of habitus and field. Because habitus is a set of durable dispositions conditioned by past structures, it may contradict the changed structures of the present. Further, the influence of the habitus is always mediated by the structure and strategies of the field of contest in which it is deployed, so that the same habitus may motivate different actions in different circumstances. However, Alexander is correct to argue that in Bourdieu's theory culture generally serves to reproduce, not contradict social structures. Yet Bourdieu addresses this and other problems in his later work, in which he argues for the existence of certain cultural universals transcending particular structures.

Introduction

In his recent book entitled *The Meanings of Social Life*, Jeffrey Alexander ambitiously seeks to redefine cultural sociology and, in the process, the entire discipline. Abandoning his earlier efforts to broaden functionalism into a multidimensional theory, he now attempts to narrow all sociology to the single dimension of culture. In his new vision of the discipline, all roads to understanding human behavior go through culture, the preeminent and ultimate determinant of action. His efforts are part of a larger revival of sociological interest in culture over the last decade or so. But Alexander's intervention into this rich and

D. Gartman (✉)

Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work, University of South Alabama,
Mobile, AL 36688-0002, USA
e-mail: dgartman@usouthal.edu

eclectic field of scholarship seeks to narrow it to a single, impoverished vision of the relation of symbols and ideas to social life.

Instead of congenially sowing his conceptual seeds among the diverse flora of the already well-tilled field of cultural sociology, Alexander practices a slash-and-burn strategy. In his first chapter, entitled “The Strong Program in Cultural Sociology,” he hastily hacks down most of the established traditions of research in the field, refusing to share ground with the weak and ill-bred. His strong program’s defining criterion, which Alexander ruthlessly wields as an ax to clear the field of competitors, is an insistence on cultural autonomy. Nothing but the pure species of unadulterated determination of behavior by collective emotions and ideas will grow in his field of cultural sociology, because, in his words, “it is such subjective and internal feelings that so often seem to rule the world” (Alexander 2003, p 5). All mongrel and hybrid approaches to culture that bear the minutest taint of the objective or material are declared “weak,” then summarily mowed down and set ablaze. The Gramsci-inspired Birmingham School of Stuart Hall and others is declared a “failure” for its inability “to grasp the nettle of cultural autonomy” (p 17). Michel Foucault’s binding of discourse to power is said to leave no room for understanding how an autonomous cultural realm provides for the transcendental goals of social life. And the production of culture perspective, as exemplified in the work of Wendy Griswold and Robert Wuthnow, is dismissed as reductionist because of its aim “to explain away culture as the product of sponsoring institutions, elites or interests” (p 20).

Given his strong-program demand for analytic autonomy of symbols and ideas from outside determination, it is not surprising that Alexander also tries to clear the cultural field of the contributions of one of the most commanding contemporary figures addressing cultural issues, Pierre Bourdieu. After all, the French sociologist seeks to show that cultural practices and ideas are inextricably and complexly intertwined with the competition for power and material resources. But perhaps in recognition of the enormous power and scope of Bourdieu’s work, Alexander is not content with the cursory blows with which he dispatches other competitors for valued ground in the field of cultural sociology. Some years before his recent redefinition of the field, he undertook a careful and sustained assault on Bourdieu’s cultural theory in an almost book-length essay subtitled “The Failed Synthesis of Pierre Bourdieu.” It is now clear that this 1995 attack was Alexander’s attempt to defeat his most powerful opponent in the cultural field in order to make way for his recent reconstruction. Although the essay rightly identifies several weak spots in Bourdieu’s theory of culture, I believe that this critique is itself deeply flawed and tendentiously misinterprets its object. In comparison to Alexander’s now-developed strong program in cultural sociology, Bourdieu’s “weak program” is actually stronger, both conceptually and empirically. And, I suggest, there are ways to shore up the weak links in the theory to render it even more robust.

The vicissitudes and stakes of Alexander’s cultural sociology

The approach to culture on which Alexander founds his criticism of Bourdieu is actually a departure from his earlier contributions to the field. Before about 1990, Alexander dedicated himself to constructing a multidimensional theory that recognized the complex interactions of the material and ideal determinants of social behavior. His neofunctional project criticized Parsons’s functionalism for being one-sidedly idealistic, because it held that social order can be achieved only through the normative control of self-interested, materialistic behavior (Alexander 1987, pp 30–31). Although he gave the early *Structure of*

Social Action credit for constructing an analytic model that synthesized the cultural and material elements of society, Alexander argued that Parsons increasingly strayed from this multidimensional framework to one dominated by culture, in the form of institutionalized values. Alexander wrote in 1990 that his neofunctionalism “explicitly attacked the idealist tendencies in Parsons’ approach to action and argued that this reduction was responsible for many defects in Parsons’ work, such as its tendency to see change in teleological terms and its relative slighting of economic rewards and political coercion” (Alexander and Colomy 1990, p 46). Alexander’s neofunctionalism was an attempt to construct a multidimensional theory that saw culture as analytically autonomous from material factors, with its own internal forms and forces, but empirically intertwined and affected by them.

Using this formulation of culture, Alexander surveyed the field of cultural sociology in a 1990 volume edited with Steven Seidman. In the introductory essay (Alexander 1990), he again criticized approaches that gave an overwhelming, one-sided influence to culture, labeling them “culturalism.” Alexander placed in this category Dilthey’s hermeneutics, as well as the semiotics and structuralism of Saussure, Barthes, and Lévi-Strauss, accusing all of reducing social behavior to cultural structures and refusing to grant analytic autonomy to material or economically motivated behavior. He levied the opposite charge of “social reductionism” against Gramsci’s cultural Marxism, but found more balanced the work of E. P. Thompson and Paul Willis, both of whom see class as inseparable from the cultural discourses that give meaning to economic behavior. Alexander also praised for its balanced approach poststructuralism, a school in which he included both Michel Foucault and Bourdieu. Combining Marxism and structuralism but avoiding the reductionisms of both, the poststructuralists reveal, he argued, the intertwining of social and cultural systems without reducing one to the other. Bourdieu’s work was also praised here for revealing that class position is constituted by cultural codes of perception that are transmitted through family and school and then used as the basis for social selection.

With the publication of *The Meanings of Social Life* in 2003, however, Alexander’s model of the relation of culture to society has changed, as has his assessment of particular traditions within cultural sociology. Although the defining criterion of his strong program in cultural sociology is nominally the same – the “relative autonomy” of the symbolic realm to affect behavior – in effect it has changed. Now the required autonomy of culture seems more absolute than relative. In Alexander’s strong program of “cultural sociology,” culture *must* be considered as an independent variable that underlies all behavior and institutions. Any attempt to investigate culture as a dependent variable, affected by something outside of it, is labeled “weak,” a mere “sociology of culture.” Alexander demands “a sharp analytical uncoupling of culture from social structure,” and “the bracketing-out of wider, nonsymbolic social relations” so that cultural forms can be investigated for their internal meanings and codes (Alexander 2003, pp 12–13). Only after the cultural object has been created by such formal analysis can it be examined for its intersections with social forces in the concrete, empirical world. Any approach that intends to show the effects of the material world on the constitution of culture is labeled reductionist.

The problem with Alexander’s demand for “analytical autonomy” is that it assumes what it hopes to demonstrate. By initially bracketing out the influence of economic and utilitarian relations in its formal analysis of culture, it assumes that cultural forms are not themselves affected by these constitutionally, from the inside. The only relation between culture and economy that this method allows is an external, fortuitous intersection of preformed forces. But the best materialist analysts of culture, including Bourdieu but also Lukács (1962, 1973), Jameson (1971, 1981) and Adorno (1984, 1994), argue that the very forms of culture, not merely its contents, are inextricably and internally constituted by the economic

organization of society. Alexander's demand for analytical autonomy arbitrarily and capriciously precludes this competing position without attempting to disprove it.

Alexander's criterion of the radical autonomy of culture sharply reverses his previous assessments of other approaches to culture. The structuralism of Saussure and Lévi-Strauss and the hermeneutics of Dilthey, all previously castigated for a one-sided culturalism, are now seen as "fine bedfellows" for Alexander's strong program (Alexander 2003, p 26). Almost all other schools are denounced as "weak." Even Parsons, previously criticized by Alexander for being too idealist, is now declared "insufficiently cultural" for explaining values by functional necessities (p 16). The assessment of Foucault's poststructuralist attempt to show the relation of discursive structure to social power is also reversed, now being declared weak for contaminating the pure autonomy of culture with the crass heteronomy of power. And now Bourdieu's work is also characterized as weak. Although Alexander concedes that Bourdieu's middle-range empirical work "has real merits" (p 18), especially its ability to reveal the deep codes in cultural works, it is judged weak for its attempt to connect these codes to the reproduction of class inequality. So Bourdieu is said to reduce culture to a dependent variable, something influenced from the outside, "rather than a Text that shapes the world in an immanent fashion" (p 19).

There is more at stake in Alexander's strong program of cultural sociology, however, than the scientific determination of the causal relation between culture and society, as he well realizes. The political assessment and fate of all Western liberal democracies also hangs in the balance. If human behavior is determined at least partially by the economic laws of the capitalist market, which are objective and beyond the control of individuals, then subjects do not freely choose their own behavior. The consent of the governed or will of the people is just a sham, a cover for materially motivated actions. And so is the natural equality of individuals on which democracy rests. If action is affected by material self-interest, then capitalist democracies with market-determined inequalities divide and stratify people, undermining not only equality but also the cooperation necessary for society to function. Immanuel Kant recognized this contradiction in rationalism long ago. So he insisted that reason and the free action it ensures be severed from the external world of the noumena, which is beyond human control and unknowable. He confined freedom to the internal, phenomenal world of ideas and beliefs, and defined it as the ability of the subject to impose its values on or judge the external world (Marcuse 1968, pp 134–141; Lukács 1971, pp 110–131).

Talcott Parsons rediscovered this contradiction between self-interested economic behavior and freedom during the depths of the Great Depression. The tumultuous struggles of this period disproved the utilitarian argument that free, materialistic behavior leads to social order. Eschewing the collectivist attempts of the period to restore order by restricting individual freedom, Parsons argued that society could have both freedom and order because behavior is determined not by material self-interest but by a shared system of cultural values. Individuals are free to choose their own behavior, but they do so within the confines of a value system that they internalize through socialization. Freedom is thus again confined to the realm of culture, which is autonomous from and regulates the economic world of material interest (Alexander 1987, pp 22–35). To his credit, however, Parsons also recognized that culture could never be completely autonomous from the utilitarian demands of the economy. Society must motivate the utilitarian behavior that creates the material resources (or "conditions") on which it rests. This requires allocating material resources differentially on the basis of efficiency, thus creating tension between the commonality of values necessary for social integration and the inequality of allocation necessary for material adaptation (Alexander 1987, pp 57–72).

Alexander's new approach to cultural sociology seems intent on eliminating this tension between the inequality of market rewards and the commonality of cultural values in order to unequivocally praise liberal democracies. He unilaterally celebrates the triumph of Western democratic capitalism over socialist societies. Yet one senses beneath the surface of his work an uneasiness with the winners of the Cold War. Alexander is, of course, aware of the work of his former teacher Robert Bellah and his collaborators, whose *Habits of the Heart* openly criticizes the dilution of America's communal values by the ruthless utilitarianism of "neocapitalism" (Bellah et al. 1996, vii–xxxix). How then can one defend the growing inequalities and selfishness of the increasingly deregulated economy? By declaring that these material facts are irrelevant to the real foundation of human behavior. If human freedom and social order are secured solely by a cultural tradition whose autonomous forms are immune to the influence of economics, then there is nothing to worry about. These are the real stakes of Alexander's reformulation of cultural sociology. If he can refute the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, which subtly reveals the intricate imbrications of material and cultural determinants of behavior, then there will be no grounds left for challenging the freedom and rationality of modern capitalist societies.

Alexander's criticism of Bourdieu's cultural theory

Jeffrey Alexander mounts his most comprehensive assault on Bourdieu's theory of culture in the longest essay of his 1995 collection, *Fin de Siècle Social Theory*. The main thrust of the essay is to show that Bourdieu violates the "standard of the relative autonomy of culture" by holding that values are influenced by something outside of them, namely, "the hierarchical structures of material life" (Alexander 1995, p 137). For Alexander, culture is not an empirical fact determined by social structures but a discourse, a symbolic code rooted in traditions. Consequently, cultural values transcend particular social structures, and can thus constrain action and provide a basis for the autonomy of individuals (pp 4–5). Bourdieu, however, is said to reduce culture to an immediate reflection of particular social structures, thus producing a deterministic theory that eliminates all grounds for autonomy. He gives full play to "the materialism and corrosive cynicism of our time" by arguing that all action is strategic, motivated not by universal cultural codes but by particularistic interests and a will to power that underlie every dimension of social life (p 129).

Alexander realizes, of course, that Bourdieu claims that his theory originated in a revolt against determinism, especially that of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism. As Bourdieu tells the story, he discovered in the process of researching marriage among Kabyle tribes in Algeria that their matrimonial choices did not follow the sort of formal, structural rules postulated by Lévi-Strauss. Rather, marriages followed a practical but unconscious logic of strategic interest designed to maximize a member's status or cultural capital in the tribe (Bourdieu 1990a, pp 59–75). Alexander argues, however, that Bourdieu's move beyond structuralism was intended to defeat not determinism but idealism, that is, Lévi-Strauss's notion that inherent cultural rules govern action. For the latter's cultural determinism, Bourdieu merely substitutes a deterministic instrumental theory that undermines the autonomy of culture altogether. Although Bourdieu claims that behavior is influenced by internalized symbolic codes, Alexander insists that he reduces these codes to "immediate reflections of the hierarchical structures of material life," that is, class structure (p 137). He ends up with a version of deterministic Marxism that subjugates all culture and action to an underlying material base. Thus, Bourdieu's battle against cultural determinism is really just a Trojan horse through which to insert the troops of Marxist economism.

At this point in Alexander's argument, a crucial question comes to the fore: why is the influence of action by internalized cultural codes any less "deterministic" than its influence by material interests in an external social structure? Do not both restrict the autonomy of action? No, Alexander answers, on two grounds. First, he argues on a conceptual basis that material interests directly determine action, while internalized cultural values create a space of indeterminacy between institutional expectations and particular acts. The latter is true "because ideals are immanently universalistic...they have an inherent tendency to become matters of principle that demand to be generalized in 'unpractical' ways" (p 137). In other words, values are general imperatives that must be specified for each particular situation, leaving actors autonomy of interpretation or specification. Practical interests, on the other hand, dictate particular actions. Second, Alexander argues on a historical basis that the social differentiation that comes with modernization creates an organizational independence of the carriers of culture, such as religious leaders and intellectuals, from the centers of material interests, such as the economy and polity. Because cultural values are universal and increasingly free from ties to material structures, they are more likely to be consensual than interests, which are by definition particular and thus disparate. For example, Alexander goes to great lengths in *The Meanings of Social Life* to reveal "the remarkable durability and continuity of a single culture structure" in American society, a consensual discourse of civil society that exerts a constraining influence on the expression of all particular interests (Alexander 2003, p 154).

Being thoroughly familiar with the criticisms of functionalism's postulate of consensus, however, Alexander is careful to deny that such a cultural consensus restricts the freedom of individuals, arguing instead that it actually provides the grounds for critical distance from social structure. The internalization of cultural values gives the self access to universal collective representations – e.g., equality, rationality, freedom – that may serve as resources to criticize and gain independence from particular social structures (Alexander 1995, pp 144–146). By contrast, Bourdieu's attempt to reduce culture to particular material interests destroys this critical distance, thus binding the self tightly to existing social structures and ensuring their unproblematic reproduction. Alexander develops this argument by criticizing Bourdieu's key concept of habitus, which is crucial for understanding his conception of culture. Bourdieu uses this term to refer to an internalized cognitive structure, an acquired set of durable dispositions that structure the actor's practices or actions. It is his way of acknowledging the importance of subjective or cultural determinants of social action. Alexander argues, though, that the dispositions of Bourdieu's habitus do not have enough independent causal force to create autonomy for the self, for they are determined directly by the conditions of material existence which the individual experiences early in life, that is, by her position in the class structure. Thus, habitus is merely a subjective reflection of the objective distribution of material resources, and does not leave the critical space between social structures and mental structures necessary for autonomy. It is not a set of general rules that guide action, but a particular strategy for obtaining objective resources that determines action. The concept's utter lack of subjective distance from objective conditions is revealed, Alexander argues, by Bourdieu's insistence that the habitus is less a state of mind than a state of the body. The dispositions of the habitus are instilled in the corporeal existence of the individual in such a way that renders them inaccessible to the conscious mind (Alexander 1995, pp 136–149).

Alexander acknowledges Bourdieu's insistence that a habitus becomes an active influence on action only within a specific field, a term he uses to refer to a particular realm of contest with its own peculiar resources and rules. For Bourdieu the structure of particular fields thus refracts the habitus, producing different strategies and actions from the

same dispositions. By introducing this concept he seems to acknowledge the social differentiation of modern societies, that is, the relative autonomy of particular institutional realms, especially cultural institutions. But Alexander argues that the indeterminacy between habitus and action within the field is insufficient to sustain individual autonomy. Ultimately, he insists, Bourdieu reduces the structure of all fields to reflections of the structure of the capitalist economy, insisting each is merely another arena for profit-making and calculation.

Bourdieu introduces the concepts of habitus and field, Alexander argues, mainly to explain the reproduction of this capitalist class structure. The social field – Bourdieu’s name for the class structure of a society – inculcates individuals from different class positions with different habitus. These habitus then generate class-specific practices for the appropriation of scarce resources in all the fields in which they are deployed, especially the cultural fields such as art, music, food, literature, and sport. Members of the dominant class, however, have the power to define their cultural practices as superior, making themselves seem superior as individuals and thus legitimating their unequal share of social resources. Instead of giving individuals universal cultural codes and values that allow them to criticize particular structures of material resources, then, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus determines class-differentiating practices that mark out and ultimately legitimate existing material inequalities. Alexander claims that the actual content of Bourdieu’s class cultures is arbitrary, without importance. All that matters is that the culture of the dominant is seen as different from and superior to that of the dominated. Culture thus has no autonomy to shape the world immanently, from within; it is merely an external instrument for the reproduction of material inequalities (Alexander 1995, pp 158–164; 2003, pp 18–19).

Alexander’s criticism of Bourdieu’s cultural sociology is driven not merely by theoretical concerns in sociology but also by a political interest—namely, the defense of the “liberal democratic project.” The concept of democracy, he argues, necessarily rests on the conception of a public realm or civil society, an arena of discourse based on common values independent from the demands of state and economy, both of which are interest-driven, instrumental spheres. Without such an independent, shared culture that controls power and money, no conception of democracy is possible. Because Bourdieu denies independence to the cultural sphere by seeing it as influenced by the economy, he does not recognize the uniqueness of liberal capitalist societies. Alexander seems especially exercised over the fact that Bourdieu refuses to dutifully choose sides in the Cold War and put his sociology at the service of Western capitalist democracies. He conceptualizes state communism as merely a variation on the structures of domination of the West, a form in which political capital predominates over economic capital. Such an attempt to “negate bourgeois society in its democratic form” by lumping it together with state communism is, Alexander proclaims, outmoded due to the triumph of the former. Bourdieu’s theory persists only due to the ignorance of him and his followers, who do not “seem to understand what a multidimensional social theory actually requires” (Alexander 1995, p 193).

Finally, Alexander charges that Bourdieu cannot reflexively account for his own critical sociology within his reductionist theory of culture. If all knowledge is merely a reflection of class-conditioned habitus that in the long run reproduce the class structure, how does his sociological knowledge avoid this determination in order to grasp and expose it? How does Bourdieu’s theory transcend the class interests that it postulates? Alexander holds that the only plausible explanation Bourdieu gives for the validity of his insights is “the thoroughly conventional claim...[of] scientific objectivity rooted in disciplinary autonomy” (Alexander 1995, p 182). More specifically, Bourdieu claims that because the scientific field has been differentiated from the economy and possesses its own independent resources and rules, it

is unaffected by class interests. But he applies this disciplinary objectivity selectively, claiming it for himself but denying it to other academics and sociologists, whom he accuses of allowing their class-conditioned habitus to influence their knowledge and determine self-interested strategies for scholastic distinction. Alexander argues that a critical distance from existing social structures cannot be found within those structures themselves, of which scientific disciplines are parts, but outside of them, in a socially produced self that “is informed by a cultural tradition that has made distanciation, dissatisfaction, and the search for justice some of its central themes” (Alexander 1995, p 186). In other words, criticism must be grounded in a cultural tradition independent of the economy, with values similar to those of liberal Western societies.

The strengths of Bourdieu’s weak program: A defense against Alexander

Jeffrey Alexander mounts a formidable attack on the cultural theory of one of the most renowned sociologists of the second half of the twentieth century. Some of his blows are fair and on-target, landing on widely recognized vulnerabilities in Bourdieu’s theoretical corpus. In the next section I acknowledge these weak spots and offer modifications that I believe address these legitimate criticisms. But some of Alexander’s punches are clearly low blows, unfair criticisms that derive their force from distortions and deletions of Bourdieu’s vast body of published work. I turn to these illegitimate strikes first, in an attempt to show that Bourdieu’s weak program is actually much stronger than it is portrayed by Alexander, whose own strong program pales in comparison.

Perhaps the biggest distortion is Alexander’s contention that Bourdieu conceives the cultural realm as an immediate reflection of economic determinants, without the least bit of autonomy. In reality, Bourdieu emphasizes time and time again that the influence of class position on cultural practices is not direct but mediated by not one but two crucial variables, habitus and field. Alexander can continue to insist on Bourdieu’s unmediated determination of culture by class interests only by dismissing the independent effect of these variables, arguing that they merely transmit the determining power of class interests into the cultural realm and have no ability to modify or control them (Alexander 2003, p 18). Below I examine the concepts of habitus and field to reveal that Bourdieu uses them specifically to introduce contingency into action. But first I want to point out, on a more fundamental and functional level, that Bourdieu’s mechanism of class reproduction absolutely *requires* for its successful operation the relative autonomy of culture that Alexander denies it possesses.

Bourdieu’s basic argument is that culture legitimates class by presenting a *misrecognition* of its privileges. The greater resources – or capital, in Bourdieu’s words – possessed by the dominant class are translated through habitus into individual cultural practices that are defined as superior. Thus, the appearance is created that members of this class have what they have (capital) because of who they are (culturally superior individuals), when in fact they are who they are because of what they have (Bourdieu 1990b, pp 139–141). This misrecognition or illusion would not be possible if, as Alexander contends, culture were an *immediate* reflection of class position, that is, a direct consequence, here and now, without intervening space or substance. Indeed, the word “reflection” itself denotes an image, the visibility of something on or in something else. If cultural practices were direct reflections of class position, the latter would be obvious and visible in the former, causing its recognition, not misrecognition. Such a recognition would directly confront its beholders with the reality of class privilege and hence, in Bourdieu’s theory at least, prevent its legitimation and reproduction. A direct, unmediated relation between class and culture would mean that

a class's economic capital, or income, determines its consumption habits—for example, a bourgeois drives a Mercedes simply because he can afford its higher price, and a worker drives a Ford simply because she cannot. But Bourdieu specifically denies such a determination of taste by income, writing that “income tends to be credited with a causal efficacy which it in fact only exerts in association with the habitus it has produced. The specific efficacy of the habitus is clearly seen when the same income is associated with very different patterns of consumption, which can only be understood by assuming that other selection principles have intervened” (Bourdieu 1984, pp 375–376). The variable tastes determined by habitus provide the obscuring screen behind which the reality of class privilege reproduces itself.

The contention that Bourdieu postulates an unmediated determination of culture by material resources also betrays a misunderstanding of how he defines class. Alexander speaks as if the class structure of a society is always and necessarily a structure of objective, material resources, which in Bourdieu determines the subjectivity of culture from the outside. Bourdieu *does* conceive the social field of classes as the realm of instrumentalities, in which people struggle practically to accumulate and reproduce resources. But these resources are not merely material but cultural as well. In *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1984, pp 114–132) and other works (Bourdieu 1998b, pp 1–14), Bourdieu clearly defines classes as constituted by the intersection of two different resource distributions—one of economic capital, and the other of *cultural capital*. He argues that the primary differences between classes derive from the overall volume of both capitals combined, while the secondary differences that define class fractions are determined by the relative proportions of the different kinds of capital. Cultural assets, defined largely as the honorability of one's symbolic tastes and practices, are an integral constituent of class position, thus contradicting Alexander's contention that in Bourdieu's theory culture is determined by a class structure outside and apart from it. Since class is itself constituted by culture, its influence on cultural practices must be at least partially internal—that is, culture determining culture. Although this deflects Alexander's criticism of economic determinism, it creates another problem for Bourdieu's theory. If class is partially defined by cultural assets, then the determination of culture by class is tautological. The explanation degenerates into the simple idea of the transmission of culture from one generation to the next in the home and school, and thus bypasses what are supposed to be the intervening variables of habitus and field. This is an important issue, but because it is not central to the problems addressed here, I will leave it aside.

It is one thing to say that Bourdieu *needs* variables that intervene between class and culture to make his theory of class reproduction function properly. It is something altogether different to say that he adequately provides for this need. Alexander holds forcefully that he does not, arguing that the concepts of habitus and field are not autonomous but merely mechanical reflections of the class structure of a society. I contend, however, that he is wrong. The way Bourdieu employs these concepts both conceptually and empirically clearly reveals that they are relatively autonomous from class structure and create the necessary contingency and indeterminacy of individual action. I examine habitus first, the concept proximate to class in Bourdieu's causal scheme.

Alexander argues that habitus “are immediate reflections of the hierarchical structures of material life,” which consequently leads Bourdieu to “focus on real political-economic causes rather than on their ‘ephemeral,’ merely ‘subjective’ representations” (Alexander 1995, p 138). Anyone who has read Bourdieu, however, knows that this is simply not true. In major works such as *Distinction* he spends very little time or effort analyzing economic structures. The empirical data presented is dedicated to detailing “ephemeral” cultural

practices – food, literature, art, museum-going – and revealing their relation to the generative principles of the different class habitus. Alexander argues, though, that these cultural practices cannot be autonomous because they are not subjective, rule-determined behaviors but objective, interest-determined behaviors—that is, strategic actions rationally calculated to maximize important resources (Alexander 1995, pp 149–152). For example, he argues that Bourdieu’s art consumers are motivated by the search not for beauty but for distinction or status advantage over others (p 174). But again, this is a distortion of his theory of consumption. Bourdieu has stated time and time again that his actors do not consciously seek distinction in their consumption, which distinguishes his theory from Veblen’s concept of conspicuous consumption. As he states (Bourdieu 1988–1989, p 783): “The sort of conscious search for distinction described by Thorstein Veblen and postulated by the philosophy of action or rational choice theory is in fact the very negation of distinguished conduct as I have analyzed it.” Because the habitus is a form of knowledge that does not require consciousness, it “produces strategies which are objectively adjusted to the objective situation even though these strategies are neither the outcome of the explicit aiming at consciously pursued goals, nor the result of some mechanical determination by external causes. Social action is guided by a practical sense, what we may call a ‘feel for the game’” (p 782). Consequently, Bourdieu states that art consumers – at least those in the dominant class – do indeed seek beauty. Their abundant capital insulates them from the necessities of life and instills in them a habitus characterized by the “aesthetic disposition,” a propensity to privilege the form of things over their function. Their consumption thus distinguishes them, without any intention, from the working class, whose sparse capital instills a taste for necessity, a propensity to focus on the bare-bones functionality of goods (Bourdieu 1984, pp 29–41). Members of the dominant class thus need only follow their inner, subjective disposition for beauty to mark out their differences from workers and attain an aura of superiority that legitimates their capital.

In defense of Alexander, one might object that regardless of whether the behavior motivated by habitus is conscious or unconscious, it is still a reflection of the immediate distribution of class resources and thus has no autonomy to contradict or criticize this structure. Yet habitus does have one attribute that makes it sufficiently autonomous from class structure to contradict it—durability. Bourdieu defines habitus as systems of durable, transposable dispositions that are the products of particular class conditions of existence, that is, material conditions associated with particular class positions and their resources (Bourdieu 1990b, p 53). Like psychoanalysis, he assigns particular weight in the acquisition of habitus to early childhood experiences, which condition a preconscious, corporeal sense that “tends to ensure its own constancy and its defense against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information” (pp 60–61). Thus, this durable, largely unchangeable habitus that the individual carries within her for life is the present product of the social structures of the past; it is embodied history, “the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. This autonomy is that of the past, enacted and acting, which, functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so ensures the permanence in change that makes the individual agent a world within the world” (p 56).

This durability of the habitus contradicts Alexander’s contention that it is an “immediate” reflection of social structures. The word “immediate” carries the temporal denotation of right now, with no lapses of time. The possibility of time lapses and lags that is built into the concept creates the possibility – indeed, the likelihood – that the durable

habitus will clash with changed social structures. Bourdieu calls such temporal lags “hysteresis”, and argues that dispositions out of phase with present structures because they are the product of past structures “can be the source of misadaptation as well as adaptation, revolt as well as resignation” (p 62). This concept of hysteresis is employed in *Homo Academicus*, Bourdieu’s book on the French academic field, to explain the student revolt of 1968. Here he argues that the overproduction of students and teachers in French universities in the 1960s caused a devaluation of their credentials on the job market. The declining objective opportunities afforded by educational credentials clashed with the high subjective expectations of career success internalized by young students and teachers during their childhoods in the 1940s and 1950s to create their sense of being deprived of what was rightfully theirs (Bourdieu 1988, pp 152–193). Alexander is familiar with this example of habitus contributing to revolt against structures, but he dismisses it as completely devoid of any subjective causes. He argues that “the subjective element [in this analysis] falls away” because “Bourdieu can insist, nonetheless, that the source of such tension can be nothing other than the objective economic situation” (Alexander 1995, pp 148, 149). But this is a serious and reductionist misunderstanding of his theory. This crisis cannot be understood by focusing single-mindedly on either the subjective habitus or the objective structures, but only by the combination and confrontation between the two, by the “ongoing dialectic” between the subjective hopes of the habitus and the objective chances of the social structure or field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p 130). I now turn to the latter concept to argue further for the relative autonomy of culture in Bourdieu’s theory.

For Bourdieu, indeterminacy or autonomy is guaranteed not only by the mediation of the durable habitus between the objective structures and individual action but also by the mediation of the field between habitus and action, thus creating a double mediation. How an individual with a habitus conditioned by a particular class position acts depends upon the structure of the particular field of contest in which she is acting. Bourdieu conceives of society not as one big unified struggle for a few common resources, but as a conglomeration of relatively independent struggles for a variety of resources. He calls these relatively independent contests “fields,” and postulates that each has its own set of rules. Modern societies possess, among others, fields of economics, religion, science, academics, power, bureaucracy, and art. And many of these fields are composed of distinct subfields. Individuals’ class-conditioned habitus determine to a large extent where they will be positioned upon entering the field, for these durable predispositions condition how actors perceive the field’s opportunities. But once in the game, the established structure shapes the actions of all within it, regardless of their background. Thus, Bourdieu writes that “it is only *in relation to* certain structures that habitus produces given discourses or practices...We must think of it [habitus] as a sort of spring that needs a trigger and, depending upon the stimuli and structure of the field, the very same habitus will generate different, even opposite, outcomes” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p 135).

Bourdieu argues that the actions flowing from habitus are shaped not merely by the field’s general structure but also by the specific strategies that actors pursue at a given time. As in a game of chess, an actor selects from among all possible actions those specific actions that further her interests, and her opponents must constantly adjust their actions to these actions, and vice versa, introducing even more indeterminacy. Thus, for example, in the field of cultural consumption members of the dominant class have a habitus that inclines them to consume products that are formalized and aestheticized, unconsciously revealing the distance from necessity afforded by their superior economic capital. But *which* formalized products they choose depends upon the consumption of the petty bourgeoisie, which seeks to gain distinction in the consumption game by imitating the products

consumed by the dominant class. This imitation, however, renders these products commonplace, thus undermining their distinction. To counter these moves and maintain their distinction, the dominant must constantly seek out new consumer products that are rare and unsullied by widespread circulation (Bourdieu 1984, pp 251–252; Gartman 2002). Thus, one cannot simply predict actions from the rules and structure of the field but must also take into account the actual moves and strategies of the competitors.

Bourdieu considers the structure of the field and its ongoing dynamics so important as determinants of action that he argues that these may actually change the habitus of an actor. “The specific logic of a field is established in the incorporated state in the form of a specific habitus, or, more precisely, a sense of the game,” which is a modification of the original habitus acquired in childhood (Bourdieu 2000, p 11; also pp 99–100). By thus postulating the flexibility of the habitus, Bourdieu allows for the possibility of individual social mobility (including his own), countering Alexander’s charge (Alexander 1995, pp 170–171) of a rigid structural determination of status attainment in his theory. An actor’s childhood habitus may be modified to adapt to the rules of specific fields. But by providing for greater flexibility of the habitus, Bourdieu actually undermines his argument that action can contradict structure through hysteresis. Because he now conceives habitus as determined not merely by the past structure of socialization but also by the present structure of the field, Bourdieu deprives the concept of its ability to determine behavior contradictory of social structures. It adjusts, although slowly, to whatever structure is present in a field, a conception that seems to validate Alexander’s assertion that it cannot be the location of an autonomy of action. I address this problem with the concept of habitus again below.

The independent influence of the field is particularly important in cultural actions, for Bourdieu argues that in modern societies the cultural field achieves substantial but not absolute autonomy from the economic field. In fact, in the high-art or restricted subfield of cultural production, the rules are the inversion of those that apply in the economy. While in the latter the objective is to maximize economic profits, in the high arts making money is absolutely proscribed, and the artist who gets rich is denigrated. In other words, in art the winners lose. According to the rules of the cultural field, the objective of the contest is the accumulation of symbolic profits, that is, recognition by other producers (artists, writers, etc.). This rule shapes the behavior of all who enter the game and creates a dynamic of innovation and consecration peculiar to the cultural field. In culture, innovation is emphasized, the creation of something different to attract the recognition of others in the field. Those who gain recognition from the institutions of the field (museums, galleries, schools) become “consecrated” and rise to the top. But the symbolic profits of consecration also bring these artists the economic profits of the marketplace, for members of the dominant class purchase their work as testimony to their cultural capital. Because accumulation of economic profits violates the rules of the field, the unconsecrated (unsuccessful) artists denounce the more fortunate as “sell-outs” and pioneer new forms of “pure art,” some of which are subsequently consecrated, starting a new round of the cycle. Bourdieu argues that this cycle is accelerated when a mass of new entrants pours into the field. To attain recognition and stand out in the crowded field, the new competitors cannot merely imitate the work of the consecrated but must pioneer new aesthetic forms. The entry of producers from a variety of social positions ensures such novelty, for their differing habitus incline them to different forms (Bourdieu 1996, pp 121–128, 146–161, 253–256; Gartman 2002).

Contrary to Alexander’s assertions, then, Bourdieu recognizes that the cultural field can be and, in modern societies, generally is autonomous from the economy, but only relatively,

for this autonomy still has an economic foundation. In order for individual artists and the field in general to be free of economic determinants, both must have sufficient economic resources to be self-supporting and hence disengaged from the larger economy. At the individual level, this means that if artists are to be unconcerned with sales on the market, they must have independent income to support themselves. At the collective level, this means that if the entire field is to be insulated from the demands of the profit-making economy, it must have a strong internal market; that is, there must be a large demand for art works by artists, museums, critics, and other in the high-art field whose purchases are driven by autonomous artistic standards rather than pecuniary motives. Bourdieu empirically demonstrates the economic conditions under which a cultural field becomes autonomous, and generally reveals the complex interactions between habitus and field, in *The Rules of Art* (Bourdieu 1996), an analysis of French literature in the nineteenth century.

During the Second Empire in France (1852–1871), the changing social field of classes shifted the economic support for literature. Rapid industrialization created a new class of industrialists and financiers that undermined the power and wealth of the aristocracy, which had traditionally supported the arts through a patronage system. At the same time, however, industrialization created a new market for literature among both this bourgeoisie and the popular classes, the latter of which benefited from increased literacy and access to education. These changes created not only more readers but more writers as well, as the educated of all classes who could not find employment in business or civil service crowded into the literary field and expanded its numbers. These newcomers were differentially positioned in the literary field according to their class habitus. Writers from bourgeois backgrounds generally positioned themselves toward the high end of the field, producing the type of watered-down, formal Romanticism that appealed to their class confrères, while those from petty-bourgeois and working-class backgrounds usually selected the lower end of the market, producing the genre of social realism that expressed the politics and practicality of the lower classes. Although their class habitus attracted new writers to different positions in the field, once occupied these positions themselves determined a homologous solidarity with the classes for which they wrote, with, for example, writers dominated in the literary field feeling sympathy with the dominated (working) class in the social field.

During this period, though, a revolution began to disengage literature from direct dependence upon the market formed by these outside classes. This revolution was made by writers from a class between the bourgeois and working-class poles of the field—the class of liberal professionals, who had relatively equal amounts of economic and cultural capital. These sons of knowledge-based, intellectual professionals like doctors and lawyers were inclined by their habitus toward an attitude of impartiality and precision, and were thus alienated from both the politicizing tendencies of social realism and the facile moralizing of bourgeois Romanticism. However, it was not merely these class dispositions but their intersection with the dynamics of the field that produced this new position that pioneered autonomy. In the crowded and highly competitive field, these writers, whose foremost representative was Gustave Flaubert, had to innovate a new genre to attract attention. So, breaking with but mediating between the established literary poles and their class markets, they took the mundane subject matter of the working-class realists and treated it with the high forms of the bourgeois Romantics. The result was an art-for-art's-sake style that sought to strip writing of all social content and be about nothing more than form itself. Initially, the inherited wealth of these sons of professionals provided the economic support that allowed them to pioneer a new art with no immediate market. But ultimately, the expanding ranks of the literary field itself, especially the bohemia of underemployed artists and writers,

provided the most important market for the new style. This intellectual reserve army, imbued with autonomous aesthetic standards by the high-art field to which they aspired, could appreciate and support an art of pure form that did not cater to the immediate tastes and interests of classes in the economic field (Bourdieu 1996, pp 47–112).

In explaining the emergence of autonomy in literature by the habitus of producers and the dynamics of the field, Bourdieu denies that he annihilates the creativity of individual writers like Flaubert. “Such [sociological] analysis seems to abolish the singularity of the ‘creator’ in favor of the relations which made the work intelligible, only better to rediscover it at the end of the task of reconstructing the space in which the author finds himself encompassed and included as a point. To recognize this point...is to be in a position to understand and to feel, by mental identification with a constructed position, the singularity of that position and of the person who occupies it, and the extraordinary effort which, at least in the particular case of Flaubert, was necessary to make it exist” (Bourdieu 1996, xix). So contrary to Alexander, who charges Bourdieu with depriving individual actors of the formal, cultural autonomy that would allow them to be creative, this analysis shows that cultural autonomy is not a pre-given theoretical category but a historical construction produced by creative individual efforts, but efforts made possible by the intersection of external economic resources and internal relations between producers (Bourdieu 1996, pp 193–205).

Bourdieu argues, however, that this hard-won autonomy of the cultural field of high art ultimately binds it back to the field of economic classes through a legitimation function. Even though the newly autonomous works of art no longer immediately reflect the interests of the economic bourgeoisie, members of this class appropriate the consecrated works of the field because their material resources condition a habitus that privileges the form of things over their function. But precisely because such works are concerned with autonomous aesthetic forms and not the pecuniary gains of the economic market, they seem “higher,” disinterested in and above the selfish materiality of everyday life. Consequently, those who consume this autonomous “high” art seem somehow superior, better than the masses who consume culture from producers who are obviously out to make money. Thus, without any conscious aiming or intentionality, the very autonomy of culture ensures that it functions to legitimate and reproduce the inequalities of economic class (Bourdieu 1984).

Thus, contrary to Alexander’s attempt to reduce Bourdieu’s theory to a simplistic economic determinism, it provides for several points of indeterminacy, and hence autonomy, between class and culture. Yet, in the last analysis the two are still tied together in complex relations of mutual influence. To deny this influence, to assert, as Alexander does, the absolute autonomy of ideas and beliefs to determine action free of the material concerns of everyday life is simply a fallacy, but one which Bourdieu can explain within his theory of the relative autonomy of culture. He labels the propensity to see action as determined by cultural constructs like norms and beliefs the “scholastic fallacy,” and attributes this mistake to the structural position of intellectuals and scholars in society. In modern societies, scholastics or academics is another cultural field that achieves autonomy from the economic field. In a process similar to that undergone by the field of literature describe above, the emergence of independent material support – in this case, mainly from the state – detaches education and science from direct dependence on the market, and allows its practitioners to pursue pure knowledge in a manner unconcerned with practical application or money-making. Because of this independent economic foundation, scholars and scientists have the leisure to be disinterested in the practicality or particularities of ideas and become “interested” only in universals, detached, general ideas. In fact, the rules of the

scholastic field imbue its participants with an “interest in disinterestedness” (Bourdieu 1998b, p 112, see also pp 87–88); they win symbolic capital (reputation) and advance in the field only by showing in their work the requisite unconcern for practical application or pecuniary reward.

Bourdieu argues that this privileged realm of scholastics is different from the rest of the social world, in which the vast majority of people must be concerned with the practicalities of material existence. In the latter world of everyday practice, people do not have the luxury of treating cultural objects (ideas, norms, values) as ends in themselves, but must use them as practical means to the end of making a living. Their actions are governed by a “logic,” by regularities that make sense and can be explained. It is not a pure logic, however, but a practical one, a pre-logical logic of practice or a *sens pratique*, the French title of one of Bourdieu’s (1990b) most important books. The problem with academics, especially social scientists, Bourdieu asserts, is that they do not recognize the peculiarity of their privilege to treat ideas as pure forms removed from practical content, and attribute the same propensity to the entire social world. The scholastic or theoretical fallacy is to see the entire world as a “school,” and all the actors in it as motivated, like scholars, by an autonomous set of universal principles that are free of practical context and content. In *The Logic of Practice* (Bourdieu 1990b) Bourdieu uses Lèvi-Strauss’s structuralism as an example of the scholastic fallacy, for it sees all human action as determined by a set of abstract, autonomous rules governed by their own internal relations, as opposed to influenced from without by the practical circumstances of their use. Lèvi-Strauss’s account of kinship, for example, reduces marriage choice to a system of logical rules that really explain nothing, for they ignore the specific contexts that members confront when faced with the practical task of making a “good marriage.” The scholar substitutes her own relation to the object under investigation, a relation of removed contemplation and understanding, for the actor’s own relation of contingent accomplishment of practical necessities. Not only is this a distortion of reality; it is also a motivated distortion that hides the economic foundation of scholarly life—the privileged access to independent resources that allows disinterested contemplation to begin with (Bourdieu 1990b, pp 30–41; 1998b, pp 127–140; 2000, pp 1–48).

Alexander’s “strong” program in cultural sociology epitomizes the scholastic fallacy. His insistence on the absolute autonomy of cultural factors in determining behavior reflects the “intellectualocentrism” of the academic world insulated from the practicalities of the everyday world of practice. Especially from Alexander’s position in the scholastic field – a privileged position in a privileged world – it is all too easy to forget the class resources that allow removal from the world of material practicalities. From this Olympian height, the material ground of not only the intellectual world but the rest of the world as well fades in the distance, and it seems as if everyone possesses the intellectual’s freedom to be concerned only with the discourse of ideas and beliefs, removed from the contaminating economism of which only the vulgar, Marxist and otherwise, speak. Ignoring the material world also facilitates the forgetting of the material inequalities of “liberal capitalism” and makes its defense more palatable. If all society is like a school, then “action” is nothing more than an equal and open discourse on ideas and beliefs, like a graduate seminar in which everyone gets his say and forgets about those whose say is silenced by their lack of the price of tuition and the habitus imbued by the ability to pay it. Even sociologists like Jürgen Habermas (1970), who theorizes the primacy of communicative action in society, realizes that in modern industrial societies the inequalities of instrumental action (economics and politics) distort communication and undermine its natural equality and universality. Not so Alexander, who seems to believe that any recognition of the effect of

class inequality on civic discourse threatens to undermine the legitimacy of the entire project of Western civilization.

This motivated and determined ignorance of any material determinants outside of culture actually leaves Alexander's "strong program" in cultural sociology quite weak in its explanations of empirical events. While he accuses Bourdieu's empirical studies of being "highly simplistic but highly contrived" (Alexander 1995, p 164), in actuality it is his own attempts to apply his theory that smack of simplistic reductionism. Take, for example, his analysis in "The Discourse of American Civil Society," which appears in *The Meanings of Social Life* (Alexander 2003, pp 121–154). Here Alexander and his co-author, Philip Smith, argue in line with the general theory that in democracies like the United States, there is an independent, legally regulated civil society that is distinct from the state and economy and exercises a controlling influence over these institutions. This civil society is defined by a unique set of consensual cultural codes that, like Lèvi Strauss's logical structures, take the form of binary oppositions, such as law versus power, equality versus hierarchy, and inclusive versus exclusive. To demonstrate empirically the existence and causal efficacy of these codes, Alexander and Smith range randomly over 150 years of American political history, picking out debates and scandals and examining the structure of their argumentation. All this is accomplished without the least hint of the underlying instrumental interests at stake in the discourse of, for example, the Bank War of the 1830s, the Teapot Dome scandal, or the Iran-Contra affair. The authors give us political history in which the structure of the language used to carry out conflicts is the main determinate of political behavior, which is tantamount to arguing that the main cause of wars is the weapons used to fight them. Also ignored as irrelevant are the historical contexts of these clashes, which give the forms of political discourse concrete meanings and constrain their use. So, for example, it is not really very cogent or robust to explain political behavior by the rhetorical appeal to "equality" against "hierarchy," since these words have been defined so variously by different interests in different periods of American history. It is difficult to see how a discursive structure so amorphous and vague as to allow the expression of almost any political interests in any historical context can constrain behavior in the way that Alexander demands.

Just how much Alexander's "strong program" of cultural sociology weakens his ability to cogently explain empirical events is revealed by the chapter entitled "Watergate as Democratic Ritual" in *The Meanings of Social Life*. Although he does not mention the fact, this chapter is actually a radically modified version of an article he published in *Sociological Theory* as "Three Models of Culture and Society Relations: Toward an Analysis of Watergate" (Alexander 1984, pp 290–314). Alexander published this version during the period in which he was dedicated to developing a multidimensional theory of society that revealed the complex interactions of cultural and material factors. Thus, he shows here how the material interests of conflicting groups are channeled or "refracted" through a consensual system of values. The common values of refraction in the Watergate crisis were equality and liberty, and the groups that struggled over their meaning were modernizing liberals and traditional conservatives. The former group was composed of middle-class intellectuals, planners, and professionals, whose commitment to modernization and rationalization led them to emphasize universalistic values like equality, inclusion, and secularization. Reacting to this program, conservatives, whom Alexander does not locate socioeconomically, defended traditional notions of individual liberty and the particularisms of family and nation. Alexander argues that Nixon was elected as the leader of a conservative backlash against modernizing liberals, and that the Watergate break-in was initially viewed through the clashing cultural meanings of these conflicting interest groups.

However, after Nixon's reelection, a broad center of opinion emerged to interpret this clash of interest groups as threatening to the foundation of American society. This "center" appealed to a general interpretation of American values, not these groups' particular refractions, to form a consensus on the Watergate events that united the nation. Furthering the growth of this centrist public was the emergence of a more centrist elite among professionals, still dedicated to universalism but shorn of the more extreme elements of the left, which were declining. Finally, this centrist consensus was solidified by the Watergate hearings, a symbolic ritual publically embodying the generalization of values. In these hearings the events were recast as a mythic morality play of good versus evil, based on the general values all Americans shared: the impersonal versus the personal, law versus power, universalism versus particularism.

Of course, one could challenge this reconstruction and interpretation of Watergate events, but the important point is that in this earlier version Alexander attempts to integrate the analysis of cultural values with an account of the interests behind those values and their specific interpretations. In the later version of the Watergate paper published in *Meanings*, however, his "strong program" has censored any such integration. The first 13 pages of the original article, containing the discussion of refraction of conflicting interests through culture, has been eliminated. Now Alexander speaks of Watergate in exclusively cultural terms, with no mention of liberals versus conservatives or modernizers against antimodernization forces. Consequently, the series of steps delivering the nation from crisis to normalcy is now severely truncated, with Alexander focusing almost exclusively on the structure of discourse in the Watergate hearings. The exclusively cultural focus even changes the chronology of this ritual renewal. In the earlier version he concludes that cultural consensus did not emerge until after Nixon's 1972 reelection, while here Alexander claims that 4 months *before* the election a "significant symbolic structuring had occurred"—not a value generalization but a "symbolic generalization." In other words, even though different groups were still fighting over the particular meanings of values, they were fighting with the same cultural codes, like good and evil, pure and impure. This symbolic consensus, Alexander argues, "laid the basis for everything that followed even while it did not produce consensus at more social levels" (Alexander 2003, p 158). Here is the epitome of his reductionism. Now, instead of explaining events by *social* factors like interest groups, institutions, even values, Alexander believes it sufficient to remain at the deepest cognitive level, the a priori structures of discourse and symbolism itself, which lay the basis for everything else. Thus, while Bourdieu reveals all cognitive structures to be grounded in social positions and the unconscious interests attached to them, Alexander reduces all social determinants to cognitive structures, showing social conflicts to be ultimately determined by the symbolic structures of their discourses.

A weakness in Alexander's empirical applications even more serious than this ahistoricism and reductionism is the assumption that American political discourse is based on a *shared* set of codes and symbolic structures, employed equally by all. With this move he seeks to reconstruct on firmer ground the shaky assumption on which the entire edifice of functionalism was founded—value consensus. The unrealistic and empirically refutable assertion that all members of society share the same substantive values was the perennial Achilles heel of Parsons and his followers. By revealing a deeper level of shared cognitive forms beneath the surface disagreements of value contents, Alexander can have his cake and eat it too. He can acknowledge the clash of groups on particular interests while asserting that all are constrained and controlled by the common forms of discourse through which these interests are expressed. Bourdieu has spent most of his career refuting precisely this assumption of common cognitive forms. As he shows empirically in *Distinction* and

elsewhere, different classes have different cognitive structures of evaluation and classification that are unconscious and conditioned by social position. Other empirical work on this topic by Michèle Lamont (1992, 2000), Herbert Gans (1962), and others also validates these differences. So, for example, Alexander assumes that American political discourse is organized around the fundamental opposition between universalism and particularism, with the former positively evaluated by the vast majority of Americans. But Lamont reveals that while universalistic evaluations are strong in the middle and upper-middle classes (Lamont 1992), working-class people generally pride themselves on their particularism, e.g., their devotion to their specific family members, friends, religion, and country (Lamont 2000).

Bourdieu goes so far as to argue in *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1984, pp 397–465) that the very ability to participate in political discourse is itself a trait confined to the dominant class in societies. Political discourse is, by definition, the ability to formulate opinions and pronouncements on abstract, universal issues that are removed from the practical, immediate interests of everyday life. To speak politically is to address the common good, the universal interest or, better put, to express one's particular interests in the language of the universal. But the ability to address this universal interest in a neutral, disinterested language assumes a distance from the practical urgencies of existence that is available only to the class with abundant resources. Political discourse is the peculiar product of the formalizing, abstracting habitus of the dominant class, whose abundant resources remove it from the realm of necessity. The dominated classes have neither the resources nor the habitus, which these resources condition, to participate in the lofty, universal realm of political discourse. They are too busy ensuring their own particular existence in practical action. When they do try to enter the political field, they illegitimately resort to particularistic, moralizing judgments that reflect their practical interests, thus violating the rules of the game. And when a few from the dominated classes do learn the foreign language of politics through experience and explicit study, they are caught in the impossible bind of expressing dominated interests in a form peculiar to the dominant, and are thus condemned to failure before they begin. Interestingly enough, Alexander's own empirical analyses of American political discourse seems to validate Bourdieu's assertion that it is a game dominated by the dominant. The contests he surveys, from the Bank War to Watergate, are struggles and arguments between different fractions of the dominant class. No working-class or poor voices are found in the numerous quotes he reproduces from the *Congressional Record* or from the editorials letters to the *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times*. And this is not because Alexander's sample of opinions is biased. It is because the only voices heard in the halls of Congress and in the pages of major newspapers are those who know how to speak the political language, which is available only to the privileged. So Alexander's cognitive consensus is an illusory one—it exists only because those who disagree with elite opinions because they are deprived of resources cannot express their disagreement because they are also deprived of the legitimate political categories with which to debate their own deprivation.

The weaknesses of Bourdieu's weak program: Alexander's legitimate criticisms

Not all of Jeffrey Alexander's punches against Bourdieu's corpus of cultural sociology are low blows, however. Some are fair jabs that land on important weaknesses and inconsistencies in his theorizing. If Bourdieu's theory of the complex interrelation of material and cultural factors is to be defended against Alexander's insistence on the

absolute autonomy of culture, then these vulnerabilities must be addressed and ultimately strengthened. I believe this task to be eminently possible, and Bourdieu himself points the way. He only rarely addresses critics directly, and is loathe to admit any substantial changes in his thinking over the course of its long development. Yet, a close reading reveals important conceptual shifts in his later works that seem to be related to Bourdieu's growing political engagement. These shifts pertain to the common source of all of Alexander's legitimate criticisms—namely, the grounding of an autonomous knowledge that provides critical leverage against the existing society. If it is true, as Bourdieu asserts, that the products of even autonomous cultural fields are based on class privilege and ultimately appropriated by the dominant to legitimate and reproduce their power, then how can society be criticized and changed? And how is it possible to create, as Bourdieu claims to be, an objective, universal knowledge of society that is free of the taint of subjective, particular interests?

One legitimate criticism that follows from Bourdieu's inability to ground autonomous, critical knowledge is that his theory of social change is weak, if not nonexistent. Alexander alleges that Bourdieu's failure to theorize ideas that transcend the particular class interests of a society leaves him unable to account for structural changes, a charge shared by even Bourdieu's most sympathetic commentators (Collins 1981; Gartman 1991). I have argued that the concept of habitus is not as rigidly determining of behavior as Alexander claims, and that there is indeterminacy between the habitus ingrained by social structures and the actions that they structure, thus providing for variation. However, Alexander is right to assert that this variation is not great, and that in the end these contingent actions reproduce the structure of social relations that produced them. Thus, Bourdieu states in *The Logic of Practice* that although actors in a field struggle over the distribution of resources within it, they do not usually challenge the *rules* of distribution but seek merely to change individual positions. Hence, such struggles "can only ever perform partial revolutions," not revolutions of the entire structure (Bourdieu 1990b, p 138). So even though Bourdieu postulates that practical resistance to power is almost inevitable, he adamantly holds that this does not undermine the acceptance of this power that is instilled by the coincidence of social structures and mental structures (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p 74).

One reason that social struggles in Bourdieu seem only to reproduce, not undermine, the broader social structure is that he sees them confined almost entirely to the "field of power," that is, the dominant class. In particular, there is usually a struggle between the economic and intellectual fractions of the bourgeoisie over which kind of capital, economic or cultural, should determine the distribution of wealth and power. However, since both fractions share a common interest in the domination of other classes and are also locked together in mutually beneficial circuits of legitimation – the cultural capital produced by intellectuals is appropriated by businessmen and executives to legitimate their economic capital – it is not surprising that their conflict does not go so far as to challenge the system of domination in general. Bourdieu conceives of the nondominant classes as almost completely passive, especially the working class. The latter has so thoroughly internalized its own domination in a fatal taste for necessity that it lacks the very language of political discourse. Workers may sometimes be mobilized by fractions of the dominant class as allies in their intraclass struggle, but they seem incapable of independently expressing their own interest in a fundamental transformation of the system of domination (Bourdieu 2000, p 103).

Bourdieu's only attempt to account for social change within his theory is based on the concept of hysteresis, which is inherently incapable of addressing fundamental, structural change. I agree with Alexander that this concept is problematic, although not merely for the reasons he gives. He fails to criticize the fundamentally functionalist logic underlying

hysteresis, which has much in common with functionalist theories of change like Neil Smelser's (1959, 1962). Both are based on equilibrium models of society and see change as a temporary "break in equilibrium," as Bourdieu (1988, p 156) puts it. The general model holds that the objective opportunities for success in a field ingrain compatible expectations in the habitus of individual participants. But because these expectations are relatively durable, they lag behind the changes in a field's resource structure. In the only case of hysteresis developed by Bourdieu, the French student revolt of the 1960s, he attributes the change in the resource structure of the academic field to a demographic shift—an influx of new entrants competing in the field drove salaries and job opportunities down below their previously formed expectations. But if resistance to a power structure is merely a matter of maladjustment between opportunities and expectations, it is necessarily short-lived, for as soon as the new structure of opportunity ingrains into participants' habitus new and lower expectations, the grounds for discontent disappear, as Bourdieu argues in the student revolt case (Bourdieu 1988, pp 166–167). And since he postulates that childhood habitus may be changed by the current structure of the field in which individuals participate, such adaptation need not wait for the next generation. Thus, as Alexander claims, it is difficult within this theory to explain how ideas critical of the entire social structure arise. In the long run, reproduction of what exists seems assured.

This is not to say, of course, that Bourdieu *intends* his theory to be pessimistic and to forestall social change. On the contrary, he sees his work as exposing the mechanisms of class reproduction in order to break the spell of misrecognition. If people understand the ways in which cultural capital serves as a disinterested cover for the reproduction of economic interests, then the system of inequalities will stand exposed to the informed and concerted actions of the dominated. Indeed, in the 1990s Bourdieu personally put his theory to political use as a leader of the European resistance to the neoliberal project of capitalist globalization. But the existence of Bourdieu's entire critical project raises the crucial question of self-accounting or reflexivity, as Alexander points out. If academic or scholastic knowledge is, as Bourdieu holds, necessarily based on the privileged removal from practical necessities, which blinds it to the practical reason that guides the actions of most people, how does Bourdieu's own academic theorizing escape this fallacy? How has he avoided the class determinations that distort the productions of other theorists? Further, to the extent that he is engaged not merely in scientific research on but also a critique of existing social structures, on what basis beyond self-interest does he ground this critique? (Alexander 1995, pp 179–186). Bourdieu is hard-pressed to claim objectivity for any knowledge, including his own, since he so prominently declares that all culture is arbitrary and particular, and that there exists no neutral basis or viewpoint for declaring one type superior to others (Bourdieu 1984, pp 32, 199). This argument is especially strong in *Distinction*, where he refutes the Kantian assertion that there exists a pure, "genuinely human" aesthetic, superior to all others because removed from the realm of necessity and its animal pleasures. Bourdieu argues that Kant's pure aesthetic is an "illusion of universality" that masks the particular aesthetic of the dominant class, whose "attempted imposition of a definition of the genuinely human is nothing less than the *monopoly of humanity*" (Bourdieu 1984, pp 493, 491). Even more militantly relativistic is the earlier analysis of education in *Reproduction*, in which he declares that the knowledge imposed on pupils in school is a "cultural arbitrary" that cannot be deduced from any universal principle. Its imposition is merely an act of power, a "symbolic violence" that ultimately reproduces the subordination of the lower classes because, although they have no chance of really acquiring this knowledge, they are forced to recognize the superiority of it and its possessors (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, pp 8–10).

Despite Bourdieu's assertion that all knowledge is interested, he argues that scientific objectivity is possible and he claims such a status for his work. What makes objectivity attainable even in the face of ubiquitous self-interest is the existence of fields that instill an interest in disinterestedness. In such fields actors win rewards only by actions that reveal an unconcern for achieving money and power outside the field. The family is one such field in nearly every society, for here one wins recognition and praise by putting the interests of one's kin ahead of self-interest. In modern societies, science is also an autonomous field that inverts the law of economic interest operating in the rest of society. Once the field has secured, usually from the state and universities, a sufficient amount of resources to support practitioners outside the economically interested world of business and industry, it is able to establish its own form of reward, symbolic capital (recognition), and autonomous rules for distributing it. Then all those who would win this reward must sublimate their self-interested actions into scientific expression—that is, they must best opponents by producing better science, as defined by the rules (Bourdieu 1998b, pp 85–88, 109–112; 2000, pp 109–114; 2004, *passim*). Among the sciences, sociology has a special role to play in securing the autonomy of all intellectual fields that would be free of external determination, for it brings to consciousness the social processes by which fields emerge and operate. When sociologists discover the ways in which habitus conditioned by classes outside autonomous fields determine perceptions and preferences, then scientists and intellectuals can consciously neutralize their effects and reinforce the autonomous rules of the field. “That means that agents become something like ‘subjects’ only to the extent that they consciously master the relation they entertain with their dispositions. They can deliberately let them ‘act’ or they can on the contrary inhibit them by virtue of consciousness” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p 137).

As Alexander notes (Alexander 1995, pp 182–186), however, it is questionable whether scientists can thus lift themselves by the bootstraps of their reflexive knowledge out of the class determinations that Bourdieu postulates. But even if they could, there is a more substantial barrier to objectivity within his own theory that Bourdieu does not address—the use of the products of cultural fields by the economic fraction of the bourgeoisie to legitimate its class power. This fraction of the dominant class is directly involved in fields where self-interest is blatantly and ubiquitously sought. Consequently, they can appear to others as selflessly superior, and not as the selfish exploiters that they really are, only by appropriating autonomous works of art and culture, which are produced without the taint of direct monetary interest. By “throwing away” their money on art, cultural activities, and refinements that have no immediate pay-off, these people appear selfless, above the crass struggle for advantage. So, in fact, the more the cultural fields are autonomous and invert the economic logic of the rest of society, the more the dominant fraction of the dominant class benefits from appropriating their goods (Bourdieu 2000, pp 104–105). For example, the more scientists in universities and government are free from manipulation by politicians, the better able are politicians to use their research convincingly to justify their interested policies. For example, political defenders of the oil industry can better legitimate their economic interests by citing the research of reputable, independent scientists questioning global warming than by relying on the research of scientists directly employed by oil companies.

Having recognized this use of autonomous culture to legitimate power, however, Bourdieu then states that “it can also happen that artists or writers are, directly or indirectly, at the origin of large-scale symbolic revolutions...capable of shaking the deepest structures of the social order...(2000, p 105). He seems to believe deeply in this ability of cultural producers to create genuinely critical work that cannot be appropriated by those in power to

legitimate their particular interests, and for this reason has made the defense of intellectual autonomy the centerpiece of much of his political activism (see, e.g., Bourdieu 1996, pp 337–348; Bourdieu and Haacke 1995). But Bourdieu seems unable to specify the social conditions under which autonomous fields produce critical as opposed to legitimating culture. He is equally hard-pressed to establish the grounds for the objectivity of critical culture, a way to argue that it is not merely a knowledge for intellectuals that promotes their particular interests as part of the dominant class but also a universal knowledge that is accessible and beneficial to all humanity.

As a consequence of these problems, Bourdieu cannot reflexively account for himself and his own critical theory, as Alexander has charged (Alexander 1995, pp 185–186). That is, he cannot give a creditable sociological account of how it is that he, coming from a particular background and standing in a particular position in the intellectual field, has been able, unlike most other intellectuals, to penetrate the misrecognitions of class reproduction and offer an objective theory that exposes the true workings of society. Biographical accounts tell us that Bourdieu comes from a lower-class background, the son of a peasant-turned-postal-worker in Deguin, a small town in Southwestern France (Swartz 1997, p 16). How is it, then, that a child with a lower-class and provincial habitus was able to reach the pinnacle of the French academic field, given that his own theory postulates that the practical dispositions imbued by such backgrounds disadvantage their holders in scholastic fields, which privilege theory over practicality, form over function? Bourdieu has generally refused to engage in such *personal* reflexivity, preferring instead to focus on reflexive accounts of the origins and dynamics of entire fields (e.g., Bourdieu 2000, pp 33–42). But his own theory postulates that the initial placement of actors in a field, or their exclusion from it entirely, is determined by the childhood habitus derived from their class backgrounds. Until the posthumous publication of a course of lectures on science (Bourdieu 2004), he refused to perform on himself the sort of class analysis to which he routinely subjects the academics, artists, writers, and others he studies. And when Bourdieu does vaguely refer to his own “social trajectory,” his remarks often contradict his theory. For example, after remarking on his “youth in a tiny and remote village of Southwestern France,” he states that “I could meet the demands of schooling only by renouncing many of my primary experiences and acquisitions...” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p 204). But the dispositions of habitus are supposed to be unconscious, and thus unavailable for any sort of willful, rational “renunciation.” So ultimately Bourdieu cannot account for his own social trajectory without invoking the type of conscious choice that his theory denies is possible.

Self-revisions of Bourdieu’s weak theory

To extricate himself from this series of dilemmas, Bourdieu would first have to renounce the arbitrariness of culture—that is, he would have to show that there are objective, universal grounds for privileging some knowledge and practices over others. Then, he would have to explain how some social positions have greater access to this universal knowledge than others. A close examination of his later works reveals that this is exactly what Bourdieu does, self-consciously. Beginning in the late 1980s, there emerges a clear shift in his conceptualization of culture that seems to be associated with his escalating activism. It is as if his intervention in European struggles against American-style neoliberalism and welfare retrenchment forces Bourdieu to intellectually ground his political decisions in some universal beyond the clash of particular interests. This shift emerges in *Practical Reason* (Bourdieu 1998b), a collection of essays written between 1988

and 1994. In these he begins to dismantle his concept of the “cultural arbitrary” and argue for a universal principle of judgment that transcends class position. Thus, radically reversing his argument in *Distinction* that Kant’s formal aesthetic is an illusory universal peculiar to the upper class, Bourdieu writes that “I am ready to concede that Kant’s aesthetics is true,” and that his notion of the beautiful as pure pleasure is a “(theoretical) universal possibility” of which all humanity is capable (Bourdieu 1998b, p 135). But even though all have the capacity to grasp the beautiful, some are “deprived of the adequate categories of aesthetic perception and appreciation” by the unequal distribution of the economic resources that are the necessary condition for this capacity (Bourdieu 1998b, p 135). The truly human aesthetic of pure pleasure, removed from any practical necessity of securing a livelihood, is available only to those with sufficient resources to be able to forget about practicalities.

At the same time, Bourdieu explicitly embraces the necessary corollary of his concession of superiority to the aesthetic of pure pleasure characteristic of the upper class—the judgment of the working class’s practical aesthetic as inferior. In *Distinction* there are numerous passages in which he goes beyond scientific neutrality to ridicule upper-class culture from the down-to-earth, practical perspective of the working class. So, for example, at one point he argues that the functional aesthetic of working people inclines them toward honesty, to do what they do without kidding themselves, while the upper-class formal aesthetic is “a sort of essential hypocrisy” that “masks the interest in function by the primacy given to form, so that what people do, they do as if they were not doing it” (Bourdieu 1984, p 200). But beginning in *Practical Reason* (Bourdieu 1998b, p 137), Bourdieu explicitly criticizes this preference for working-class culture as radical chic, ressentiment, and class racism, and admits that he has been guilty of these errors. Although such assertions seem to praise the masses, Bourdieu states, they really serve to enforce their domination by transforming “a sociologically mutilated being...into a model of human excellence” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p 212).

So this ultimately very comfortable way of respecting the ‘people,’ which, under the guise of exalting the working class, helps to enclose it in what it is by converting privation into a choice or an elective accomplishment, provides all the profits of a show of subversive, paradoxical generosity, while leaving things as they are, with one side in possession of its truly cultivated culture (or language), which is capable of absorbing its own distinguished subversion, and the other with its culture or language devoid of any social value and subject to abrupt devaluations...which are fictitiously rehabilitated by a simple operation of theoretical false accounting (Bourdieu 2000, p 76).

In other words, simplistically validating working-class culture as equal to or better than the formal, high culture of the upper class serves to enforce class inequality by accepting or obscuring the maldistribution of economic and cultural capital that gives rise to classes and their cultural differences to begin with. Or, as another critical sociologist, Theodor Adorno (1974, p 28), puts the point more succinctly, “glorification of the splendid underdogs is nothing other than glorification of the splendid system that makes them so.” Thus, it prevents the formation of what Bourdieu (2000, p 80) calls a true cultural *Realpolitik*, which would fight to provide everyone with the resources necessary to realize the universal potential present in all.

This brings us to a more fundamental question about the high culture that Bourdieu now praises. What makes it universal? Which of its traits tap the “anthropological possibilities” inherent in humanity? Bourdieu mentions two such traits—its disinterested privileging of

the group over the individual, and its autonomous creation. I turn first to the second of these, which he develops less extensively. Bourdieu asks himself suggestively in *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p 87): “Is there not something universal about culture? Yes, asceticism. Everywhere culture is constructed against nature, that is, through effort, exercise, suffering; all human societies put culture above nature...It is in this sense that we can say that ‘high’ art is more universal.” Authentic culture is the product of effort and labor, “the endless series of refusals and transcendences” through which humans lift themselves above the heteronomy of nature (p 87). Culture is thus the realm of autonomous, self-conscious efforts, chosen by humans for *their* purposes, not those forced on them by material necessities. It is the useless effort humans impose on themselves through the self-made rules of their games. Consequently, any cultural practices or productions that are forced on people by material function, the economic necessities of earning a living, are not really culture, for they are not freely chosen. It is because working-class culture is focused precisely on such practical functions that Bourdieu now describes it as mutilated, devoid of any social value, and characterizes its obverse, high culture removed from necessity, as more universal. The ultimate pay-off of this truly human high culture is not, Bourdieu informs us, anything practical such as money or power, but the pleasure of free play itself. Thus, quoting and paraphrasing Mallarmé’s defense of literature, despite a recognition of the purely fictive nature of its transcendent referent, he writes: “It is in the name of literary pleasure, this ‘ideal joy,’ sublime product of sublimation, that one is *entitled* to save the game of letters, and even, as we shall see, the literary game itself” (Bourdieu 1996, p 275). This grounding of culture in the inherent human capacity for conscious, autonomous activity, in and for itself, sounds remarkably like Marx’s early analysis of labor in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (Marx 1975) and its development by members of the Frankfurt School, especially Theodor Adorno (1984) and Herbert Marcuse (1972, 1978). And, if pressed for the foundation or location of this human capacity for autonomy, one could confidently point to the large cerebral cortex that developed in the evolution of homo sapiens, thus disengaging the species’ behavior from physical determination by inherited genes and their natural selection and allowing learning from experience.

The second characteristic of high or formal culture that renders it universal, and the one that Bourdieu develops more extensively, is its disinterested orientation, its selfless dedication to the group as opposed to self-interest. He argues in *Practical Reason* (Bourdieu 1998b, p 90) that the disinterested cultural practices of the dominant class, which bear no taint of the practicality of working-class culture, “can only fulfill their symbolic function of legitimation precisely because they benefit in principle from universal recognition—people cannot openly deny them without denying their own humanity.” What people universally recognize in these practices is the imperative of the universal, that is, the demand that the interests of the group take precedent over individual interests. “There is nothing that groups recognize and reward more unconditionally and demand more imperatively than the unconditional manifestation of respect for the group as a group (which is affirmed, in particular, in seemingly quite anodyne rituals of ‘civic religion’), and they give social recognition even to the recognition (even if feigned and hypocritical) of the rule that is implied in strategies of universalization” (Bourdieu 2000, p 125). Because they have no instincts ensuring survival built into their genes, humans are social animals, relying upon the group to teach such behavior and to nurture and protect the young during this socialization. Since the very survival of the individual and the species thus depends on the group, humans universally recognize and reward actions that negate the subjective and personal in favor of the objective and transpersonal, that deny egoism and particular interest

in favor of generosity and disinterestedness. This also implies a recognition of ethical universality, the ideal that society's rules and norms apply equally to all, regardless of resources or position. So despite Alexander's arguments to the contrary, Bourdieu now recognizes the universality of culture, the existence of general norms and ideas applied to all people and situations. But unlike Alexander, who constructs the universal as a realm apart from and in opposition to self-interested behavior, he reveals the imbrication of the two, arguing that the universal advances only through the self-interested struggles of those who have a particular interest in it.

One way that particular interests advance the universal is by using it cynically—Bourdieu calls this the strategy of universalization. Actors pursue their individual economic interests, but seek to hide this fact by presenting these interests in the guise of universal values recognized by the group. By doing so, they receive not only a primary return of economic profits, but also a secondary return of symbolic profits, that is, recognition of their worthiness by the group. Bourdieu uses the example of individuals among the Kabyle who break the group's traditional marriage rules in order to make a economically profitable match, but seek after the fact to “universalize” their behavior by portraying it as actually conforming to the rules (Bourdieu 1990b, pp 108–110). This hypocritical use is the homage that vice pays to virtue—by using the universal to hide self-interest the dissemblers acknowledge and maintain its universality. Such hypocritical use of the universal aside, however, Bourdieu argues that the universal is more genuinely advanced by the clash of particular interests when social differentiation produces cultural fields that are autonomous from the economic field. In these fields actors pursue their self-interests, but the primary stake is not economic profits but symbolic profits, recognition from the group as a whole on the basis of the agreed-upon rules of the game. Thus, Bourdieu postulates that actors in fields such as science and art have a particular interest in disinterestedness, that is, they receive recognition only when they produce work aimed not at making money but at advancing the entire field by playing within the rules. Thus, the rules of the field itself force actors to sublimate self-interest into universal interest, or the good of the whole group (Bourdieu 2000, pp 77, 99).

In his earlier work Bourdieu (1996, pp 337–348) is thus willing to see universal norms and standards at work only in those fields with sufficient autonomy from extrinsic powers to be able to set and enforce rules that harness self-interest for the general advance of science, art, scholastics, literature, etc. In this conception, the “universal” appears plural and fragmented, with each autonomous cultural field advancing its own particular universal or group good, based on the privileged possession of enough internal resources to be able to ignore the imperatives of those who hold external power. But such a vision of the universal is inherently unsatisfactory, for it leaves in place the possibility of competing and clashing conceptions of the good. But in his later work Bourdieu begins to embrace the notion of a social institution or field that is the repository of the universal or common interest of society as a whole—the state. Bourdieu's earlier work (Bourdieu 1998b, pp 35–63; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, pp 111–115) is marked by a cynical concept of the state typical of conflict theorists—the state merely institutionalizes dominant-class culture and interests, which are legitimated by falsely portraying them as universal, the standards of judgment for all. But as Bourdieu begins to recognize the existence of an authentic universal, his portrayal of the state subtly shifts. While continuing to see the existing state as favoring the dominant, he argues that it represents a potential universal that is actually furthered by cynical dissimulation. Because legitimation of the state requires reference to the values of neutrality and disinterested loyalty to the public good, “such values impose themselves with increasing force upon the functionaries of the state as the history of the long work of

symbolic construction unfolds whereby the official representation of the state as the site of universality and of service to the general interest is invented and imposed” (Bourdieu 1998b, p 59). That is, by using the universal good to legitimate its particular interests, the dominant class unwittingly creates a standard that its state representatives are forced to live up to by the dominated. Consequently, a site is created for a struggle over the definition of the public good, which gives the dominated the power to force the state to actually adopt policies benefiting the universal interest. Bourdieu’s concept of the state is now profoundly ambiguous; it is simultaneously the representative of particular economic and political powers as well as the site of rationality and universality that “is capable of acting as a kind of umpire, no doubt always somewhat biased, but ultimately less unfavorable to the interests of the dominated, and to what can be called justice, than what is exalted, under the false colours of liberty and liberalism, by the advocates of ‘laissez-faire,’ in other words the brutal and tyrannical exercise of economic force” (Bourdieu 2000, p 127).

With this complex, ambiguous concept of the state Bourdieu’s theory now provides the dominated classes with a site to struggle for change. Consequently, the reproduction of existing power structures seems less inevitable and more problematic than in his earlier theory. Compared to Alexander, Bourdieu now seems to provide for *more* contingency of action. The former sees the state as part of the realm of instrumental action, just like the economy, and hence tainted with the pursuit of particular interests. The universal or common interest is embodied only *outside* of this realm, in civil society, where generalizable cultural codes are said to provide constraints on the instrumental realms of politics and economics. But it is difficult to see exactly how all people, including those in the dominated classes, can enter into and shape the institutions that Alexander (2003, p 121) sees presiding over civil society—voluntary associations, courts, and the media. None of these is subject to democratic representation, especially the media, which are increasingly controlled by a few global corporations that shape and mold communication to their particular interests. The constitutionally guaranteed popular representation in state institutions seems much firmer ground on which to base the universal, common interest of all in modern societies, notwithstanding the increasing power that private interests wield over these.

There is, however, a problem that remains unsolved by Bourdieu’s new formulation of cultural universals—how to reflexively account for his own theory. Bourdieu now anoints the bureaucratic (state) and cultural fields as the potential homes of the rationality and universality that is characteristic of all humanity. But, as he previously argued, the scholastic fallacy prevents the achievement of this potential. Intellectuals, scientists, artists, and state bureaucrats generally do not recognize the foundation of material resources upon which rests their privileged access to rational analysis and universal values. Because this material condition of their practice remains unseen and unconscious, their knowledge is distorted, for it neglects material determinants and postulates human behavior as based solely on freely chosen beliefs and values. By thus attributing to all the freedom that intellectuals exercise due to their insulation from material necessity, their work most often functions ideologically to obscure the unfree conditions under which the majority of social agents operate. So even though these cultural fields embody potential universality, in actual operation they facilitate the monopoly of universality by those with privileged access to economic capital.

In his recent work, however, Bourdieu has theorized a way out of this dilemma by specifying the conditions under which some intellectuals, like himself, can break with the scholastic fallacy and reveal the material conditions of all human behavior, including their own. This break with the established ideology is, like most dissatisfaction and dissent in

Bourdieu, the product of a discrepancy between the subjective habitus embodied in agents and the objective structure of fields. But in this case the problem is caused by a discrepancy not between a durable habitus and the changing field, but between a durable field and the changing position of individuals in it. As Bourdieu writes in *Pascalian Meditations*:

In particular because of the structural transformations which abolish or modify certain positions, and also because of their inter- or intragenerational mobility, the homology between the space of positions and the space of dispositions is never perfect and there are always some agents “out on a limb,” displaced, out of place and ill at ease. The discordance...may be the source of a disposition towards lucidity and critique which leads them to refuse to accept as self-evident the expectations and demands of the post...The *parvenus* and the *déclassés*...are more likely to bring to consciousness that which, for others, is taken for granted, because they are forced to keep watch on themselves and consciously correct the “first movements” of a habitus that generates inappropriate or misplaced behaviors (Bourdieu 2000, pp 157, 163).

Thus, agents like Bourdieu who are socialized in lower-class positions but move up into the cultural bourgeoisie experience a mismatch between their childhood habitus and structural position. Their habitus inclines them to practical action aimed at material necessities, while their position in a cultural field requires disinterested action that denies economic exigencies in the name of pure knowledge. Because of their practical dispositions and heightened sensitivity to material deprivation, these *parvenus* are more likely to see through the cultural field’s facade of disinterestedness to the economic resources on which it rests. And in the social sciences, these *parvenus* are inclined to resist “the aseptized and derealized representation of the social world offered by the socially dominant discourse” and insist upon the practical foundation of all social action (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p 249). In his last lectures delivered at the Collège de France, which were published posthumously, Bourdieu (2004, pp 94–114) reflexively applies this insight to himself, accounting for his own ability to penetrate objectively the scholastic fallacy and its ideological misrecognition of the origins of social advantage. He argues that his lower-class habitus predisposed him to an anti-intellectualism that sharpened his critical insight into the hypocrisies of the intellectual field (see also Bourdieu 1993, pp 269–270). But now this erstwhile *parvenu*, having experienced the true autonomy of the scholastic field, no longer resentfully rejects its disinterested values as mere deception but labels them universal, and calls for their generalization throughout society by a more equal distribution of the material resources on which they rest.

Bourdieu’s belated political engagement: Application of the universal

Bourdieu’s new conception of an authentic universality creates a space for political intervention in his theory. As long as he conceived the structure of domination as inevitably reproducing itself through creating in individuals differential cultural dispositions that could not be judged from a common standard, then any attempt to rationally intervene and to change society seemed futile. Rational interventions by intellectuals were necessarily imprisoned in their own scholastic fallacies and biases, imposing their theoretical view of the social world on unwitting members of the dominated class, whose practical dispositions prevented them from generalizing beyond their immediate material interests to a broader political consciousness (Bourdieu 1984, pp 397–465). Besides, there were no social

institutions outside the battle of particular interests and points of view that could be used to exert pressure on existing structures of domination. However, once Bourdieu postulates a cultural universal recognized by all, as well as its institutional embodiment in the state, then the possibility is created for a universal political intervention, both by and for all of humanity. It is not by chance, then, that the period of these theoretical revisions, the late 1980s, is also marked by Bourdieu's first foray into political activism, although it is unclear which factor was the cause and which the effect.

Throughout his career Bourdieu's work expresses an ongoing interest in politics, as David Swartz (2003) has effectively demonstrated. All Bourdieu's research and writing is critical of existing power structures and dedicated to exposing the social mechanisms of their creation and reproduction in order to undermine their legitimacy. But early on Bourdieu's political fights are largely internal to the intellectual field, battling for scientific research against academic bureaucrats and pop sociologists. However, by the late 1980s his involvement becomes more direct, as he intervenes in the external world of politics beyond the academy. Swartz (2003) argues that this increased external activism is explained by Bourdieu's increased centrality in the intellectual field, which gives him more symbolic power to fight, as well as changes in this field itself toward greater domination by popular media and politicians, which undermines the autonomy of intellectuals. His initial activism is thus directed at defending the autonomy of cultural fields like science and art against interference by these external forces. Bourdieu becomes particularly concerned with the encroachment of commercial media and publishers on intellectuals' rational commentary about important social issues. Increasingly, he argues, second-rate writers and journalists working for commercial media, whose main interest is to make money by entertaining the masses, are passing themselves off as experts, thus shaping public opinion without taking into account the research done by authentic scientists under the disinterested rules of the field. This willingness of some to subordinate knowledge and reason to the economic exigencies of the market threatens the hard-won autonomy of all intellectuals and their ability to offer, on the basis of independent scholastic authority, a critical, countervailing force to the structures of domination. Using "For a Corporatism of the Universal" as his rallying cry," Bourdieu calls in 1989 for an "Internationale of intellectuals," a collective organization to overcome national divisions and fight for the autonomy of reason from economic and political power (Bourdieu 1996, pp 337–348). To start building such an organization, Bourdieu founds in the same year *Liber: Revue Européenne des Livres*, a journal designed to provide a forum for cross-disciplinary and cross-national exchanges between intellectuals (Swartz 1997, pp 247–269; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, pp 47–59).

This initial stage of political activism is based on a concept of the universal, but one which is rather narrow. The concept is confined to specific cultural fields that have achieved autonomy from power and thus have the ability to impose rules guaranteeing their collective interests. In his slogan of "a corporatism of the universal," however, Bourdieu reveals the theoretical contradictions of his first directly political intervention. The word "corporatism" is tainted by connotations of exclusion and individuality—it calls for organizing society around self-interested and self-governing occupational groups that are constituted as individuals in the eyes of the state. But if the universalism of culture is the particular prerogative of autonomous groups of intellectuals and, as Bourdieu concedes at this stage, the reproducer and legitimator of economic inequality, how can it be really universal, in the interests of all? How does such a universal deliver us from the struggle for particular interests to a common interest that can and should be defended by all? This universal seems to be merely another cynical mask for the privilege of the particular group

of intellectuals. Perhaps it is the realization of this theoretical contradiction that forces Bourdieu to reconceptualize the idea of the universal, not as the privilege of intellectuals but as the potential of all humanity, the general recognition of autonomy and the collective that requires only the equalization of resources to achieve full realization. Or perhaps it is the practical contradiction of seeking to mobilize general political support for a program defending the privilege of intellectuals that forces him to rethink his theory of universalism. Regardless of the causal sequence, Bourdieu's broadening of this concept coincides with a broadening of his political intervention, from defending the autonomy of privileged intellectuals from economic and political interference to defending the autonomy of dominated classes from the neoliberal program of market globalization.

This shift in Bourdieu's political program is tied to his postulation of the state as privileged site and guarantor of his broadened concept of the universal. By the early 1990s, Bourdieu explicitly recognizes that cultural fields such as science and art must rely on the support of the state, since the autonomous cultural standards they impose contradict the profit standard of the economic market (Bourdieu and Haacke 1995, pp 69–77). But this support of disinterested science and art is just one aspect of the state's general role as guarantor of the collective interest: "the state, whether one likes it or not, is the official guarantor" [of] "everything that pertains to the order of the universal—that is, to the general interest," including hospitals, schools, radio and television stations, museums, and laboratories (Bourdieu and Haacke 1995, p 72). Consequently, it is now clear what intellectuals have in common with the dominated class of society—greater reliance on the state for a livelihood as a result of a lack of resources from the market. Bourdieu now argues that the "social state" or the "left hand of the state" – government spending programs for income supplements, health, and education – is the result of popular struggles of the past and provides everyone a measure of freedom from the tyranny and individualism of the market. Thus, it ensures the universal human attributes of autonomy and solidarity. At the same time, however, he recognizes that the social state is opposed from within by what he calls the "right hand of the state," the coercive apparatus of the technocratic ministries. This part of the state serves the particular interests of capitalist elites and supports neoliberal attempts to roll back the hard-won protection of universal interests by the social state in the name of global competitiveness. During this period Bourdieu increasingly becomes the spokesperson for the European movement of workers, farmers, intellectuals, and others opposing this neoliberal reaction, especially its attempt to construct a European Union that places economic profitability ahead of social welfare. He not only gives speeches and writes articles criticizing the new financial technocrats of the European Union (Bourdieu 1998a, 2003), but also organizes a research team that undertakes a massive empirical study of the results of social welfare cuts in France, entitled *La Misère du Monde* (translated as *The Weight of the World*, Bourdieu et al. 1999).

This period is also marked by an escalating critique of mass culture as a barrier to the reasoned defense of the universals embedded in the social state. In his early approach to culture, which culminates in *Distinction*, Bourdieu sees mass culture as the benign embodiment of the practical habitus of the dominated class, implying that it is neither better nor worse than, just different from, the high culture that embodies the aesthetic disposition of the dominant. But once he establishes a universal standard of judgment and struggles to defend its social locus in intellectual fields and the social state, Bourdieu launches a ruthless critique of market-dominated mass culture as a support of the neoliberal program. Sounding remarkably like the Frankfurt School's analysis of the culture industry (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972), he argues that the mass media depoliticize the masses by replacing the

diversity of autonomous art and science with a homogeneous kitsch culture that quasi-cynically aims “to seduce the largest number of viewers by playing to their basic drives” (Bourdieu 2003, p 73). In an ironic inversion of his analysis in *Distinction*, he argues that this culture industry produces an “inverted snobbery” that is a mere illusion of democracy.

Indeed, it is the first time in history that the cheapest products of a popular culture (of a society [the United States] which is economically and politically dominant) are imposing themselves as chic. The adolescents of all countries who wear baggy pants with the crotch down at the knee level do not know that the fashion they regard as both ultrathin and ultramodern finds its origin in U.S. jails, as did a certain taste for tattoos! This is to say that the civilization of jeans, Coca-Cola, and McDonald’s has not only economic power on its side but also the symbolic power exerted through a seduction to which the victims themselves contribute (Bourdieu 2003, p 71; see also Bourdieu 1998a, pp 70–77).

Perhaps for Bourdieu the most pernicious effect of the popular media is to perpetuate among the masses an apolitical fatalism. As all culture becomes deregulated and commodified, media conglomerates are able to dominate the debate over the neoliberal policies from which they benefit, employing their own journalists, experts, and commentators to define deregulation, individual competition, and social-spending cuts as dictated by the inevitable laws of economics. This constructed illusion of economic inevitability masks the immense, consciously pursued political program of the dominant that neoliberalism is in reality, rendering the dominated incapable of mounting an opposition. “In the name of the scientific programme of knowledge, converted into a political programme of action, an immense *political operation* is being pursued (denied, because it is apparently purely negative), aimed at creating the conditions for realizing and operating of the ‘theory;’ a *programme of methodical destruction of collectives* (neo-classical economics recognizes only individuals, whether it is dealing with companies, trade unions or families)” (Bourdieu 1998a, pp 95–96). But, Bourdieu goes on to say, “social laws, economic laws and so on only take effect to the extent that people let them do so” (Bourdieu 1998a, p 55). It is the job of intellectuals to demystify this ideology of economic fatalism and return these issues to politics by equipping the people with forms of thought to resist them. Sociology has a specific contribution to make in overcoming fatalism, for it “teaches how groups function and how to make use of the laws governing the way they function so as to try to circumvent them” (Bourdieu 1998a, p 57).

It is clear from Bourdieu’s explicit appeal to conscious political action based on a social movement enlightened by intellectuals that he has thrown off the last remnants of deterministic reproduction, for which he is faulted by Alexander. Stimulated by a complex interaction of theoretical revision and political intervention, he now presents us with a theory that provides a substantial space for voluntary human action to shape society. Bourdieu still holds that there exist scientific laws governing the operation and reproduction of society, but only in so far as people are unaware of them. Once enlightened about their existence, people may consciously intervene and change these social laws, but only within the limits of objective possibility. Thus, he calls for a “reasoned utopianism” that rejects both objectivist automatism and pure voluntarism. Society does not automatically reproduce itself but can be consciously changed, but only when the selection of the means and ends of change are informed by scientific knowledge that aligns them with objective trends (Bourdieu 1998c, p 128).

Conclusion

Pierre Bourdieu's cultural sociology has consistently demonstrated a subtle grasp of the interaction of ideas and beliefs with material determinants of action. But over the course of his career, he has substantially revised the nature of this interaction. He begins with a pessimistic conception of culture as objectively determined by particular class interests and leaving only minimal room for subjective intervention. Yet by his last works he optimistically conceptualizes culture as potentially universal beliefs and practices, rooted in specific institutions and providing the basis for autonomous political action to achieve economic and cultural justice. Although Jeffrey Alexander's conception of cultural autonomy achieves some critical leverage against Bourdieu's early formulations, it pales in comparison to the revised view of culture in his later works. His formulation of cultural universals whose realization depends on the distribution of material resources ultimately leaves more room for conscious human practice than Alexander's militant voluntarism founded on the autonomy of ideas and beliefs from structures of power and wealth. The insistence in theory on the freedom of human actions from material determinants is no boon to freedom in reality if such determinants actually exist. On the contrary, it serves as a support for unfreedom, for it obscures the material inequalities that differentially constrain choice, preventing people from taking conscious actions to overcome or lessen their effects. The autonomy of culture from the economy is not, as Alexander asserts, a prerequisite for the proper understanding of social life. It is the accomplishment of social life, the end and aim of associated humanity. To assert that this end has already been achieved, in the here and now, is not only a barrier to good social science; it is also a barrier to the realization of autonomy itself.

Acknowledgments For their helpful readings and suggestions at various stages of this article, I thank Randall Collins, Douglas Marshall, and anonymous reviewers for *The American Journal of Sociology* and *Theory and Society*.

References

- Adorno, T. (1974). *Minima moralia*. London: Verso.
- Adorno, T. (1984). *Aesthetic theory*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Adorno, T. (1994). *The philosophy of modern music*. New York: Continuum.
- Alexander, J. C. (1984). Three models of culture and society relations: Toward an analysis of Watergate. *Sociological Theory*, 2, 290–314.
- Alexander, J. C. (1987). *Twenty lectures: Sociological theory since World War II*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Alexander, J. C. (1990). Analytic debates: Understanding the relative autonomy of culture. In J. C. Alexander & S. Seidman (Eds.), *Culture and society: Contemporary debates* (pp. 1–27). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Alexander, J. C. (1995). *Fin de siècle social theory: Relativism, reduction, and the problem of reason*. London: Verso.
- Alexander, J. C. (2003). *The meanings of social life: A cultural sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Alexander, J. C., & Colomy, P. (1990). Neofunctionalism today: Reconstructing a theoretical tradition. In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *Frontiers of social theory: The new syntheses* (pp. 33–67). New York: Columbia University Press.

- Bellah, R., Marsden, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1996). *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1988). *Homo academicus*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1988–1989). *Vivi la crise! For heterodoxy in social science*. *Theory and Society*, 17, 773–787.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990a). *In other words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990b). *The logic of practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *Concluding remarks: For a sociogenetic understanding of intellectual works*. In C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma, & M. Postone (Eds.), *Bourdieu: Critical perspectives* (pp. 263–275). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1996). *The rules of art: Genesis and structure of the literary field*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998a). *Acts of resistance: Against the tyranny of the market*. New York: New Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998b). *Practical reason: On the theory of action*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998c). *A reasoned utopia and economic fatalism*. *New Left Review*, 227, 125–130.
- Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Pascalian meditations*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2003). *Firing back: Against the tyranny of the market 2*. New York: New Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2004). *Science of science and reflexivity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Haacke, H. (1995). *Free exchange*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1977). *Reproduction: In education, society and culture*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourdieu, P., et al. (1999). *The weight of the world: Social suffering in contemporary society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Collins, R. (1981). *Cultural capitalism and symbolic violence*. In *Sociology at midcentury: Essays in theory cumulation* (pp. 173–182). New York: Academic Press.
- Gans, H. J. (1962). *The urban villagers: Group and class in the life of Italian Americans*. New York: Free Press.
- Gartman, D. (1991). *Culture as class symbolization or mass reification? A critique of Bourdieu's Distinction.* *American Journal of Sociology*, 97, 421–447.
- Gartman, D. (2002). *Bourdieu's theory of cultural change: Explication, application, critique*. *Sociological Theory*, 20, 255–277.
- Habermas, J. (1970). *Toward a rational society*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. (1972). *Dialectic of enlightenment*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Jameson, F. (1971). *Marxism and form*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jameson, F. (1981). *The political unconscious*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Lamont, M. (1992). *Money, morals, and manners: The culture of the French and the American upper-middle class*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lamont, M. (2000). *The dignity of working men: Morality and the boundaries of race, class, and immigration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lukács, G. (1962). *The historical novel*. London: Merlin Press.
- Lukács, G. (1971). *History and class consciousness: Studies in Marxist dialectics*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Lukács, G. (1973). *Idea and form in literature*. In *Marxism and human liberation* (pp. 109–131). New York: Dell.
- Marcuse, H. (1968). *Philosophy and critical theory*. In *Negations: Essays in critical theory* (pp. 134–158). Boston: Beacon Press.
- Marcuse, H. (1972). *The foundation of historical materialism*. In *Studies in critical philosophy* (pp. 1–48). London: Verso.
- Marcuse, H. (1978). *The aesthetic dimension: Toward a critique of Marxist aesthetics*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Marx, K. (1975). *Economic and philosophical manuscripts of 1844*. In K. Marx & F. Engels (Eds.), *Collected works vol. 3* (pp. 229–346). New York: International Publishers.

- Smelser, N. (1959). *Social change in the industrial revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Smelser, N. (1962). *Theory of collective behavior*. New York: Free Press.
- Swartz, D. (1997). *Culture and power: The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Swartz, D. (2003). From critical sociology to public intellectual: Pierre Bourdieu and politics. *Theory and Society*, 32, 791–823.

David Gartman is Professor of Sociology at the University of South Alabama. His main interests are culture, art, history, and theory. His books include *Auto Slavery: The Labor Process in the American Automobile Industry* (1986) and *Auto Opium: A Social History of American Automobile Design* (1994). He is currently completing a book entitled *From Autos to Architecture: Fordism and Architectural Aesthetics in the Twentieth Century*.