

tinuous genesis of discontinuity. When we retrospectively project the concept of artist before the 1880s, we commit absolutely fantastic anachronisms: we overlook the genesis, not of the character of the artist or the writer, but of the *space* in which this character can exist as such.

And the same is true of politics. We take the risk of formidable historical fallacies when we fail, as do some historians who, today, take a fancy to "political philosophy," to pose the question of the social genesis of the political field (Bourdieu 1981a) and of the very notions that political philosophy eternalizes by treating them as transhistorical essences. What I just said about the words "art" and "artist" would apply to notions such as "democracy" and "public opinion" (see Bourdieu 1979e, Bourdieu and Champagne 1989, Champagne 1990). Paradoxically, historians often condemn themselves to anachronism because of their ahistorical, or dehistoricized, usage of the concepts they employ to think the societies of the past. They forget that these *concepts* and the reality they capture are themselves the product of a historical construction: the very history to which they apply these concepts has in fact invented, created them, oftentimes at the cost of an immense—and largely forgotten—historical work.⁴¹

3 The Logic of Fields

The notion of field is, together with those of habitus and capital, the central organizing concept of your work, which includes studies of the fields of artists and intellectuals, class lifestyles, *Grandes écoles*, science, religion, the field of power, of law, of housing construction, and so on.⁴² You use the notion of field in a highly

41. This fruitful tension between history and sociology encouraged by Bourdieu is particularly well illustrated by the historical research of his colleagues and collaborators Christophe Charle (1987, 1990, 1991), Dario Gamboni (1989), Alain Viala (1985) and Victor Karady, who has undertaken an ambitious long-term project in the historical sociology of Hungary and other Eastern European countries (see Karady 1985, Don and Karady 1989, Karady and Mitter 1990). On the question of historical discontinuity and the temporal rootedness of conceptual categories or *épistémés*, there are many parallels between Bourdieu and Foucault, some of which can be traced directly back to their common training in the history of science and medicine under Canguilhem (Bourdieu 1988e: 779). The major differences are rooted in Bourdieu's historicizing of reason via the notion of field.

42. On the intellectual and artistic field, see Bourdieu 1971a, 1975b, 1975c, 1983a, 1983d, 1988a; on the space of classes and class lifestyles, Bourdieu 1978b, 1984a, 1987b; on

technical and precise sense that is perhaps partly hidden behind its commonsense meaning. Could you explicate where the notion comes from (for Americans, it is likely to evoke the "field theory" of Kurt Lewin) and what its meaning and theoretical purposes are?

I do not like professorial definitions much, so let me begin with a brief aside on their usage. I could refer here to *Le métier de sociologue* (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1973), which is a didactic, almost scholastic, book,⁴³ but a book which nevertheless contains a number of theoretical and methodological principles that would make people understand that many of the gaps or shortcomings for which I am sometimes reproached are in fact conscious refusals and deliberate choices. For instance, the use of *open concepts*⁴⁴ is a way of rejecting

cultural goods, Bourdieu 1980h, 1985d, and Bourdieu and Delsaut 1975; on the religious field, Bourdieu 1971b, 1987h, Bourdieu and de Saint Martin 1982; on the scientific field Bourdieu 1981d, 1987e, 1990e; on the juridical field and the field of power, Bourdieu 1981a, 1986c, 1987g, 1989a, and Bourdieu and de Saint Martin 1978, 1982, 1987; the field of private housing construction is explored in Bourdieu et al. 1987 and in the articles that make up the March 1990 issue of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*.

Others studies of fields conducted at the Center for European Sociology include, *inter alia*, the fields of comic books (Boltanski 1975) and of children's book publishing (Chamboredon and Fabiani 1977), the field of the French university and intellectuals at the turn of the century (Charle 1983 and 1990, Karady 1983, Fabiani 1989), the field of power under the Third Republic (Charle 1987), and the fields of religion (Grignon 1977), the arts and sciences in the classical age (Heinich 1987), seventeenth-century literature (Viala 1985), the management of the "elderly" (Lenoir 1978), peasant trade-unionism (Maresca 1983), social work (Verdès-Leroux 1976, 1978), political representation (Champagne 1988, 1990), and feminist studies in France (Lagrange 1990).

43. This book (whose translation was for years blocked for obscure copyright reasons and has just been published by Walter de Gruyter) is essential to an understanding of Bourdieu's sociological epistemology. It consists of a dense exposition of the foundational principles of "applied rationalism" in the social sciences, and of a selection of texts (by historians and philosophers of science, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Mauss, and other sociologists) that illustrate key arguments. Each comprises three parts which theorize the three stages that Bourdieu, following French epistemologist Gaston Bachelard, considers central to the production of sociological knowledge and that he encapsulates in the following formula: "Facts are conquered [through rupture with common sense], constructed, confirmed (*les faits sont conquis, construits, constatés*)" (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1973: 24). A worthwhile critical introduction to Bachelard's philosophy can be found in Tiles 1984; see MacAllester 1991 for a selection of texts.

44. For examples of criticisms of Bourdieu for the lack of closure or rigor of his concepts, see DiMaggio 1979: 1467, Swartz 1981: 346-48, Lamont and Larreau 1988: 155-58.

positivism—but this is a ready-made phrase. It is, to be more precise, a permanent reminder that concepts have no definition other than systemic ones, and are designed to be *put to work empirically in systematic fashion*. Such notions as habitus, field, and capital can be defined, but only within the theoretical system they constitute, not in *isolation*.⁴⁵

This also answers another question that is often put to me in the United States: why do I not propose any “laws of the middle range”? I think that this would first of all be a way of satisfying a positivistic expectation, of the kind represented in earlier times by a book by Berson and Steiner (1964) which was a compilation of small, partial laws established by the social sciences. This kind of positivistic gratification is something that science must deny itself. *Science admits only systems of laws* (Duhem showed this long ago for physics, and Quine has since developed this fundamental idea).⁴⁶ *And what is true of concepts is true of relations, which acquire their meaning only within a system of relations*. Similarly, if I make extensive use of *correspondence analysis*, in preference to multivariate regression for instance, it is because *correspondance analysis is a relational technique of data analysis whose philosophy corresponds exactly to what, in my view, the reality of the social world is*. It is a technique which “thinks” in terms of relation, as I try to do precisely with the notion of field.⁴⁷

To think in terms of field is to think relationally.⁴⁸ The relational

45. The distinction between relational or “systemic concepts” (rooted in a theoretical problematics of the object) and “operational concepts,” defined in terms of the pragmatic requirements and constraints of empirical measurement, is elaborated in Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1973: 53–54.

46. The now famous “Duhem-Quine hypothesis” states that *science is a complex network that faces the test of empirical experience as a whole: evidence impinges not on any particular proposition or concept but on the entire net they form*.

47. The technique of correspondence analysis is a variant of factor analysis developed by the school of “French Data Analysis” (J. P. Benzécri, Rouanet, Tabard, Lebart, Cibois), which has elaborated tools for a relational use of statistics that are increasingly being employed by social scientists in France, the Netherlands, and Japan in particular. Two useful and accessible presentations in English are Greenacre 1984 and Lebart et al. 1984; correspondence analysis has recently been included on standard computer packages by SAS and BMDP.

48. Bourdieu (1982a: 41–42, my translation) explains: “To think in terms of field demands a conversion of the whole ordinary vision of the social world which fastens only on visible things: the individual, this *ens realissimum* to which we are attached by a sort of primordial ideological interest; the group, which is only in appearance defined solely by the temporary or durable relations, formal or informal, between its members; and

(rather than more narrowly "structuralist") mode of thinking is, as Cassirer (1923) demonstrated in *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*, the hallmark of modern science, and one could show that it lies behind scientific enterprises apparently as different as those of the Russian formalist Tynianov,⁴⁹ of the social psychologist Kurt Lewin, of Norbert Elias, and of the pioneers of structuralism in anthropology, linguistics and history, from Sapir and Jakobson to Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss. (If you check, you will find that both Lewin and Elias draw explicitly on Cassirer, as I do, to move beyond the Aristotelian substantialism that spontaneously impregnates social thinking.) I could twist Hegel's famous formula and say that *the real is the relational*: what exist in the social world are relations—not interactions between agents or intersubjective ties between individuals, but objective relations which exist "independently of individual consciousness and will," as Marx said.

In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.).

In highly differentiated societies, the social cosmos is made up of a number of such relatively autonomous social microcosms, i.e., spaces of objective relations that are the site of a logic and a necessity that are *specific and irreducible* to those that regulate other fields. For instance, the artistic field, or the religious field, or the economic field all follow specific logics: while the artistic field has constituted itself by rejecting

even relations understood as *interactions*, that is, as intersubjective, actually activated connections. In fact, just as the Newtonian theory of gravitation could only be constructed against Cartesian realism which wanted to recognize no mode of action other than collision, direct contact, the notion of field presupposes a break with the realist representation which leads us to reduce the effect of the *environment* to the effect of direct action as actualized during an interaction."

49. Jurii Tynianov (1894–1943) was, with Roman Jakobson and Vladimir Propp, a leading member of the Russian Formalist school which advocated a structuralist approach to the study of literature and language.

or reversing the law of material profit (Bourdieu 1983d), the economic field has emerged, historically, through the creation of a universe within which, as we commonly say, "business is business," where the enchanted relations of friendship and love are in principle excluded.

You often use the analogy of a "game" to give a first intuitive grasp of what you understand by field.

We can indeed, with caution, compare a field to a game (*jeu*) although, unlike the latter, a field is not the product of a deliberate act of creation, and it follows rules or, better, regularities,⁵⁰ that are not explicit and codified. Thus we have *stakes* (*enjeux*) which are for the most part the product of the competition between players. We have an *investment in the game, illusio* (from *ludus*, the game): players are taken in by the game, they oppose one another, sometimes with ferocity, only to the extent that they concur in their belief (*doxa*) in the game and its stakes; they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning. Players agree, by the mere fact of playing, and not by way of a "contract," that the game is worth playing, that it is "worth the candle," and this *collusion* is the very basis of their competition. We also have *trump cards*, that is, master cards whose force varies depending on the game: just as the relative value of cards changes with each game, the hierarchy of the different species of capital (economic, social, cultural, symbolic) varies across the various fields. In other words, there are cards that are valid, efficacious in all fields—these are the fundamental species of capital—but their relative value as trump cards is determined by each field and even by the successive states of the same field.

This is so because, at bottom, the value of a species of capital (e.g., knowledge of Greek or of integral calculus) hinges on the existence of a game, of a field in which this competency can be employed: a species of capital is what is efficacious in a given field, both as a weapon and as a stake of struggle, that which allows its possessors to wield a power, an influence, and thus to *exist*, in the field under consideration, instead of being considered a negligible quantity. In empirical work, it is one and the same thing to determine what the field is, where its limits lie, etc., and to determine what species of capital are

50. On the difference between rules and regularities and the equivocations of structuralism between those two terms, see Bourdieu 1986a, and 1990a: 30–41.

active in it, within what limits, and so on. (We see here how the notions of capital and field are tightly interconnected.)

At each moment, it is the state of the relations of force between players that defines the structure of the field. We can picture each player as having in front of her a pile of tokens of different colors, each color corresponding to a given species of capital she holds, so that her *relative force in the game*, her *position* in the space of play, and also her *strategic orientation toward the game*, what we call in French her "game," the moves that she makes, more or less risky or cautious, subversive or conservative, depend both on the total number of tokens and on the composition of the piles of tokens she retains, that is, on the volume and structure of her capital. Two individuals endowed with an equivalent overall capital can differ, in their position as well as in their stances ("position-takings"), in that one holds a lot of economic capital and little cultural capital while the other has little economic capital and large cultural assets. To be more precise, the strategies of a "player" and everything that defines his "game" are a function not only of the volume and structure of his capital *at the moment under consideration* and of the game chances (Huygens spoke of *lusiones*, again from *ludus*, to designate objective probabilities) they guarantee him, but also of the *evolution over time* of the volume and structure of this capital, that is, of his social trajectory and of the dispositions (*habitus*) constituted in the prolonged relation to a definite distribution of objective chances.

But this is not all: players can play to increase or to conserve their capital, their number of tokens, in conformity with the tacit rules of the game and the prerequisites of the reproduction of the game and its stakes; but they can also get in it to transform, partially or completely, the immanent rules of the game. They can, for instance, work to change the relative value of tokens of different colors, the exchange rate between various species of capital, through strategies aimed at discrediting the form of capital upon which the force of their opponents rests (e.g., economic capital) and to valorize the species of capital they preferentially possess (e.g., juridical capital).⁵¹ A good number of struggles within the field of power are of this type, notably

51. For an illustration of the growing conflict between juridical and economic capital involved in the rise of new legal professions (notably "bankruptcy experts") at the intersection of the two fields, see Dezalay 1989.

those aimed at seizing power over the state, that is, over the economic and political resources that enable the state to wield a power over all games and over the rules that regulate them.

This analogy displays the links between the core concepts of your theory, but it does not tell us how one determines the existence of a field and its boundaries.

The question of the limits of the field is a very difficult one, if only because it is *always at stake in the field itself* and therefore admits of no *a priori* answer. Participants in a field, say, economic firms, high fashion designers, or novelists, constantly work to differentiate themselves from their closest rivals in order to reduce competition and to establish a monopoly over a particular subsector of the field. (I should immediately correct this sentence for its teleological bias, the very bias attributed to me by those who construe my analysis of cultural practices as based on a search for distinction. There is a production of difference which is in no way the product of a *search for* difference. There are many agents—I think for instance of Gustave Flaubert—for whom to exist in a given field consists *eo ipso* in differing, in being different, in asserting one's difference, oftentimes because they are endowed with properties such that they should not be there, they should have been eliminated at the entrance to the field.) Their efforts to impose this or that criterion of competency, of membership, may be more or less successful in various conjunctures. Thus the boundaries of the field can only be determined by an empirical investigation. Only rarely do they take the form of juridical frontiers (e.g., *numerus clausus*), even though they are always marked by more or less institutionalized "barriers to entry."

We may think of a field as a space within which an effect of field is exercised, so that what happens to any object that traverses this space cannot be explained solely by the intrinsic properties of the object in question. The limits of the field are situated at the point where the effects of the field cease. Therefore, you must try by various means to measure in each case the point at which these statistically detectable effects decline. In the work of empirical research the construction of a field is not effected by an act of imposition. For instance, I seriously doubt that the ensemble of cultural associations (choirs, theater groups, reading clubs, etc.) of a given American state or of a French region form a field. By contrast, the work of Jerry Karabel (1984) suggests that major American universities are linked by objective rela-

tions such that the structure of these (material and symbolic) relations has effects within each of them. Similarly for newspapers: Michael Schudson (1978) shows that you cannot understand the emergence of the modern idea of "objectivity" in journalism if you do not see that it arose in newspapers concerned with standards of respectability, as that which distinguishes "news" from the mere "stories" of tabloids. It is only by studying each of these universes that you can assess how concretely they are constituted, where they stop, who gets in and who does not, and whether at all they form a field.

What are the motor causes of the functioning and transformation of a field? ✓

The principle of the dynamics of a field lies in the form of its structure and, in particular, in the distance, the gaps, the asymmetries between the various specific forces that confront one another. [The forces that are active in the field—and thus selected by the analyst as pertinent because they produce the most relevant differences—are those which define the specific capital. *A capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field*. It confers a power over the field, over the materialized or embodied instruments of production or reproduction whose distribution constitutes the very structure of the field, and over the regularities and the rules which define the ordinary functioning of the field, and thereby over the profits engendered in it.

As a space of potential and active forces, the field is also a *field of struggles* aimed at preserving or transforming the configuration of these forces. Furthermore, the field as a structure of objective relations between positions of force undergirds and guides the strategies whereby the occupants of these positions seek, individually or collectively, to safeguard or improve their position and to impose the principle of hierarchization most favorable to their own products. The strategies of agents depend on their position in the field, that is, in the distribution of the specific capital, and on the perception that they have of the field depending on the point of view they take on the field as a view taken from a point *in* the field.⁵² ✓

52. Bourdieu takes pains to emphasize the discontinuity between a social field and a magnetic field, and therefore between sociology and a reductionistic "social physics": "Sociology is not a chapter of mechanics and social fields are fields of forces but also fields of struggles to transform or preserve these fields of forces. And the relation, practical or reflective, that agents entertain with the game is part and parcel of the game and may be at the basis of its transformation" (Bourdieu 1982a: 46, my translation).

What difference is there between a field and an apparatus or a system as theorized by Luhmann for instance?

An essential difference: struggles, and thus historicity! I am very much against the notion of apparatus, which for me is the Trojan horse of "pessimistic functionalism": an apparatus is an infernal machine, programmed to accomplish certain purposes no matter what, when, or where.⁵³ (This fantasy of the conspiracy, the idea that an evil will is responsible for everything that happens in the social world, haunts critical social thought.) The school system, the state, the church, political parties, or unions are not apparatuses but fields. In a field, agents and institutions constantly struggle, according to the regularities and the rules constitutive of this space of play (and, in given conjunctures, over those rules themselves), with various degrees of strength and therefore diverse probabilities of success, to appropriate the specific products at stake in the game. Those who dominate in a given field are in a position to make it function to their advantage but they must always contend with the resistance, the claims, the contention, "political" or otherwise, of the dominated.]

Now, under certain historical conditions, which must be examined empirically, a field may start to function as an apparatus.⁵⁴ When the dominant manage to crush and annul the resistance and the reactions of the dominated, when all movements go exclusively from the top down, the effects of domination are such that the struggle and the dialectic that are constitutive of the field cease. There is history only as long as people revolt, resist, act. Total institutions— asylums, prisons, concentration camps—or dictatorial states are attempts to institute an end to history. Thus apparatuses represent a limiting case, what we may consider to be a pathological state of fields. But it is a limit that is never actually reached, even under the most repressive "totalitarian" regimes.⁵⁵

53. "As a game structured in a loose and weakly formalized fashion, a field is not an apparatus obeying the quasi-mechanical logic of a discipline capable of converting all action into mere execution" (Bourdieu 1990b: 88). See Bourdieu 1987g: 210–12 for a brief critique of the Althusserian concept of "legal apparatus."

54. For historical examples of the opposite evolution, from apparatus to field, see Fabiani (1989: chap. 3) on French philosophy at the end of the nineteenth century, and Bourdieu (1987i) on the birth of impressionist painting.

55. The notion of apparatus also makes it possible to elude the question of the production of social agents who can operate in them and make them operate, a question

As for systems theory, it is true that it has a number of surface similarities with field theory. One could easily retranslate the concepts of "self-referentiality" or "self-organization" by what I put under the notion of autonomy; in both cases, indeed, the process of differentiation and autonomization plays a pivotal role. But the differences between the two theories are nonetheless radical. For one thing, the notion of field excludes functionalism and organicism: the products of a given field may be systematic without being products of a system, and especially of a system characterized by common functions, internal cohesion, and self-regulation—so many postulates of systems theory that must be rejected. If it is true that, in the literary or artistic field, for instance, one may treat the stances constitutive of a space of possibles as a system, they form a system of differences, of distinctive and antagonistic properties which do not develop out of their own internal motion (as the principle of self-referentiality implies) but via conflicts internal to the field of production. The field is the locus of relations of force—and not only of meaning—and of struggles aimed at transforming it, and therefore of endless change. The coherence that may be observed in a given state of the field, its apparent orientation toward a common function (in the case of the French *Grandes écoles*, to reproduce the structure of the field of power; see Bourdieu

that cannot be dodged by a field analysis insofar as "a field can function only if it finds individuals socially predisposed to behave as responsible agents, to risk their money, their time, sometimes their honor or their life, to pursue the games and to obtain the profits it proposes" (Bourdieu 1982a: 46; see also Bourdieu's [1987i] analysis of the historical genesis of the artistic field as the "institutionalization of anomie" in aesthetic matters).

The fictitious character of the notion of apparatus is further emphasized by Bourdieu (1988i) in his critique of the notion of "totalitarianism" as developed by French political theorists such as Lefort and Castoriadis, following Hannah Arendt. For Bourdieu, the very concept of "totalitarianism" is what Kenneth Burke would call a "terministic screen" which has masked the reality, however repressed, of ongoing social contention in Soviet-type societies, just as, in the case of the court society under the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV, "the appearance of an apparatus, in fact, conceals a field of struggles in which the holder of 'absolute power' himself must participate" (Bourdieu 1981c: 307). At the same time, Bourdieu (1981a) has highlighted opposite tendencies in the functioning of the political field, where a range of factors related to the lack of cultural capital among the dominated classes tend to foster the concentration of political capital and therefore a drift of leftist parties toward an apparatus-like functioning. For an analysis of the French Communist Party that critically assesses tendencies and countertendencies toward "totalization" and of the social fabrication of members fit to carry them out, see Verdès-Leroux 1981 and Pudal 1988, 1989.

1989a) are born of conflict and competition, not of some kind of immanent self-development of the structure.⁵⁶

[A second major difference is that a field does not have parts, components. Every subfield has its own logic, rules and regularities, and each stage in the division of a field (say the field of literary production) entails a genuine qualitative leap (as, for instance, when you move down from the level of the literary field to that of the subfield of novel or theater).⁵⁷ Every field constitutes a potentially open space of play whose boundaries are *dynamic borders* which are the stake of struggles within the field itself. A field is a game devoid of inventor and much more fluid and complex than any game that one might ever design. But to see fully everything that separates the concepts of field and system one must put them to work and compare them via the empirical objects they produce.⁵⁸

Briefly, how does one carry out the study of a field and what are the necessary steps in this type of analysis?

An analysis in terms of field involves three necessary and internally connected moments (Bourdieu 1971d). First, one must analyze the position of the field vis-à-vis the field of power. In the case of artists and writers (Bourdieu 1983d), we find that the literary field is contained within the field of power where it occupies a dominated position. (In common and much less adequate parlance: artists and writers, or intellectuals more generally, are a "dominated fraction of the dominant

56. The necessity expressed in the structure and functioning of a field is "the product of a historical process of progressive collective creation which obeys neither a plan nor an obscure immanent Reason without being for that abandoned to chance" (Bourdieu 1989a: 326). Luhmann's conception of law as a system is briefly discussed in Bourdieu 1987g: 212; for a methodical comparison of Bourdieu and Luhmann, see Cornelia Bohn's (1991) *Habitus und Kontext*.

57. The concept of field can be used at different levels of aggregation: the university (Bourdieu 1988a), the totality of disciplines or the faculty of the human sciences; in the housing economy (Bourdieu 1990c), the market made up of all home-builders or the individual construction firm "considered as a relatively autonomous unit."

58. Contrast, for instance, the way in which Bourdieu (1990b, 1990c, 1990d; Bourdieu and Christin 1990) conceptualizes the internal dynamics of the industrial sector of single-family home production in France as an economic field and its interface with other fields (notably the bureaucratic field, i.e., the state) with Luhmann's (1982) and Parsons and Smelser's (1956) abstract theorization of the boundaries between the economy and other formal subsystems.

class.") Second, one must map out the objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions who compete for the legitimate form of specific authority of which this field in the site. And, third, one must analyze the habitus of agents, the different systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalizing a determinate type of social and economic condition, and which find in a definite trajectory within the field under consideration a more or less favorable opportunity to become actualized.

The field of positions is methodologically inseparable from the field of stances or position-takings (*prises de position*), i.e., the structured system of practices and expressions of agents. Both spaces, that of objective positions and that of stances, must be analyzed together, treated as "two translations of the same sentence" as Spinoza put it. It remains, nevertheless, that, in a situation of equilibrium, *the space of positions tends to command the space of position-takings*. Artistic revolutions, for instance, are the result of transformations of the relations of power constitutive of the space of artistic positions that are themselves made possible by the meeting of the subversive intentions of a fraction of producers with the expectations of a fraction of the audience, thus by a transformation of the relations between the intellectual field and the field of power (Bourdieu 1987i). And what is true of the artistic field applies to other fields: one can observe the same "fit" between positions within the academic field on the eve of May 1968 and the political stances taken by the various protagonists of these events, as I show in *Homo Academicus*, or between the objective position of banks in the economic field and the advertising and personnel management strategies they deploy, etc.

In other words, the field is a critical mediation between the practices of those who partake of it and the surrounding social and economic conditions.

First, the external determinations that bear on agents situated in a given field (intellectuals, artists, politicians, or construction companies) never apply to them directly, but affect them only through the specific mediation of the specific forms and forces of the field, after having undergone a *re-structuring* that is all the more important the more autonomous the field, that is, the more it is capable of imposing its specific logic, the cumulative product of its particular history. Second, we can observe a whole range of structural and functional *homologies* between the field of philosophy, the political field, the literary

field, etc., and the structure of social space (or class structure): each has its dominant and its dominated, its struggles for usurpation and exclusion, its mechanisms of reproduction, and so on. But every one of these characteristics takes a specific, irreducible form in each field (a homology may be defined as a resemblance within a difference). Thus, being contained within the field of power, the struggles that go on in the philosophical field, for instance, are always overdetermined, and tend to function in a double logic. They have political effects and fulfill political functions by virtue of the homology of position that obtains between such and such a philosophical contender and such and such a political or social group in the totality of the social field.⁵⁹

A third general property of fields is that they are *systems of relations that are independent of the populations which these relations define*. When I talk of the intellectual field, I know very well that in this field I will find “particles” (let me pretend for a moment that we are dealing with a physical field) that are under the sway of forces of attraction, of repulsion, and so on, as in a magnetic field. Having said this, as soon as I speak of a field, my attention fastens on the primacy of this system

59. “The specifically ideological function of the field of cultural production is performed quasi-automatically on the basis of the homology of structure between the field of cultural production, organized around the opposition between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and the field of struggles between the classes, for the maintenance or subversion of the symbolic order. . . . The homology between the two fields causes the struggles for the specific objectives at stake in the autonomous field to produce *euphemized* forms of the ideological struggles between the classes” (Bourdieu 1979b: 82, translation modified).

At the core of Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic domination is the notion that ideological legitimation (or “naturalization”) of class inequality operates via a correspondence which is effected only between systems. It does not require that cultural producers intentionally endeavor to mask or to serve the interests of the dominant—indeed, the function of “sociodicy” of culture is more effectively fulfilled when the opposite is true. It is only by genuinely pursuing their specific interest as specialists in symbolic production that intellectuals *also* legitimate a class position: “Ideologies owe their structure and their most specific functions to the social conditions of their production and circulation, i.e., to the functions they fulfill *first for the specialists* competing for the monopoly of the competence in question (religious, artistic, etc.), and *secondarily and incidentally* for the non-specialists” (Bourdieu 1979b: 81–82, my emphasis).

For analyses of how the homology with the structure of class relations obtains and with what effects, see Bourdieu and Delsaut 1975 on high fashion, Bourdieu 1980a on tastes in theater and art, Bourdieu 1988b on philosophy and Bourdieu 1989a on elite professional schools.

of objective relations over the particles themselves. And we could say, following the formula of a famous German physicist, that the individual, like the electron, is an *Ausgeburt des Felds*: he or she is in a sense an emanation of the field. This or that particular intellectual, this or that artist, exists *as such* only because there is an intellectual or an artistic field. (This is very important to help solve the perennial question that historians of art have raised time and again, namely, at what point do we move from the craftsman to the artist? This is a question which, posed in this fashion, is almost meaningless, since this transition is made progressively, along with the constitution of an artistic field within which something like an artist can come to exist.)⁶⁰

The notion of field reminds us that the true object of social science is not the individual, even though one cannot construct a field if not through individuals, since the information necessary for statistical analysis is generally attached to individuals or institutions. It is the field which is primary and must be the focus of the research operations. This does not imply that individuals are mere "illusions," that they do not exist: they exist as *agents*—and not as biological individuals, actors, or subjects—who are socially constituted as active and acting in the field under consideration by the fact that they possess the necessary properties to be effective, to produce effects, in this field. And it is knowledge of the field itself in which they evolve that allows us best to grasp the roots of their singularity, their *point of view* or position (in a field) from which their particular vision of the world (and of the field itself) is constructed.

This is because, at every moment, there is something like an "admission fee" that each field imposes and which defines eligibility for participation, thereby selecting certain agents over others.

People are at once founded and legitimized to enter the field by their possessing a definite configuration of properties. One of the goals of research is to identify these active properties, these efficient charac-

60. Bourdieu's analysis of the historical formation of the artistic field in late nineteenth-century France and of the correlative "invention" of the modern artist is the centerpiece of a forthcoming book entitled *The Economics of Cultural Goods*. For preliminary sketches, see Bourdieu 1971a, 1971c, 1971d, 1983d, 1988d. A concise statement of his sociology of aesthetics and art is Bourdieu 1987d; several of these articles are contained in Bourdieu forthcoming c.

teristics, that is, these forms of *specific capital*. There is thus a sort of hermeneutic circle: in order to construct the field, one must identify the forms of specific capital that operate within it, and to construct the forms of specific capital one must know the specific logic of the field. There is an endless to and fro movement in the research process that is quite lengthy and arduous.⁶¹

To say that the structure of the field—note that I am progressively building a *working* definition of the concept—is defined by the structure of the distribution of the specific forms of capital that are active in it means that when my knowledge of forms of capital is sound I can differentiate everything that there is to differentiate. For example, and this is one of the principles that guided my work on intellectuals, one cannot be satisfied with an explanatory model incapable of differentiating people—or, better, positions—who ordinary intuition in the specific universe tells us are quite different. In such a case, one should search for what variables have been omitted which permit us to differentiate. (Parenthesis: ordinary intuition is quite respectable; only, one must be sure to introduce intuitions into the analysis in a conscious and reasoned manner and to control their validity empirically,⁶² whereas many sociologists use them unconsciously, as when they build the kind of dualistic typologies that I criticize at the beginning of *Homo Academicus*, such as “universal” vs. “parochial” intellectuals.) Here intuition raises questions: “Where does the difference come from?”

One last and critical point: *social agents are not “particles”* that are mechanically pushed and pulled about by external forces. They are, rather, bearers of capitals and, depending on their trajectory and on the position they occupy in the field by virtue of their endowment (volume and structure) in capital, they have a propensity to orient

61. For a detailed illustration of this “hermeneutic circle,” through which the population of relevant individuals or institutions and the efficient assets or forms of capital are mutually specified, see Bourdieu’s study of the reform of governmental housing policy in France in the mid-1970s (Bourdieu and Christin 1990, esp. 70–81).

62. “Far from being, as certain ‘initiatory’ representatives of the ‘epistemological break’ would have us believe, a sort of simultaneously inaugural and terminal act, the renunciation of first-hand intuition is the end product of a long dialectical process in which intuition, formulated in an empirical operation, analyses and verifies or falsifies itself, engendering new hypotheses, gradually more firmly based, which will be transcended in their turn, thanks to the problems, failures and expectations which they bring to light” (Bourdieu 1988a: 7).

themselves actively either toward the preservation of the distribution of capital or toward the subversion of this distribution. Things are of course much more complicated, but I think that this is a general proposition that applies to social space as a whole, although it does not imply that all small capital holders are necessarily revolutionaries and all big capital holders are automatically conservatives.

Let us grant that the social universe, at least in advanced societies, is made up of a number of differentiated fields that have both invariant properties (this justifies the project of a general theory of fields) and varying properties rooted in their specific logic and history (which requires a genetic and comparative analysis of each of them). How do these diverse fields relate to one another? What is the nature of their articulation and their differential weight?

The question of the interrelation of different fields is an extremely complex one. It is a question that I would normally not answer because it is too difficult, and I risk saying things that are relatively simple and might thereby reawaken modes of analysis phrased in terms of "instance" and "articulation," that allowed some Marxists to give rhetorical solutions to problems that only empirical analysis can tackle. I believe indeed that there are *no transhistoric laws of the relations between fields*, that we must investigate each historical case separately. Obviously, in advanced capitalist societies, it would be difficult to maintain that the economic field does not exercise especially powerful determinations. But should we for that reason admit the postulate of its (universal) "determination in the last instance"? An example from my research on the artistic field will, I believe, suggest how complicated this question is.

When we study this question historically, we observe that a process began with the Quattrocento which led the artistic field to acquire its true autonomy in the nineteenth century. From then on, artists are no longer subjected to the demands and commands of sponsors and patrons, they are freed from the state and from academies, etc. Most of them begin to produce for their own restricted market in which a sort of deferred economy operates (Bourdieu 1983d, 1987i). Everything would lead us to believe that we are dealing with an irreversible and irresistible movement toward autonomy, and that art and artists have once and for all achieved their freedom from external forces. Now, what do we observe today? A return of patronage, of direct dependency, of the state, of the most brutal forms of cen-

sorship, and suddenly the idea of a linear and indefinite process of autonomization is reopened. Look at what happened to a painter such as Hans Haacke who uses artistic tools to question interferences with the autonomy of artistic creation.⁶³ He exhibited at the Guggenheim Museum a painting displaying the origins of the financial resources of the Guggenheim family. Now, the Director of the Museum had no alternative other than to resign or be dismissed by his funders, or to ridicule himself in the eyes of artists by refusing to exhibit the painting. This artist gave a function back to art and immediately he ran into trouble. Thus we discover that the autonomy acquired by artists, originally dependent for both the content and the form of their work, implied a submission to necessity: artists had made a virtue out of necessity by arrogating to themselves the absolute mastery of the form, but at the cost of a no less absolute renunciation of function. As soon as they want to fulfill a function other than that assigned to them by the artistic field, i.e., the function which consists in exercising no social function ("art for art's sake"), they rediscover the limits of their autonomy.

[This is only one example, but it has the merit of reminding us that relations between fields—the artistic and the economic field in this case—are not defined once and for all, even in the most general tendencies of their evolution.] The notion of field does not provide ready-made answers to all possible queries, in the manner of the grand concepts of "theoreticist theory" which claims to explain everything and in the right order. Rather, its major virtue, at least in my eyes, is that it promotes a mode of construction that has to be rethought anew every time. It forces us to raise questions: about the limits of the universe under investigation, how it is "articulated," to what and to what degree, etc. It offers a coherent system of recurrent questions that saves us from the theoretical vacuum of positivist empiricism and from the empirical void of theoreticist discourse.

In a recent issue of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* (March 1990) devoted to the "Economy of Housing," that is, the set of social spaces that have to be taken into account to understand the production and circulation of this peculiar economic good that the single-family home is, you have been led to analyze the genesis of

63. The sociological significance of Haacke's work is underlined by Howard Becker and John Walton (1986).

state policies which, in this case, enter directly in the determination of the functioning of an economic market. In so doing, you have begun to outline a theory of the state as a sort of meta-field."

Indeed, it seems to me that, when you take a close look at what goes on inside what we call the "state," you immediately annul most of the *scholastic* problems that scholars, armchair Marxists and other speculative sociologists, keep raising about the state, that quasi-meta-physical notion that must be exploded in order to "go to the things themselves," as Edmund Husserl said in a different context. I think for instance of the consecrated theoretical alternative between "correspondence" (or dependance) and "autonomy." This alternative presupposes that the state is a well-defined, clearly bounded and unitary reality which stands in a relation of externality with outside forces that are themselves clearly identified and defined (for instance, in the case of Germany, on which so much ink has been spilled because of the famous *Sonderweg*, the traditional landed aristocracy of the Junkers, or the wealthy industrial bourgeoisie, or, in the case of England, the urban entrepreneurial bourgeoisie and the country gentry). In fact, what we encounter, concretely, is an ensemble of administrative or bureaucratic fields (they often take the empirical form of commissions, bureaus and boards) within which agents and categories of agents, governmental and nongovernmental, struggle over this peculiar form of authority consisting of the power to *rule* via legislation, regulations, administrative measures (subsidies, authorizations, restrictions, etc.), in short, everything that we normally put under the rubric of state policy as a particular sphere of practices related, in this case, to the production and consumption of housing.

The state, then, if you insist on keeping this designation, would be

64. The analysis of the structuring role of the state in the economics of housing is found in Bourdieu 1990b, and Bourdieu and Christin 1990. Bourdieu was first led to address the question of the state frontally in *La noblesse d'Etat*, when he came to the conclusion that the "contemporary technocracy" are the "structural (and sometimes genealogical) inheritors" of the *noblesse de robe* which "created itself [as a corporate body] by creating the state," and formulated the hypothesis that "the state nobility . . . and educational credentials are born of complementary and correlative inventions" (Bourdieu 1989a: 544, 540). Bourdieu's course at the Collège de France in 1988–91 has been devoted to this topic, in the form of an investigation of the genesis and effects of the modern state understood as the organizational expression of the concentration of symbolic power, or "public trove of material and symbolic resources guaranteeing private appropriations" (Bourdieu 1989a: 540).

the ensemble of fields that are the site of struggles in which what is at stake is—to build on Max Weber's famed formulation—the *monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence*,⁶⁵ i.e., the power to constitute and to impose as *universal and universally applicable* within a given "nation," that is, within the boundaries of a given territory, a common set of coercive norms. As I showed in the case of state housing policy in France between 1970 and 1980, these fields are the locus of a constant confrontation between forces belonging both to the private sector (banks and bankers, construction and architectural firms, etc.) and to the public sector (ministries, administrative divisions within these ministries, and the *grands corps d'Etat* who staff them),⁶⁶ that is, sub-universes themselves organized as fields that are both united by and divided over internal cleavages and external oppositions. The notion of "state" makes sense only as a convenient stenographic label—but, for that matter, a very dangerous one—for these spaces of *objective relations* between *positions* of power (assuming different forms) that can take the form of more or less stable networks (of alliance, cooperation, clientelism, mutual service, etc.) and which manifest themselves in phenomenally diverse interactions ranging from open conflict to more or less hidden collusion.

As soon as you examine in detail how "private" agents or organizations (say, banks interested in the passing of certain regulations likely to boost the diffusion of given kinds of housing loans), which are themselves in competition with one another, work to orient "state" policy in each of their domains of economic or cultural activity (the same processes can be observed in the case of an educational reform), how they form coalitions and ties with other bureaucratic agents

65. For developments, see Bourdieu 1989a: part 5, and Bourdieu and Wacquant 1991: 100: "The state is in the final analysis the great fount of symbolic power which accomplishes acts of consecration, such as the granting of a degree, an identity card or a certificate—so many acts through which the authorized holders of an authority assert that a person is what she is, publicly establish what she is and what she has to be. It is the state, as the reserve bank of consecration, that vouchsafes these official acts and the agents who effect them and, in a sense, carries them out via the agency of its legitimate representatives. This is why I distorted and generalized Max Weber's famous words to say that *the state is the holder of a monopoly, not only over legitimate physical violence, but over legitimate symbolic violence* as well."

66. The *grands corps* are corporate bodies made up of graduates of the country's top *Grandes écoles* which traditionally reserve for themselves certain upper-level administrative positions within the French state. (On *Grandes écoles*, see p. 231, n. 22.)

whose preference for a given type of measure they share, how they confront yet other organizational entities with their own interests and resources (e.g., the properly bureaucratic capital of management of regulations), you cannot but jettison all speculations about correspondence and autonomy. To be truthful, I feel closer, on this count, to the analyses of Edward Laumann (Laumann and Knoke 1988), though I differ from him in other respects, than to those of Nicos Poulantzas (1973) or Theda Skocpol (1979), to cite two names emblematic of traditional positions on correspondence and autonomy. By this, I mean to point out also that, in such matters as elsewhere, the "armchair Marxists," those materialists without materials, whom I ceaselessly opposed at the time of their apogee in the 1960s, have done much to help the perpetuation of scholastic issues.

More generally, this illustrates what makes for much of the difficulty of my position in the sociological field. On the one hand, I can appear very close to the "Grand Theoreticians" (especially the structuralists) insofar as I insist on structural configurations that cannot be reduced to the interactions and practices through which they express themselves. At the same time, I feel a kinship and a solidarity with researchers who "put their noses to the ground" (particularly symbolic interactionists, and all those who, through participant observation or statistical analysis, work to uncover and to debunk the empirical realities that Grand Theoreticians ignore because they look down upon social reality from such heights), even though I cannot agree with the philosophy of the social world which often undergirds their interest in the minutiae of daily practices and which, in this case, is in fact imposed upon them by this "close-up view" and by the theoretical myopia or the blindness to objective structures, to relations of force that are not immediately perceivable, that this view encourages.

What, then, would separate your analysis of the state as a set of partially overlapping bureaucratic fields from Laumann and Knoke's (1988) notion of the "organizational state" or from network theory more broadly?

I could recall here the distinction I established, against Max Weber in particular, between structure and interaction or between a structural relation which operates in a permanent and invisible fashion, and an effective relation, a relation actualized in and by a particular exchange (see Bourdieu 1971b, 1971e, 1987h). In fact, the structure of a field,

understood as a space of objective relations between positions defined by their rank in the distribution of competing powers or species of capital, is different from the more or less lasting networks through which it manifests itself. It is this structure that determines the possibility or the impossibility (or, to be more precise, the greater or lesser probability) of observing the establishment of linkages that express and sustain the existence of networks. The task of science is to uncover the structure of the distribution of species of capital which tends to determine the structure of individual or collective stances taken, through the interests and dispositions it conditions. In network analysis, the study of these underlying structures has been sacrificed to the analysis of the particular linkages (between agents or institutions) and flows (of information, resources, services, etc.) through which they become visible—no doubt because uncovering the structure requires that one put to work a relational mode of thinking that is more difficult to translate into quantitative and formalized data, save by way of correspondence analysis.

I could pursue this argument by drawing on the research I have been conducting over the past few years on the historical genesis of the state. I could argue, to simplify greatly, that there has occurred, since the construction of the dynastic state and, later, of the bureaucratic state, a long-term process of concentration of different species of power, or capital, leading, in a first stage, to private monopolization—by the king—of a public authority at once external and superior to all private authorities (lords, bourgeoisie, etc.). The concentration of these different species of capital—economic (thanks to taxation), military, cultural, juridical and, more generally, symbolic—goes hand in hand with the rise and consolidation of the various corresponding fields. The result of this process is the emergence of a specific capital, *properly statist capital*, born of their cumulation, which allows the state to wield a power over the different fields and over the various forms of capital that circulate in them. This kind of *meta-capital* capable of exercising a power over other species of power, and particularly over their rate of exchange (and thereby over the balance of power between their respective holders), defines the specific power of the state. It follows that the construction of the state goes hand in hand with the constitution of the field of power understood as the space of play in which holders of various forms of capital struggle *in particular* for power over the state, that is, over the statist capital that grants power

over the different species of capital and over their reproduction (via the school system in particular).

4 Interest, Habitus, Rationality

Your use of the notion of interest has often called forth the charge of "economism."⁶⁷ What theoretical role does interest play in your method of analysis?

The notion of interest imposed itself upon me as an instrument of rupture with a philosophical anthropology, a naive conception of human conduct that was dominant when I started working in the social sciences. I have often quoted a remark of Weber about law which says that social agents obey a rule only insofar as their interest in following it outweighs their interest in overlooking it. This sound materialist principle reminds us that, before claiming to describe the rules according to which people act, we should ask what makes those rules operative in the first place.

[Thus, building upon Weber, who utilized an economic model to uncover the specific interests of the great protagonists of the religious game, priests, prophets, and sorcerers (Bourdieu 1971b, 1987h), I introduced the notion of interest into my analysis of cultural producers in reaction to the dominant vision of the intellectual universe, to question the ideology of the *freischwebende Intelligenz*.] I much prefer to use the term *illusio*, since I always speak of specific interest, of interests that are both presupposed and produced by the functioning of historically delimited fields. Paradoxically, the term interest has brought forth the knee-jerk accusation of economism.⁶⁸ In fact, the

67. E.g., Paradeise 1981, Cailié 1981 and 1987a, Richer 1983, Adair 1984, Kot and Lautier 1984, Rancière 1984: 24, Joppke 1986, Sahlins 1989: 25. Thus Fiske (1991: 238) lumps Gary Becker and Bourdieu together as defenders of "the selfish rationality assumption" that constitutes one of his four models of social relations. The opposite interpretation is vigorously defended by Harker, Mahar, and Wilkes (1990: 4–6), Thompson (1991) and Ostrow (1990: 117), among others, who commend Bourdieu for his rejection of economism.

68. Bourdieu's opposition to economism is clear from his first ethnographic pieces on the sense of honor among the Kabyles (Bourdieu 1965 and 1979d). It is argued at great length in *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* and in *The Logic of Practice*: "Economism is a form of ethnocentrism. Treating precapitalist economies, in Marx's phrase, 'as the Fathers of the Church treated the religions that preceded Christianity,' it applies to them categories, methods (economic accounting, for instance), or concepts (such as the notions of interest, investment, or capital, etc.) that are the historical product of