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Pierre Bourdieu

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The most influential and original French sociologist since Durkheim, Pierre Bourdieu is at once a leading theorist and an empirical researcher of extraordinarily broad interests and distinctive style. He has analyzed labor markets in Algeria, symbolism in the calendar and the house of Kabyle peasants, marriage patterns in his native Béarne region of France, photography as an art form and hobby, museum goers and patterns of taste, modern universities, the rise of literature as a distinct field of endeavor, and the sources of misery and poverty amid the wealth of modern societies. Bourdieu insists that theory and research are inseparable parts of one sociological enterprise, and refuses to separate them. He has never, accordingly, written a purely abstract theoretical treatise summing up his perspective. Through the course of his writings, however, he has developed a distinctive set of basic themes and concepts. It is on these that we will focus in the present chapter.

Taking Games Seriously

A former rugby player, Bourdieu is drawn to the metaphor of games to convey his sense of social life. But by "game" he does not mean mere diversions or entertainments. Rather, he means a serious athlete's understanding of a game. He means the experience of being passionately involved in play, engaged in a struggle with others and with our own limits, over stakes to which we are (at least for the moment) deeply committed. He means intense competition. He means for us to recall losing ourselves in the play of a game, caught in its flow in such a way that no matter how individualistically we struggle we are also constantly aware of being only part of something larger – not just a team, but the game itself. It is worth knowing that rugby (a game of running, passing,

kicking, and tackling somewhat like American football, but played with more continuous motion, a bit like soccer) is one of the world's most physically intense games. When Bourdieu speaks of playing, he speaks of putting oneself on the line.

Social life is like this, Bourdieu suggests, except that the stakes are bigger. Not just is it always a struggle; it requires constant improvisation. No game can be understood simply by grasping the rules that define it. It requires not just following rules, but having a "sense" of the game, a sense of how to play.[1] This is a social sense, for it requires a constant awareness of and responsiveness to the play of one's opponent (and in some cases one's teammates). A good rugby (or soccer or basketball) player is constantly aware of the field as a whole, and anticipates the actions of teammates, knowing when to pass, when to try to break free. A good basketball player is not simply one who can shoot, but one who knows when to shoot.

Games are strategic. There are different possible approaches to each contest, and to each moment in the contest. What makes for a good strategy is determined by the rules of the game, of course, but also by assessing one's opponent's strengths and weaknesses – and one's own. Originality or inspiration is only one factor among many in determining the outcome.

Whether a tennis player rushes the net is a complex result of numerous factors, not a simple, conscious decision. Indeed, if it is simply a conscious decision the player is probably already too late. The tennis player has a physical, bodily sense of how strong her own serve was, and an awareness (usually without words) of the shot her opponent is returning; thought and bodily action are not sharply separate. She also has an inclination to rush a lot or a little, to play risky or safe tennis, to be confident in her physical strength and speed or watching for angles or chip shots to throw a stronger opponent off balance. This is partly the result of years of experience, partly the result of coaching and disciplined practice. The coach may even use theory to help analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the player's game; for example, urging her to rush the net a little more, hang back at the baseline a little less. This can be long-term, general advice, or specifically targeted to the opponent the player faces today. Either way, however, the player's actual shots are actions that cannot be reduced to theoretical rules. They are improvisations. Sometimes they are inspired surprises, occasionally disastrous mistakes. But for a good player they are also embodiments of a highly consistent style. This is what Bourdieu terms a "habitus," the capacity each player of a game has to improvise the next move, the next play, the next shot.

We may be born with greater or lesser genetic potentials, but we are not born with a habitus. As the word suggests, this is something we acquire through repetition, like a habit, and something we know in our bodies, not just our minds. A professional basketball player has shot a million free throws before he steps to the line. Some of these have come in practice sessions, designed to allow the player to work on technical skills free from the pressure and chance of a game. But the player's practical experience – and learning – also came in real games, in front of crowds, with the hope of victory and the fear of letting down his teammates on his mind. Whether he has developed a relaxed confidence in

his shot and an ability to blot out the noise and waving hands of the arena is also a matter of previous experience. It is part of the player's habitus. And the difference between a great athlete and a mediocre also-ran is often not just physical ability but a hard-to-pin-down mix of confidence, concentration, and ability to rise to the occasion.

The confidence that defines greatness is largely learned, Bourdieu suggests. It is learned in a thousand earlier games. On playgrounds, in high school, and in college, basketball players imagine themselves to be Michael Jordan – but they also learn that they are not. They do not jump as high or float as long; their desperate shots miss when his amazingly often went in. One of the most important points Bourdieu makes is that this is precisely how our very experience of struggling to do well teaches us to accept inequality in our societies. We learn and incorporate into our habitus a sense of what we can "reasonably" expect. I, for example, would *like* to be a great tennis player, but have accepted that I am not. More basically, I have come to regard tennis as a mere recreation. I play it for fun, and sometimes play aggressively, but I do not play it for serious stakes. The games I play more seriously are ones I early learned I was better at, games involving words instead of balls, requiring more speed of thought and less of foot. I play these for greater stakes: my salary, my sense of career accomplishment, my belief that through my work I make a contribution to others. Then there are the games that matter so much to us that most of us play them whether we are good at them or not – love and marriage, raising children and trying to help them prosper, acquiring material possessions, or seeking religious salvation. It is our desire for the stakes of the game that ensures our commitment to it. But we do not invent the games by ourselves; they are the products of history, of social struggles and earlier improvisations, and of impositions by powerful actors with the capacity to say this, and not that, is the right way to make love, create a family, raise children.

To understand any social situation or interaction, Bourdieu suggests, ask what game (or games) the actors are playing. This is closely analogous to distinguishing the different institutional fields of modern life: education, law, family, and so forth. What is at stake in their play? The stakes determine what will count as winning or losing. The game may be literature, for example, and the players seek reputation and immortality (defined as inclusion in the canon of recognized great works). The game may be business, and the players seek wealth. It may be politics and they pursue power. The stakes of different games also shape the ways in which players will attempt to limit the field and preserve its autonomy. Precisely because they care about their literary reputations, therefore, authors of serious books are at pains to distinguish their field from "mere journalism."

Science too is a game, in this only partly metaphorical sense. It is strategic. It has winners and losers. It depends on specific sorts of resources and rules of play. And science has stakes, most notably truth. Scientists do not pursue truth out of simple altruism. It is an interest, not a *dis*interest. Commitment to truth – and to the specifically scientific way of pursuing truth (e.g. by empirical research rather than waiting for divine inspiration) – defines the field of science. But the participants in this field do not simply share peacefully in truth, they struggle

over it. They seek to command it; for example, by controlling who gets hired in universities and research institutes, which projects get funded by national science foundations, which kinds of work are published in the most famous journals. They advance competing theories; they attempt to advance competing careers. Science works as a field devoted to truth because it provides players with organized incentives for pursuing their rewards – their victories in the game – by discovering and communicating genuine knowledge. It offers organized disincentives for lying, failure to use good research methods, or refusing to communicate one's discoveries.

The rules of each game are constraints on both the players and the ways in which players get things done. Players usually have to treat them as fixed and unchanging, but in fact they are historically produced. This means that they are subject to continual change, but even more that there is a great deal of investment in the existing organization of fields. When we improvise our actions, we respond to both the social and cultural structures in which we find ourselves and to our own previous experiences. We are able to act only because we have learned from those experiences, but much of what we have learned is how to fit ourselves effectively into existing cultural practices. We are constrained not just by external limits, in other words, but by our own internalization of limits on what we imagine we can do. We cannot simply shed these limits, not only because they are deep within us, but because they are part of our sense of how to play the game. In other words, they are part of the knowledge that enables us to play well, to improvise actions effectively, and maintain our commitment to the stakes of the game.

PERSON AND CAREER

No culture prizes intellectuals more than France; in none are intellectuals celebrities of comparable magnitude. Pierre Bourdieu has resented and contested (and profited from and used) this throughout his career. He has challenged the legitimacy of "total intellectuals" with an opinion on every subject and an eye out for the TV cameras. He has offered critical analysis of "the intellectual hit parade," mocking the presentation of scholarship as though it were popular music. He has decried the power wielded by academic mandarins who control university appointments and research institutes. At the same time, Bourdieu has become one of the most prominent French intellectuals of his generation and certainly the most influential and best known social scientist. He has been on the cover of popular magazines, been the subject of television documentaries and news stories, seen his books on bestseller lists, and become a dominant force in parts (though only parts) of the academic world. He has also become an intellectual mandarin himself. Holder of the most prestigious academic appointment in France, a chair at the Collège de France – and indeed, the very chair of sociology first held by Durkheim – he is also the head of a major research center and the editor of two journals. His work is supported by a small army of collaborators and assistants.

Amid all this, Bourdieu has always thought of himself as an outsider, and though it is paradoxical, he has reasons. Paris exerts a power over French intellectual life that far exceeds that of New York, Boston, Chicago, and the San Francisco Bay area combined. The Parisian power structure is dominated by people who combine credentials from a handful of elite institutions with a smooth, urbane cultural style. They fluidly cross the lines of politics, journalism, and the university. Although a disproportionate number of the most creative figures are outsiders by family background, the power structure remains dominated by Parisians of elite class backgrounds. Many have known each other since childhood in a handful of highly selective schools, and quickly recognize and disdain outsiders. Into their midst in the 1950s, an adolescent Pierre Bourdieu came to study in the most elite of the Parisian *grandes écoles*, the École Normale Supérieure (ENS).

Bourdieu's father was the postmaster of Deguin, a small town in the Béarne region of Southwest France.[2] This is the rough French equivalent of coming from Appalachia or a remote part of Idaho. The regional dialect is strong and distinctive; the Béarnaise have resisted homogenizing efforts of the French state for generations. Both brilliant and hard-working, Bourdieu gained admission to a special, highly selective regional high school (the Lycée de Pau) and then to one of Paris's most famous secondary schools, the Lycée Louis-le-Grand. From there he entered the École Normale in 1951. Simply gaining admission to the ENS was a guarantee of membership in France's intellectual power-elite. Students were treated as members of the civil service from the moment they entered, taught to think of themselves as what Bourdieu (1989) later termed "the state nobility." Some who started as outsiders simply assimilated, perhaps especially those whose talents were middle of the pack; Bourdieu excelled and also resisted. So did his ENS contemporaries Jacques Derrida (philosopher and literary scholar, founder of "deconstruction") and Michel Foucault (intellectual historian and cultural critic, possibly the most prominent of all the intellectuals of that generation, though now dead more than a decade). Derrida and Bourdieu graduated at the top of their class at the ENS and both became world famous. But both remained in important ways outsiders to the Parisian intellectual elite. Neither was immediately chosen for major academic positions. Derrida for decades was barred from any of the major chairs of philosophy in France, teaching in a peripheral position even after he was one of the world's most famous and influential scholars. Bourdieu was able to make more of an institutional career only because of fortuitous circumstances.

On the one hand, he was fortunate to be supported early in his career by such powerful figures as Raymond Aron, a distinguished sociologist and journalist. On the other hand, and perhaps even more crucially, an institutional base for the social sciences had been created outside the traditional university structure. The École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) had been created (by transformation of an older institution). Bourdieu did not follow the approved path to a regular university appointment – for example, never writing a thesis for the *doctorat d'état*, the special higher degree that was the usual basis for professorships. More than that, he launched strong criticisms of a professorial

elite that he thought focused heavily on defending an old intellectual order (and its own power) and minimally on advancing knowledge through research. Bourdieu allied himself with research, with new knowledge, rather than with those who sought instead simply to control the inheritance of old knowledge. This met with predictable disapproval from much of the university elite, but the existence of the EHESS gave Bourdieu an alternative base where he was able in the 1960s to establish a research center and publications program.

Though Bourdieu's writings on the problems of French higher education (especially Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964) influenced the student protests of the 1960s, he was not himself centrally involved in the activism. His approach to politics was more to intervene through producing new knowledge, with the hope that this would help to demystify the way institutions worked, revealing the limits to common justifications and the way in which power rather than simple merit shaped the distribution of opportunities. His views of the educational system reflected the disappointed idealism of one who had invested himself deeply in it, and owed much of his own rise from provincial obscurity to Parisian prominence to success in school. As he wrote in *Homo Academicus*, the famous book on higher education that he began amid the crises of 1968, he was like someone who believed in a religious vocation, then found the church to be corrupt. "The special place held in my work by a somewhat singular sociology of the university institution is no doubt explained by the peculiar force with which I felt the need to gain rational control over the disappointment felt by an 'oblate' [a religious devotee] faced with the annihilation of the truths and values to which he was destined and dedicated, rather than take refuge in feelings of self-destructive resentment" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. xxvi). The disappointment could not be undone, but it could be turned to understanding and potentially, through that understanding, to positive change.

Educational institutions may be central to Bourdieu's concern, but both his sense of disappointment and his critical analyses are more wide-reaching. All the institutions of modernity, including the capitalist market and the state itself, share in a tendency to promise far more than they deliver. They present themselves as working for the common good, but in fact reproduce social inequalities. They present themselves as agents of freedom, but in fact are organizations of power. They inspire devotion from those who want richer, freer lives, and they disappoint them with the limits they impose and the violence they deploy. Simply to attack modernity, however, is to engage in the "self-destructive resentment" Bourdieu seeks to avoid. Rather, the best way forward lies through the struggle to understand, to win deeper truths, and to remove legitimacy from the practices by which power mystifies itself. In this way, one can challenge the myths and deceptions of modernity, enlightenment, and civilization without becoming the enemy of the hopes they offered.

Bourdieu's perspective and approach were both shaped crucially by his fieldwork in Algeria. He studied Kabyle peasant life and participation in a new cash economy that threatened and changed it (Bourdieu and Sayad, 1964). He studied the difficult situation of those who chose to work in the modern economy and found themselves transformed into its "underclass," not even able to gain the full

status of proletarians because of the ethno-national biases of the French colonialists (Bourdieu et al., 1963; Bourdieu, 1972). And during the time of his fieldwork, Bourdieu confronted the violent French repression of the Algerian struggle for independence. The bloody battle of Algiers was a formative experience for a generation of French intellectuals who saw their state betray what it had always claimed was a mission of liberation and civilization, revealing the sheer power that lay behind colonialism, despite its legitimation in terms of progress.

Bourdieu's formal education had been in philosophy, but in Algeria he remade himself as a self-taught ethnographer (Honneth et al., 1986, p. 39). It was in trying to understand Kabyle society that he shaped his distinctive perspective on the interplay of objective structures and subjective understanding and action. The experience of fieldwork itself was powerful, and helped to shape Bourdieu's orientation to knowledge. As an ethnographer, Bourdieu entered into another social and cultural world, learned to speak an unfamiliar language, and struggled to understand what was going on, while remaining necessarily in crucial ways an outsider to it. This helped him to see the importance of combining insider and outsider perspectives on social life. To be altogether an outsider to Kabylia was certainly to fail to understand it, but in order to grasp it accurately the ethnographer also had to break with the familiarity of both his own received categories and those of his informants. His job is neither to impose his own concepts nor simply to translate those of the people he studies. He must struggle, as the philosopher Bachelard (an important influence on Bourdieu) put it, to "win" the facts of his study.

One of the most basic difficulties in such research, Bourdieu came to realize, is the extent to which it puts a premium on natives' discursive explanations of their actions. Because the anthropologist is an outsider and starts out ignorant, natives must explain things to him. But it would be a mistake to accept such explanations as simple truths, not because they are lies but because they are precisely the limited form of knowledge that can be offered to one who has not mastered the practical skills of living fully inside the culture (Bourdieu, 1972, p. 2). Unless he is careful, the researcher is led to focus his attention not on the actual social life around him but on the statements about it which his informants offer. "The anthropologist's particular relation to the object of his study contains the makings of a theoretical distortion inasmuch as his situation as an observer, excluded from the real play of social activities by the fact that he has no place (except by choice or by way of a game) in the system observed and has no need to make a place for himself there, inclines him to a hermeneutic representation of practices, leading him to reduce all social relations to communicative relations and, more precisely, to decoding operations" (ibid., p. 1). Such an approach would treat social life as much more a matter of explicit cognitive rules than it is, and miss the ways in which practical activity is really generated beyond the determination of the explicit rules.

In this respect, Bourdieu took the case of anthropological fieldwork to be paradigmatic for social research more generally. The confrontation with a very different way of life revealed the need for both outsider and insider perspectives. Not long after he completed his work in Algeria, Bourdieu challenged himself by

applying the method he was developing to research in his own native region of Béarne. The task, as he began to argue didactically and to exemplify in all his work, was to combine intimate knowledge of practical activity with more abstract knowledge of objective patterns, and, using the dialectical relation between the two, to break with the familiar ways in which people understand their own everyday actions. These everyday accounts always contain distortions and misrecognitions that do various sorts of ideological work. The classic example is gift-giving, which is understood as disinterested, voluntary, and not subject to precise accounting of equivalence, but which people actually do in ways that are more strategic than their self-understanding allows. Bourdieu's project was to grasp the practical strategies people employed, their relationship to the explanations they gave (to themselves as well as to others), and the ways in which people's pursuit of their own ends nonetheless tended to reproduce objective patterns which they did not choose and of which they might even be unaware.

This project was a profound intervention into Bourdieu's intellectual context. French intellectual life in the 1950s and 1960s produced two powerful but opposed perspectives in the human sciences: structuralism and existentialism. The former emphasized the formal patterns underlying all reality (extending ideas introduced to sociology by Durkheim and Mauss); the latter stressed that meaning inhered in the individual experience of being in the world, and especially in autonomous action. The two greatest and most influential figures in French intellectual life of the period were Claude Lévi-Strauss (the structuralist anthropologist) and Jean-Paul Sartre (the existentialist philosopher). Bourdieu's theoretical tastes were closer to Lévi-Strauss, but he saw both as one-sided. If existentialism greatly exaggerated the role of subjective choice, structuralism neglected agency. In a sense, Bourdieu developed an internal challenge to structuralism, incorporating much of its insight and intellectual approach but rejecting the tendency to describe social life in overly cognitive and overly static terms as a matter of following rules rather than engaging in strategic practice.

It is partly for similar reasons that Bourdieu chose not to write an abstract theoretical treatise summarizing his theory. He saw theory as best developed in the task of empirical analysis, and saw this as a practical challenge. Rather than applying a theory developed in advance and in the abstract, he brought his distinctive theoretical habitus to bear on a variety of analytic problems, and in the course of tackling each developed his theoretical resources further. The concepts developed in the course of such work could be transposed from one setting to another by means of analogy, and adapted to each. Theory, like the habitus in general, serves not as a fixed set of rules but as a characteristic mode of improvising (Brubaker, 1992). In an implicit critique of the dominance of philosophy over French social science, Bourdieu held that the real proof that a sociological project has value is to be demonstrated in its empirical findings, not in abstract system-building.

When Bourdieu left Algeria, he received a fellowship to the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and followed it with a stay at the University of Pennsylvania. While in the USA, he met the American sociologist Erving

Goffman – another theoretically astute sociologist who refrained from abstract system-building in favor of embedding theory in empirical practice. Goffman had begun to develop a sociology that followed Durkheim's interest in the moral order, but focused on the ways this was reproduced in interpersonal relations by individuals with their own strategic investments in action. Rather than treating individuals as either autonomous or simply socially constructed, for example, Goffman (1959) introduced the element of strategy by writing of the "presentation of self in everyday life." His point was similar to that Bourdieu would stress: to show the element of improvisation and adaptation, rather than simple rule-following, and then to introduce agents as dynamic figures in the social order. Where Bourdieu's favorite metaphor was games, Goffman's was drama, but they shared the sense of social life as a performance that could be played better or worse, and which nearly always tended to the reproduction of social order even when individuals tried to make new and different things happen in their lives.

Goffman encouraged Bourdieu to take a position at the University of Pennsylvania, but Bourdieu felt that if he stayed in the USA he would be unable to develop the kind of critical sociology he wanted to create.[3] It was not simply that he wanted to criticize France rather than the USA, but that he wanted to benefit from inside knowledge while still achieving critical distance. This would present a challenge, but the challenge was itself a source of theoretical insight: "In choosing to study the social world in which we are *involved*, we are obliged to confront, in *dramatized* form as it were, a certain number of fundamental epistemological problems, all related to the question of the difference between practical knowledge and scholarly knowledge, and particularly to the special difficulties involved first in *breaking* with inside experience and then in reconstituting the knowledge which has been obtained by means of this break" (Bourdieu, 1988a, p. 1).

Bourdieu returned to France and took a position in the European Center for Historical Sociology, headed by Raymond Aron. Aron was an important early supporter of Bourdieu's, and made him a deputy in the administration of the Center. The two were never close collaborators, despite initial mutual respect, and they came into increasing conflict as Bourdieu became more critical of French higher education. Aron was a moderate conservative politically, and Bourdieu was aligned with the left. Perhaps more importantly, Aron was a defender of French academia and Bourdieu criticized its role in preserving class inequality (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964). Things came to a head when student revolt broke out in 1968. Aron suggested that the problem lay primarily with the students and sought to limit – rather than expand – their involvement in the life of the university. Bourdieu was sympathetic to the students, though he thought them naively voluntaristic and inattentive to the deep structures that made for the reproduction of class inequality and the university as an institution (see Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970).[4] He made little public comment on the protests, but he did choose this moment to break with Aron and found his own Center for European Sociology. With him he took a remarkable group of collaborators whom he had attracted, including Luc Boltanski, Jean-Claude Passeron, and Monique de Saint Martin.

Together, this group (and new recruits) conducted a remarkable range of empirical studies. These put the perspective Bourdieu had developed to use in analyzing many different aspects of French social life. In 1975 Bourdieu and his collaborators also founded a new journal, *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*. In its pages they not only took up different empirical themes but developed and tried out new ideas and theoretical innovations. *Actes* also translated and introduced work from researchers with cognate interests in other countries.

Almost simultaneously with the founding of his Center, Bourdieu published a kind of manual for doing sociology (Bourdieu et al., 1968). This differed from typical textbooks in presenting not a compilation of facts and a summary of theories, but an approach to sociology as an ongoing effort to "win social facts." Entitled *The Craft of Sociology*, it bypassed abstract codification of knowledge and endeavored to help students acquire the practical skill and intellectual habitus of sociologists. Bourdieu also put his craft to work in an extraordinary series of books and articles. His study (with Passeron) of *Reproduction: In Education, Society, and Culture* was initially the best known in English. It helped to establish a whole genre of studies of how education contributes to the reproduction of social inequality. In theoretical terms, however, Bourdieu's most important work of the period was *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972), probably his single most influential work. At almost the same time, he also published his most sustained study of French cultural patterns, *Distinction* (1979), and two books of essays. This remarkable corpus of work was the basis for his election to the chair of sociology in the Collège de France. He has continued his remarkable productivity since then. Among the most important of his books are *Language and Symbolic Power* (1982), *Homo Academicus* (1984), *The State Nobility* (1989), *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (1988), *The Rules of Art* (1992), and *The Misery of the World* (1993). He has also published several collections of articles, and the noteworthy collaboration with Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), which is among the best overall statements of Bourdieu's perspective on sociology.

In sum, Bourdieu's own educational experience at once gave him fantastic resources – a command of the history of philosophy, multiple languages, and skills in critique and debate – and alienated him from the very institutions that helped, as it were, to make him a star. The resources were not limited to intellectual abilities but included the credentials, connections and sense of the game that enabled him not just to become famous but to create new institutions. The alienation gave Bourdieu the motivation to pioneer a critical approach, rather than a simple affirmation of the status quo.

FALSE DICHOTOMIES

Bourdieu (1988a) has described one of the central motivations behind his intellectual work as a determination to challenge misleading dichotomies. The

broad dualistic outlook of Western thought is expressed in the ubiquitous opposition of mind to body. It also takes the form of specific dichotomies basic to social science: structure/action, objective/subjective, theory/practice. Drawing on Gaston Bachelard and other philosophers critical of this dualistic outlook, Bourdieu set out to transcend it (see the critical discussion in Vandenberghe, 1999). It is crucial, he suggests, not just to see both sides but to see how they are inseparably related to each other. Seemingly fixed objective structures have to be created and reproduced; apparently voluntary subjective actions depend on and are shaped by objective conditions and constraints; knowledge and action constantly inform each other, rather than theory guiding practice by a set of fixed rules. Bourdieu seeks to move sociology beyond the antinomy of social physics (seeing social life as completely external and objective) and social phenomenology (looking at social life through subjective experience) (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 7).

Take the opposition of theory to practice. This is ancient, a central theme as long ago as the philosophical writings of Aristotle. It contrasts knowing to doing, mental to physical activity. This conceptualization has several problems. First, it tends to neglect the kind of non-theoretical knowledge that is implicit in practical skills. Few of us can explain the physics of buoyancy in water, the mechanics of moving muscle and bone, or even the dynamics that make freestyle faster than breaststroke, yet we can swim. In a similar sense, craft workers are able to produce pottery and textiles (among other things) in ways that demonstrate huge amounts of learned knowledge, but which do not depend heavily on putting that knowledge into formal terms, or even into words. This neglect of practical knowledge both reflects and encourages a value judgment that mental work is "better" than physical labor. This was implicit in the class structure of ancient Greece, in which aristocratic men could afford the time for pondering philosophy, while slaves, commoners, and women took care of most material production.

Second, the theory/practice dichotomy encourages the view that practice is the application of theory, a form of rule-following. Behind this is an image of the mind (something distinct from the brain) moving the body like a puppet, giving directions to the muscles as the puppet master pulls strings. Bourdieu (along with a variety of philosophers including especially Wittgenstein) suggests this is misleading. When we perform practical tasks we are not necessarily following rules. Computer models of mental processing commonly suggest something like this because that is the typical nature of a computer program. But human activity involves a combination of discursive awareness and unconscious skill. A "simple" task like buttoning a shirt is not based on consciously following a set of rules (try to articulate what these would be!); rather, it is a practical ability that we learn through the discipline of repetition. We can only do it well when it becomes habitual. The same is true, Bourdieu suggests, not just for such physical tasks but for much more complex social tasks like choosing marriage partners or giving gifts. There *are* rules about such things, but on the basis of careful empirical observation and analysis in both Algeria and France Bourdieu suggests that the rules do not account adequately for what actually goes on. The rules are

one part of the story, important to people when they discuss what is desirable, but their practical activity involves a constant adaptation to circumstances that call for going beyond rules. This does not mean that in coming to conclusions about such matters as who makes a good marriage partner people are not drawing on their knowledge. They are making judgments about potential for happiness, economic success, acceptance by their parents, etc. But these judgments are precisely not deductions from scientific theories in the way that, say, an engineer's conclusions that a bridge needs more structural supports may be. Similarly, Bourdieu describes how Kabyle peasants resolve disputes, emphasizing that it is not by rigidly applying formal legal rules, but by making judgments – socially shared through conversation – about what is in accord with justice or honor.

Taking practice seriously implies, third, that we see society through the lens of what social actors are trying to do. Social science is typically built on a totalizing view. This is made possible by the fact that scientists are generally outsiders to the social situations they analyze, and by the fact that they can see how historical events have turned out. This gives the scientists some great advantages. They can know more than most actual social actors about the odds of their choices working out the way they want, and about the unintended consequences of their actions (Merton, 1936). But the scientists need to guard against forgetting the uncertainty under which all real people act. Recall the game analogy. The basketball player with the ball is not concerned with scientific analysis of the probabilities of making a shot from 25 feet. He is concerned with the particular options before him – who is open for a pass, how much time is left on the clock – as well as with his own desire to win and the risk that he will embarrass himself instead of being a hero. Players will respond differently. But all, Bourdieu suggests, respond by acting strategically, not by simply following rules. "To substitute *strategy* for *rule*," he writes, "is to reintroduce time, with its rhythm, its orientation, its irreversibility" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 9). A good player will not always take the 25-foot shot under similar conditions, but sometimes fake and pass, and sometimes drive for the basket. The key to understanding strategy is not just that the actor wants to accomplish something, but that he or she is trying to do so under conditions of uncertainty. Not only is the future not yet settled, but the actor cannot see the whole of society, the player can only see the game from his or her particular position within it.

Fourth, the traditional idea of theory represents knowledge as passive understanding of the world. The implication is that there is a complete and potentially permanent logical order already existing behind society or culture, and that the task of the sociologist or anthropologist is only to decipher it. Not so, says Bourdieu, partly because every culture is incomplete and contains internal contradictions. It may be relatively structured, but not 100 percent so. As a result, social scientists should not try to represent culture simply as rules that people follow, but as the practical dispositions that enable people to improvise actions where no learned rule fits perfectly. These will not be uniform throughout a society, but will vary with the locations of people's different experiences within it. Those who have more resources (capital) may be better able to realize widely

shared values. To take a mundane example, star athletes may be better able to get dates with the prettiest or most popular girls in a high school. It would be a mistake, however, to represent their behavior and luck as though it represented cultural rules from which everyone else deviated. And to grasp the workings of the high school culture, we would need to understand how other people experienced their different social locations, and how this influenced who they thought they could or should date, what they saw as attractive, and so forth. What we would see is a system not simply of rules, but of resources, practical dispositions, and strategies. Our knowledge would also become more critical – we would be aware of the inequalities in the high school in a way that a more conventional cultural theorist might not be, we would see ways in which conventional norms about social attractiveness are in fact a basis of discrimination.

Bourdieu's case is not for an action-centered sociology as opposed to one focused on structure. On the contrary, he seeks to overcome this distinction, which he thinks has limited sociology in the past. His effort is to develop a "genetic structuralism"; that is, a sociology that uses the intellectual resources of structural analysis, but approaches structures in terms of the ways in which they are produced and reproduced through action. Bourdieu had already analyzed dynamics of reproduction in several works of the 1960s, but the most influential statement of his developing theoretical approach came with the publication in 1972 of *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

Bourdieu starts with the assumption that most social scientists exaggerate "structure" rather than action, because emphasizing the orderly, recurrent, and enduring aspects of social life is what sets "objective" social science apart from everyday "subjective" viewpoints. Every introductory sociology student learns the difference between a personal point of view and a scientific one, between an individual experience or choice and a social pattern in experiences and choices. Students often learn Émile Durkheim's (1895) famous maxim that social facts should be treated as though they were "things" – in other words, hard, objective reality. The facts of social science, Durkheim argued, are external to individuals, endure longer than individual lifetimes, and have coercive power over individuals. The Durkheimian tradition, and these approaches to social facts, remained dominant in French social science when Bourdieu wrote *Outline*.

Bourdieu's first task in *Outline*, thus, is to show the "objective limits of objectivism." Real objectivity in social science starts by breaking with anecdotes and familiar understandings in order to grasp a deeper reality. This is not simply the sum total of the facts that happen to exist (as a purely empiricist view might suggest). Rather, it is the underlying conditions that make possible whatever facts exist. The idea is similar to that involved in grasping the difference between genetics and physical appearance. A man and a woman bring more or less fixed genetic possibilities to the creation of children. But which of these possibilities appear in any specific child is a matter of statistical probabilities. Simply generalizing from the empirical traits of an individual child or even several children may thus be misleading with regard to the underlying pattern of genetic determination. In the same sense, what is "objectively" the deepest "reality" in social life is not the surface phenomena that we see all around us, but the underlying

structural features that make these surface phenomena possible. The "objectivist" task of sociology is to grasp these underlying structural features. For example, what are the underlying conditions for the production and distribution of wealth, as distinct from simply its presence or absence among our friends or others we know? But here we see also the limits to pure objectivism. By itself, objectivism cannot make sense of how the underlying conditions of possibility are translated into empirical actuality. This only comes about when they become the bases of human action, which is not altogether objective, but is based on practical subjective knowledge of the social world. Social theory needs, therefore, to study both objective structures and the ways in which human beings act. These are two sides of a dialectical relationship and not simply two distinct phenomena, because the ways in which human beings act are the result of practical dispositions that they develop through their experience of objective structures. This is why most action tends to reproduce structures, and change in social institutions is relatively gradual. If we did not grasp that social action is itself structured, it would be hard to explain why action did not simply dissolve all institutions into chaos.

Objectivist sociology tends to explain the structuring of action only as the result of external forces. We may be pushed in one direction, or constrained from going in another. Our action is governed by force, or by rules, or by obstacles. What this misses, says Bourdieu, is the extent to which social structure is inside each of us because we have learned from the experience of previous actions. We have a practical mastery of how to do things that takes into account social structures. Thus the way in which we produce our actions is already shaped to fit with and reproduce the social structures because this is what enables us to act effectively. But we internalize the social structures as we experience them – not as they exist in some abstract objectivist model. We develop our practical understanding of these structures through our learning of categories that are made available by our culture, but also through our own active development of understanding. On the basis of this combination of experience and cognition, each of us develops a practical disposition to act in certain ways.

> There is action, and history, and conservation or transformation of structures only because there are agents, but agents who are acting and efficacious only because they are not reduced to what is ordinarily put under the notion of individual and who, as socialized organisms, are endowed with an ensemble of dispositions which imply both the propensity and the ability to get into and to play the game. (Bourdieu, 1989b, p. 59)

Bourdieu's stress on the presence of social structure inside the actor is a challenge not only to objectivism, but to most forms of subjectivism. These are mirror images of each other. Subjectivists are prone to two basic errors. First, they are apt to ascribe too much voluntarism to social actors. Focusing on each occasion as though it is an opportunity for creativity and constructing a new reality, they neglect the extent to which people's very abilities to understand and choose and act have been shaped by processes of learning which are themselves

objectively structured and socially produced. Second, subjectivist approaches commonly present social life as much less structured, much more contingent, than it really is. As Bourdieu (1989b, p. 47) writes, "If it is good to recall, against certain mechanistic visions of action, that social agents construct social reality, individually and also collectively, we must be careful not to forget, as the interactionists and ethnomethodologists often do, that they have not constructured the categories they put to work in this work of construction." In other words, how we think about reality does shape what it is for us, but how we think about it is a result of what we have learned from our culture and experience, not simply a matter of free will.

Bourdieu draws on sociologists (like George Herbert Mead, Harold Garfinkel, and Erving Goffman) who have paid attention to the ways in which social action shapes social structures, and stressed the ways in which *inter*action even shapes who the actors are and what strategies they pursue. At the same time, he remains sharply critical of philosophers (like Sartre) who write as though individual existence came before society. Bourdieu insists on a dialectic of structure and action, but he also makes it clear that he thinks the crucial first step for social science comes with the discovery of objective structure, and the break with everyday knowledge that this entails.

Winning the Social Fact

Social life requires our active engagement in its games. It is impossible to remain neutral, and it is impossible to live with the distanced, detached perspective of the outside observer. As a result, all participants in social life have a knowledge of it that is conditioned by their specific location and trajectory in it. That is, they see it from where they are, how they got there and where they are trying to go. Take something like the relations between parents and children. As participants, we see these from one side or the other. They look different at different stages of life and other different circumstances – as, for example, when one's parents become grandparents to one's children. Our engagement in these relationships is powerful, but it is deeply subjective, not objective. We know a lot, but what we know is built into the specific relationships we inhabit and into specific modes of cultural understanding. Much of it is practical mastery of how to be a parent or a child. This is a genuine form of knowledge, but it should not be confused with scientific knowledge.

Our everyday life involvements, Bourdieu suggests, invest us with a great deal of practical knowledge, but require us to misrecognize much of what we and other people do. Misrecognition is not simply error; indeed, in a practical mode of engagement every recognition is also a misrecognition. This is so precisely because we cannot be objective and outside our own relations, we cannot see them from all possible angles. Which aspects of them we understand and how reflects our own practical engagement in them and also the conditions for perpetuating the games in which we are participants. As Bourdieu (1980, p. 68) writes, "Practical faith is the condition of entry that every field tacitly imposes,

not only by sanctioning and debarring those who would destroy the game, but by so arranging things, in practice, that the operations of selecting and shaping new entrants (rites of passage, examinations, etc.) are such as to obtain from them that undisputed, pre-reflexive, naive, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field which is the very definition of doxa." "Doxa" is Bourdieu's term for the taken-for-granted, preconscious understandings of the world and our place in it that shape our more conscious awarenesses. Doxa is more basic than "orthodoxy," or beliefs that we maintain to be correct in the awareness that others may have different views. Orthodoxy is an enforced straightness of belief, like following the teachings of organized religion. Doxa is felt reality, what we take not as beyond challenge but before any possible challenge. But though doxa seems to us to be simply the way things are, it is in fact a socially produced understanding, and what is doxic varies from culture to culture and field to field. In order for us to live, and to recognize anything, we require the kind of orientation to action and awareness that doxa gives. But doxa thus also implies misrecognition, partial and distorted understanding. It was the doxic experience of Europeans for centuries that the world was flat. Thinking otherwise was evidence not of scientific cleverness but of madness.

The ideas of doxa and misrecognition allow Bourdieu a subtle approach to issues commonly addressed through the concept of ideology. Marxist and other analysts have pointed to the ways in which people's beliefs may be shaped to conform with either power structures or the continued functioning of a social order. Ideology is commonly understood as a set of beliefs that is in some degree partial and distorted and serves some specific set of social interests. Thus it is ideological to suggest that individual effort is the basic determinant of where people stand in the class hierarchy. It is not only false, but it serves both to legitimate an unequal social order and to motivate participants. Common use of the notion of ideology, however, tends to imply that it is possible to be without ideology, to have an objectively correct or undistorted understanding of the social world. This Bourdieu rejects. One can shake the effects of specific ideologies, but one cannot live without doxa, and one cannot play the games of life without misrecognition. Misrecognition is built into the very practical mastery that makes our actions effective.

Nonetheless, symbolic power is exercised through the construction of doxa as well as orthodoxy. Every field of social participation demands of those who enter it a kind of preconscious adherence to its way of working. This requires seeing things in certain ways and not others, and this will work to the benefit of some participants more than others. Take the modern business corporation. It seldom occurs to people who work for corporations, or enter into contracts with them, or represent them in court, to question whether they exist. But what is a corporation? It is not precisely a material object, and not a person in any ordinary sense. As the Supreme Court Justice Marshall put it famously, the corporation has "no soul to damn, no body to kick." Yet corporations can own property, make contracts, and sue and be sued in courts of law. Corporations exist largely because they are recognized to exist by a wide range of people,

including agents of the legal system and the government. In order to do almost any kind of business in a modern society, one must believe in corporations. Yet they are also in a sense fictions. Behind corporations stand owners and managers – and for the most part, they cannot be held liable for things the corporation "does." To believe in the corporation is to support a system that benefits certain interests much more than others, and yet to not believe in it makes it impossible to carry out effective practical action in the business world. This is how misrecognition works.

In addition to making misrecognition, and doxa, the objects of analysis, Bourdieu wishes to remind us of their methodological significance. It is because ordinary social life requires us to be invested in preconscious understandings that are at least in part misrecognitions that it is a faulty guide to social research. A crucial first step for every sociologist is to break with familiar, received understandings of everyday life. To "win" social facts depends on finding techniques for seeing the world more objectively. This is always a struggle, and one that the researcher must keep in mind throughout every project. It will always be easy to slide back into ways of seeing things that are supported by everyday, doxic understandings – one's own, or those of one's informants. Some of the advantages of statistical techniques, for example, come in helping us to achieve distance on the social life we study. At the same time, however, we need to work to understand the processes by which misrecognition is produced, to grasp that it is not a simple mistake. It is not enough to see the "objective" facts alone. We need to see the game in which they are part of the stakes.

Habitus

Participation in social games is not merely a conscious choice. It is something we do prereflectively. We are, in a sense, always already involved. From childhood we are prepared for adult roles. We are asked what we want to be when we grow up and learn that it is right to have an occupation. We are told to sit up straight and speak when spoken to. We experience the reverence our parents show before the church – or before money or fame, depending on the parents. Out of what meets with approval or doesn't, what works or doesn't, we develop a characteristic way of generating new actions, of improvising the moves of the game of our lives. We learn confidence or timidity. But in either case much of the power of the socialization process is experienced in bodily terms, simply as part of who we are, how we exist in the world. This sense is the habitus.

Notoriously difficult to pin down, the term "habitus" means basically the embodied sensibility that makes possible structured improvisation.[5] Jazz musicians can play together without consciously following rules because they have developed physically embodied capacities to hear and respond appropriately to what is being produced by others, and to create themselves in ways which others can hear sensibly and to which others can respond. Or, in Bourdieu's metaphor, effective play of a game requires not just knowledge of rules but a practical sense for the game.[6] If this is a challenge to the static cognitivism of structuralism, it is

equally a challenge to the existentialist understanding of subjectivity. Sartre created his famous account of the existential dilemma by positing "a sort of unprecedented confrontation between the subject and the world" (Bourdieu, 1972, p. 73). But this misrepresents how actual social life works, because it leaves completely out of the account the durable dispositions of the habitus. Before anyone is a subject, in other words, he or she is already inculcated with institutional knowledge – recognition and misrecognition.

The habitus appears in one sense as each individual's characteristic set of dispositions for action. There is a social process of matching such dispositions to positions in the social order (as, in another vocabulary, one learns to play the roles that fit with one's statuses). But the habitus is more than this. It is the meeting point between institutions and bodies. That is, it is the basic way in which each person as a biological being connects with the sociocultural order in such a way that the various games of life keep their meaning, keep being played. "Produced by the work of inculcation and appropriation that is needed in order for objective structures, the products of collective history, to be reproduced in the form of the durable, adjusted dispositions that are the condition of their functioning, the *habitus*, which is constituted in the course through which agents partake of the history objectified in institutions, is what makes it possible to inhabit institutions, to appropriate them practically, and so to keep them in activity, continuously pulling them from the state of dead letters, reviving the sense deposited in them, but at the same time imposing the revisions and transformations that reactivation entails" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 57).[7] Think of an example – say the Christian church, a product of two millennia that still seems alive to members. They experience it as alive, but they also make it live by reinventing it in their rituals, their relations with each other, and their faith. Being brought up in the church helps to prepare members for belief (inculcation), but it is also something they must actively claim (appropriation). The connection between the institution and the person is the very way in which members produce their actions. "Each agent, wittingly or unwittingly, willy nilly, is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning. Because his actions and works are the product of a *modus operandi* of which he is not the producer and has no conscious mastery, they contain an 'objective intention', as the Scholastics put it, which always outruns his conscious intentions" (Bourdieu, 1972, p. 79). To return to an earlier example, each of us reproduces the idea of corporation every time we engage in a transaction with one – owning stock, renting an apartment, going to work – even though that may not be our conscious intention.

Bourdieu emphasizes that habitus is not just a capacity of the individual, but an achievement of the collectivity. It is the result of a ubiquitous "collective enterprise of inculcation." The reason why "strategies" can work without individuals being consciously strategic is that individuals become who they are and social institutions exist only on the strength of this inculcation of orientations to action, evaluation, and understanding. The most fundamental social changes have to appear not only as changes in formal structures but as changes in habitual orientations to action. Bourdieu seeks thus to overcome the separation

of culture, social organization, and embodied individual being that is characteristic of most existing sociology.

FIELDS AND CAPITAL

As we saw above, one of the ways in which Bourdieu uses the metaphor of "games" is to describe the different fields into which social activities are organized. Each field, like law or literature, has its own distinctive rules and stakes of play. Accomplishments in one are not immediately granted the same prestige or rewards in another. Thus novelists are usually not made judges, and legal writing is seldom taken as literature. But, although the fields involve different games, it is possible to make translations between them. To explain this, Bourdieu uses the concept of capital. His analysis of the differences in forms of capital and dynamics of conversion between them is one of the most original and important features of Bourdieu's theory. This describes both the specific kinds of resources accumulated by those who are winners in the struggles of various fields and the more general forms of capital – such as money and prestige – that make possible translations from one to the other. "A capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 101). Yet successful lawyers and successful authors both, for example, seek to convert their own successes into improved standards of living and chances for their children. To do so, they must convert the capital specific to their field of endeavor into other forms. In addition to material property (economic capital), families may accumulate networks of connections (social capital) and prestige (cultural capital) by the way in which they raise children and plan their marriages. In each case, the accumulation has to be reproduced in every generation or it is lost.

In short, there are two senses in which capital is converted from one form to another. One is as part of the intergenerational reproduction of capital. Rich people try to make sure that their children go to good colleges – which, in fact, are often expensive private colleges (at least in America). This is a way of converting money into cultural capital (educational credentials). In this form, it can be passed on and potentially reconverted into economic form. The second sense of conversion of capital is more immediate. The athlete with great successes and capital specific to his or her sporting field may convert this into money by signing agreements to endorse products, or by opening businesses like car dealerships or insurance agencies, in which celebrity status in the athletic field may help to attract customers.

Bourdieu's account of capital differs from most versions of Marxism. It is not backed by a theory of capitalism as a distinct social formation (Calhoun, 1993). Neither is it the basis for an economic determinism. Bourdieu sees "an economy of practices" at work insofar as people must always decide how to expend their effort and engage in strategies that aim at gaining scarce goods. But Bourdieu does not hold that specifically economic goods are always the main or underlying motivations of action or the basis of an overall system. By conceptualizing capital as taking many different forms, each tied to a different field of action,

Bourdieu stresses: (a) that there are many different kinds of goods that people pursue and resources that they accumulate; (b) that these are inextricably social, because they derive their meaning from the social relationships that constitute different fields (rather than simply from some sort of material things being valuable in and of themselves); and (c) that the struggle to accumulate capital is hardly the whole story – the struggle to reproduce capital is equally basic and often depends on the ways in which it can be converted across fields.

In addition, Bourdieu shows that fields (such as art, literature, and science) that are constituted by a seeming disregard for or rejection of economic interests nonetheless operate according to a logic of capital accumulation and reproduction. It is common to think of religion, art, and science as basically the opposite of economic calculation and capital accumulation. Even fields like law are constituted not simply by reference to economic capital (however much lawyers may treasure their pay) but by reference to justice and technical expertise in its adjudication. This is crucial, among other reasons, as a basis for the claim of each field to a certain autonomy. This, as Bourdieu (1992, pp. 47ff) has argued, is the "critical phase" in the emergence of a field. Autonomy means that the field can be engaged in the play of its own distinctive game, can produce its own distinctive capital, and cannot be reduced to immediate dependency on any other field.

Bourdieu's most sustained analysis of the development of such a field focuses on the genesis and structure of the literary field. He takes up the late nineteenth-century point at which the writing of "realistic" novels separated itself simultaneously from the broader cultural field and the immediate rival of journalism. His book *The Rules of Art* (1992) focuses equally on the specific empirical case of Gustave Flaubert and his career, and on the patterns intrinsic to the field as such. The emphasis on Flaubert is, among other things, a riposte to and (often implicit) critical engagement with Sartre's famous largely psychological analysis. *The Rules of Art* contests the view of artistic achievement as disinterested, and a matter simply of individual genius and creative impulses. It shows genius to lie in the ability to play the game that defines a field, as well as in aesthetic vision or originality.

Flaubert was the mid-nineteenth-century writer who, more than anyone else with the possible exception of Baudelaire, created the exemplary image of the author as an artistic creator working in an autonomous literary field. The author was not merely a writer acting on behalf of other interests: politics, say, or money. A journalist was such a paid writer, responsible to those who hired him. An author, by contrast, was an artist. This was the key point for Flaubert and for the literary field that developed around and after him. What the artistic field demanded was not just talent, or vision, but a commitment to "art for art's sake." This meant producing works specifically for the field of art.

Writers like Flaubert and Baudelaire made strong claims for the value of their distinctive points of view. This has encouraged the analysis of their products as simply embodiments of their psychological individuality. On the other hand, they wrote "realistic" novels, engaging the social issues of their day, from poverty to the Revolution of 1848. This has encouraged others to focus on the

ways in which they reflected one or another side in those issues, interpreting them, for example, as social critics or as voices of the rising middle class. Bourdieu shows how this misses the decisive importance of the creation of a field of literature as art. This meant, first, that when Flaubert or Baudelaire wrote about the issues of their day, they claimed the distinctive authority of artists. Indeed, they helped to pioneer the idea that artists might offer a special contribution to social awareness that reflected precisely their "disinterestedness" – in other words, the fact they they were not *simply* political actors. Second, though, Bourdieu shows that this appearance of distinterestedness is misleading. It is produced to the extent that artists are motivated by interests specific to the artistic field and their place within it, and not merely serving as spokespeople for other social positions. In other words, artists are distinterested in the terms of some other fields precisely because of the extent to which they are interested in the field of art. The autonomy of this field is thus basic to the production of artists in this sense.

Painting as a modern artistic field is defined by the difference between producing "art" for the sake of religion, as in medieval decorations of churches, or for the sake of memory and money, as in some portraiture; and producing art for its own sake (Bourdieu, 1983). The latter approach does not mean that the painter stops wanting food, or fame, or salvation – though he may not consciously recognize how much he is driven by these desires. Rather, what it does is orient his creative work specifically to the field of art, and to the standards of judgment of others in that field. The artist in this sense doesn't just produce more of what the market wants, but endeavors to create works that embody his own distinctive vision and place in the field. He seeks recognition from other artists, and in his work marks off his debts to but also distinctions from them. It is because it becomes a field in this way, oriented to an internal communication and accumulation of specifically artistic capital, that the production of art becomes partially autonomous from popular and even elite tastes. Art may guide tastes (not just be guided by them), or it may operate outside the world of everyday tastes, but it may not be reduced to them. This liberates art from determination by its immediate social context, but it does not liberate artists from all interests in achieving distinction or accumulating capital. On the contrary, they are driven to innovate (rather than just reproducing the masterworks of a previous generation), and to innovate in ways that derive much of their form from the existing state of communication in the art field. The artistic habitus, thus, enables a regulated improvisation, working with the symbolic materials at hand to express at once the artist's original vision and the artist's individual claims on the field of art. Because the art field is autonomous, its works can only be understood by those who master its internal forms of communication. This is why ordinary people find much modern art hard to understand, at least until they take classes or read the guiding statements offered by museum curators. From the mid-nineteenth century, art could become increasingly abstract partly because it was the production not simply of beauty, or of a mirror on the world, but of a communication among artists. This communication was driven simultaneously by the pursuit of distinction and of art for art's sake.

When we set out to understand the "creative project" or distinctive point of view of an artist like Flaubert, therefore, the first thing we need to grasp is his place in and trajectory through the field of art (or the more specific field of literature as art). This, Bourdieu recognizes, must seem like heresy to those who believe in the individualistic ideal of artistic genius. It is one thing to say that sociology can help us understand art markets, but this is a claim that sociology is not just helpful for but crucial to understanding the individual work of art and the point of view of the artist who created it. Bourdieu takes on this task in an analysis simultaneously of Flaubert's career, or his own implicit analysis of it in the novel *Sentimental Education*, and of the genesis and structure of the French literary field. In doing so, he accepts a challenge similar to that Durkheim (1897) took in seeking to explain suicide sociologically: to demonstrate the power of sociology in a domain normally understood in precisely antisociological terms.

The analysis is too complicated to summarize here. At its center lies the demonstration that Flaubert's point of view as an artist is shaped by his objective position in the artistic field and his more subjective position-takings in relation to the development of that field. For example, it is important that Flaubert came from a family that was able to provide him with financial support. This enabled him to participate fully in the ethic (or interest) of art for art's sake, while some of his colleagues (perhaps equally talented) were forced to support themselves by writing journalism for money. This is different from saying simply that Flaubert expressed a middle-class point of view. In fact, it suggests something of why middle- and upper-class people who enter into careers (like art) that are defined by cultural rather than economic capital often become social critics. Their family backgrounds help to buy them some autonomy from the immediate interests of the economy, while their pursuit of distinction in a cultural field gives them an interest in producing innovative or incisive views of the world. In other words, the objective features of an artist's background influence his work not so much directly as indirectly through the mediation of the artistic field.

Within that field, the artist occupies a specific position at any one point in time, and also a trajectory of positions through time. The position of an individual artist is shaped by the network of relationships that connect him to (or differentiate him from) other artists and by his position in the hierarchies of artistic producers defined by both the external market and the internal prestige system of the field. The actual position the artist occupies, however, is only one among a universe of possible positions. He could have made different friends and enemies, could have used his talent better or worse at earlier times, could have traveled abroad rather than staying in Paris. In this sense, the artist's biography (including both the objective resources he starts with and the uses he makes of them) describes a trajectory through the space of objective positions in the field (which itself may be developing and changing). This trajectory is produced partially by choices and by the way the artist played the game, as well as by material factors. At the same time, as we saw in considering the habitus, the way the artist plays the game is itself shaped by the objective circumstances he has experienced. As he sets out to produce any new work, the artist starts from an objective position in the field, and also engages in new "position-takings." That

is, he chooses consciously or unconsciously from among the range of possible moves open to him.

In line with Bourdieu's overall approach, what we see here is the deep way in which subjective and objective dimensions of fields and practices are bound up with each other. "Paradoxically," he writes, "we can only be sure of some chance of participating in the author's subjective intention (or, if you like, in what I have called elsewhere his 'creative project') provided we complete the long work of objectification necessary to reconstruct the universe of positions within which he was situated and where what he wanted to do was defined" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 88). One important way in which the field as a whole shapes the work of a Flaubert, say, is by granting him the freedom to innovate, and to construct a vision of the world that is not immediately constrained by economic logic or political power. In other words, the artist gains his freedom in relation to his broader social context precisely by accepting the determinations that come with investment in the artistic field. "The posts of 'pure' writer and artist, like that of 'intellectual', are institutions of freedom, which are constructed against the 'bourgeoisie' (in the artist's terms) and, more concretely, against the market and state bureaucracies (academies, salons, etc.) through a series of ruptures, partially cumulative, which are often made possible only by a diversion of the resources of the market – hence of the 'bourgeoisie' – and even of state bureaucracies." That is, the pure writer needs resources from somewhere. "These posts are the end point of all the *collective work* which has led to the constitution of the field of cultural production as a space independent of the economy and politics; but, in return, this work of emancipation cannot be carried out or extended unless the post finds an agent endowed with the required dispositions, such as an indifference to profit and a propensity to make risky investments, as well as the properties which, like income, constitute the (external) conditions of these dispositions" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 257).

In this sense, the artist is not so much "disinterested" as "differently interested." The illusion of disinterest is produced by the way economic and cultural dimensions of modern societies are ideologically opposed to each other. The field of cultural production is defined as the economic world reversed (Bourdieu, 1993, chapter 1). It is one of the central contributions of Bourdieu's theory, however, to show that this is a misrecognition, and the opposition is really between different forms of capital. Directly economic capital operates in a money-based market that can be indefinitely extended. Cultural capital, by contrast, operates as a matter of status, which is often recognized only within specific fields.[8]

Bourdieu situates his logic of multiple fields and specific forms of capital in relation to a more general notion of "the field of power." The field of art thus has its own internal struggles for recognition, power, and capital, but it also has a specific relationship to the overall field of power. Even highly rewarded artists generally cannot convert their professional prestige into the power to govern other institutional domains. By contrast, businesspeople and lawyers are more able to do this. The question is not just who is higher or lower in some overall system, but how different groups and fields relate to each other. Fields that are relatively high in cultural capital and low in economic capital occupy dominated

positions within the dominant elite. In other words, university professors, authors, and artists are relatively high in the overall social hierarchy, but we would not get a very complete picture of how they relate to the system of distinctions if we stopped at this. We need to grasp what it means to be in possession of a very large amount of particular kinds of capital (mainly cultural) that trade at a disadvantage in relation to directly economic capital. This translates into a feeling of being dominated even for people who are objectively well off in relation to society as a whole. College professors, for example, don't compare themselves to postmen so much as to their former university classmates who may have gotten lower grades but made more money in business. Similarly, they experience the need to persuade those who control society's purse strings that higher education deserves their support (whereas the opposite is much less often the case; businessmen do not have the same need to enlist the support of college professors – though sometimes it can be a source of prestige to show connections to the intellectual world). This experience of being what Bourdieu has called "the dominated fraction of the dominant class" can have many results. These range from a tendency to be in political opposition to specific tastes that do not put possessors of cultural capital in direct competition with possessors of economic capital. College professors, thus, may prefer old tweed jackets to new designer suits, or old Volvos to new Mercedes as part of their adaptation to the overall position of their field.[9]

REFLEXIVITY

Analyses of the objective determinants of the tastes of college professors are not in Bourdieu's view simply an idle form of narcissistic self-interest. Rather, it is vital for intellectuals to be clear about their own positions and motivations in order to be adequately self-analytic and self-critical in developing their accounts of the social worlds at large. This is the necessary basis for both public interventions and the best social science itself. Just as an analysis can discern the combination of objective and subjective factors that come to produce the point of view of an author like Flaubert, so analysis can establish the grounds on which scientific production rests.

Bourdieu does not call for the study of the points of view of individual scientists, or a critical uncovering of their personal biases, so much as for the study of the production of the basic perspectives that operate within intellectual fields more broadly. These are collective products. Identifying them is a source of insight into the unconscious cultural structures that shape intellectual orientations. These may be general to a culture or specific to the intellectual field. We saw an example in considering the ways in which anthropologists may be prone to an intellectualist bias in describing action in terms of following cultural rules. This follows not only from the typical self-understanding of intellectuals, but from reliance on discourse with informants as a way of discovering how practices are organized. Grasping how this bias gets produced is a way to improve the epistemic quality of analyses.

Beyond uncovering such possible biases, reflexivity offers the opportunity to see how the organization of the intellectual or academic field as a whole influences the knowledge that is produced within it. A simple example is the way in which the differentiation of disciplines organizes knowledge. Each discipline is predisposed to emphasize those features that are distinctive to it, reinforce its autonomy, and give it special advantage in relation to others. Topics that lie in the interstices may be neglected or relatively distorted. Bourdieu has attempted more systematically to analyze the social space of intellectual work, using a technique called correspondence analysis. This allows him to identify similarities in the products, activities, and relationships of different intellectuals, and graphically represent them as locations in a two or more dimensional space. In his major book on the organization of universities and intellectuals, *Homo Academicus*, he uses this technique to produce an overall picture of social space. This is useful for grasping the battle lines over specific intellectual orientations, and also the conflicts over using knowledge to support or challenge the social order. Law professors, for example, are more likely to be products of private schools and children of senior state officials, and not surprisingly also more likely to be supporters of the state and its elites. Social scientists, more likely to be the children of schoolteachers and professionals, and graduates of Parisian public lycées, tend toward a more critical engagement with the state. Obviously, these are relatively superficial attributes and Bourdieu offers much more detail. Paying attention to these sorts of differentiations among the different disciplines helps us to understand what is at stake when they struggle over intellectual issues – say, whether a new field of study should be recognized with departmental status – and also when their members engage in intellectual production.

Drawing on the example of the literary field, we can see something of what is at stake for Bourdieu here. His reflexivity is not aimed at negative criticism of science, but rather at improving it. He wishes social science to be more scientific, but this depends not simply on imitating natural science but on grasping the social conditions for the production of better scientific knowledge. Mere imitation of natural science (as in some economics) produces objectifications which make no sense of the real world of social practices because they treat social life as though it were solely material life with no room for culture or subjectivity. Bourdieu's analysis helps not only to show the limits of such an approach but to show why it can gain prestige and powerful allies, why it attracts recruits of certain backgrounds, and how it in turn supports the state and business elites. A better social science requires, as we saw earlier, breaking with the received familiarity of everyday social practices in order to grasp underlying truths. It requires reflexively studying the objective limits of objectivism. But it also requires maintaining the autonomy of social science, resisting the temptations to make social science directly serve goals of money or power. Just as literature depends on authors gaining the freedom to produce art for art's sake – with other members of the literary field as its arbiters – so science depends on producing truth for truth's sake, with other scientists as arbiters. This truth can become valuable for a variety of purposes. But just as there is a difference between basic physics and the use of the truths of physics in engineering projects, there is a

difference between producing basic sociological knowledge and using this in business or politics. It is especially easy for social scientists to be drawn into an overly immediate relationship to money or power; it is crucial that their first commitment be to the scientific field, because their most valuable contributions to broader public discourse come when they can speak honestly in the name of science. At the same time, truths that social science discovers are likely to make many upholders of the social order uneasy, because they will force more accurate recognitions of the ways in which power operates and social inequality is reproduced.

Bourdieu sees critical social science as politically significant, but he is careful to avoid "short-circuiting" the relationship between scholarly distinction and political voice. He has resisted trading on his celebrity, and kept his interventions to topics where he was especially knowledgeable, such as education or the situation of Algerians in France. More recently, he has written a bestselling polemic about television (1996) and several pointed essays on the ways in which market logic is being introduced into cultural life. His typical goal is to demystify the ways in which seemingly neutral institutions in fact make it harder for ordinary people to learn the truth about the state or public affairs. He has called for an "internationale" of intellectuals (to replace the old Internationale of the working-class movement). In this spirit, he has founded a review of books and intellectual debate, *Libère*, which now appears in half a dozen languages (though, curiously, not English). He has also overcome a longstanding resistance to making public declarations of conscience by signing petitions, in order to work with other leading figures to suggest in the midst of the Yugoslavian wars that there were other options besides passivity and massive high-altitude bombing. The media and the state seemed to suggest, wrote Bourdieu and his colleagues, that there was a simple choice between the NATO military campaign and ignoring the horrors of ethnic cleansing that Milosevic and others had unleashed. Not so, they argued, for there were other possible approaches to stemming the evils, including working more closely with Yugoslavia's immediate neighbors. And it was worth noting that NATO's intervention had actually increased the pace of ethnic cleansing. As Bourdieu (1999) has argued, the categories with which states "think" structure too much of the thinking of all of us in modern society; breaking with them is a struggle, but an important one.

More generally, Bourdieu's mode of intervention has been to use the methods of good social scientific research to expose misrecognitions that support injustice. A prime example is the enormous collective study of "the suffering of the world" produced under his direction (Bourdieu, 1993). This aimed not simply to expose poverty or hardship, but to challenge the dominant points of view that made it difficult for those living in comfort, and especially those running the state, to understand the lives of those who had to struggle most simply to exist. The book thus included both direct attempts to state the truths that could be seen from social spaces of suffering, and examinations of how the views of state officials and other elites prevented them from seeing these truths for themselves. The misrecognition built into the very categories of official knowledge was thus

one of its themes. Bourdieu and his colleagues entered the public discourse not simply as advocates, therefore, but specifically as social scientists.

In other cases as well, Bourdieu's interventions into public debate and politics take the form of trying to expose misrecognitions and false oppositions. Worried by the growing dominance of television over popular consciousness, Bourdieu (1998) wrote a short book analyzing its characteristic ways of collapsing the real range of possibilities into false choices and misrecognitions that support certain social interests at the expense of others. Indeed, throughout his work, one of Bourdieu's enduring concerns has been with symbolic violence. By this he means the ways in which people are harmed or held back not by force of arms but by the force of (mis)understanding. The very way in which knowledge is organized for the education of France's most elite students, for example, enshrines certain ways of thinking as right, or as simply "the way to think" (doxa) (see Bourdieu, 1989b, chapter 2). The most powerful forms of symbolic violence are not simply name calling, like saying the poor are lazy or immigrants greedy. Rather, they inhere in the very cognitive structure. Students (Bourdieu has in mind specifically students at France's *grandes écoles*) thus learn to categorize different ways of thinking, different kinds of cultural production, and different social values as higher or lower. It is easier for them later to rebel against a specific classification – say the view that jazz is lower than opera – than to resist the whole project of viewing the world hierarchically. Yet there is nothing intrinsic to the world that requires that all cultural objects be viewed on a scale from higher to lower; this is a specific, culturally reproduced way of thinking. And it is one that systematically encourages support for social hierarchies of other kinds and misrecognition of the actual nature of what people think, or do, or value.

When Bourdieu intervenes in public debates, it is almost always in favor of free exchange. The work and social value of artists, writers, and intellectuals depends on such free exchange – an unhampered and open creativity and communication. It thus depends on maintaining the autonomy of the artistic, literary, and scientific or intellectual fields. Boundaries need to be maintained between serious intellectual pursuit of truth and discourses – however smart – that seek only to use knowledge instrumentally. In this, he has stood clearly against those who would censor intellectual or cultural life in favor of their standards of morality or political expediency (see Bourdieu and Haacke, 1994).

Impact and Assessment

Bourdieu's work has had an exceptionally broad, but relatively uneven, impact in sociology.[10] His analyses of the educational structure have been basic to analysis of the role of education in the reproduction of social inequality. His influence over the sociology of education is strong, but in the English-speaking world at least, the impact of his analyses on the study of social stratification generally has been more limited. James Coleman assimilated Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to Gary Becker's notion of human capital, and called to Bourdieu's discomfort for a social engineering effort to enhance both. Research

in social stratification has continued to be predominantly highly objectivist, concerned with descriptions of hierarchies and predictions of patterns of mobility, rather than taking up Bourdieu's challenge to understand the nature of reproduction. This would require a more temporally dynamic, historical approach. It would also require paying attention to cultural as well as material factors, and to the differentiation of fields and problems of the conversion of capital.

Bourdieu's influence on empirical research has been greatest in the sociology of culture. This stems in large part from the range and power of his own empirical studies of forms of artistic production and consumption, and especially of the pursuit of distinction. These have, indeed, played a basic role in creating the contemporary (and highly vibrant) subfield of sociology of culture and have also shaped the broader interdisciplinary field of cultural studies. *Distinction* is easily the best known of these works, and it is extremely widely studied and cited. Somewhat surprisingly, however, there has not been much systematic cross-national research attempting to replicate the study or establish differences in the organization of tastes in different settings. Observers (e.g. Fowler, 1997; Swartz, 1997) have remarked that France may have an unusually tightly integrated cultural hierarchy; it remains for Bourdieu's approach to launch a series of similar empirical studies of anything resembling comparable breadth. Bourdieu himself has done comparative research on similar themes. *The Love of Art* (Bourdieu and Darbel, 1966), for example, focuses on attendance at museums. It is framed by the paradox that state support (and non-profit private organizations) make the great treasures of European art readily accessible to broad populations, most of whom ignore them. The achievement of democratic access is undercut by a widespread perception that the ability to appreciate art is something ineffable, an individual gift, intensely personal. This, Bourdieu and Darbel suggest, is simply a misrecognition underpinning the continued use of art to establish elite credentials in an ostensibly democratic but still highly unequal society. Their study (which looked at six European countries) was one of the earliest in a series of research projects that have established in considerable detail the empirical patterns in the appropriation of culture. Bourdieu did not limit himself to high culture, studying as well the "middlebrow" art form of photography, including that of amateurs (Bourdieu et al. 1965). In this and other research (including *Distinction*), he participated in a broad movement that was basic to the development of cultural studies. This was a challenge to the traditional dichotomy of high versus popular culture. Along with others, Bourdieu helped to debunk the notion that this represented simply an objective distinction inherent in the objects themselves, the nature of their production, or the capacities required to appreciate them. While Bourdieu and other researchers revealed differences in tastes, they showed these to be created by the system of cultural inequality, not reflections of objective differences.

Bourdieu is virtually unique among major theorists in the extent to which he has focused on and been influential through empirical research. Nonetheless, it is probably his theoretical contributions that have had the largest and most general impact in English-language social science. This is an influence that reaches

beyond sociology to anthropology, within which he is a comparably major theorist (with the influence of his work on Algeria and especially Kabylia predictably larger and that on France correspondingly reduced). Bourdieu's is probably the single most important theoretical approach to the sociology of culture. More than this, he has helped to bring the study of culture into a central place in sociology. This means paying attention to culture – and struggles over culture – as a crucial part of all social life, not simply approaching cultural objects as a special realm or subfield.

An overall appreciation of Bourdieu's work, however, must resist reading it in fragments: the work on education distinct from that on art and literature, that on power and inequality distinct from that devoted to overcoming the structure/action antinomy. Bourdieu's key concepts, like habitus, symbolic violence, cultural capital, and field, are useful in themselves, but derive their greatest theoretical significance from their interrelationships. These are best seen not mechanistically, in the abstract, but at work in sociological analysis. The fragments of Bourdieu's work are already exerting an influence, but the whole will have had its proper impact only with a broader shift in the sociological habitus that lies behind the production of new empirical understandings.

Bourdieu's work has been criticized from various perspectives. The most general critical review is that by Jenkins (1992). His grumbling is widely distributed but (aside from complaints about language and French styles in theory) centers on three contentions. First, Bourdieu is somewhat less original than at first appears. This is not an unreasonable point, for Bourdieu's work is indebted to influences (like Goffman and Mauss) that are not always reflected in formal citations. Second, Bourdieu's conceptual framework remains enmeshed in some of the difficulties to which he draws attention and seeks to escape. His invocations of "subjectivism" and "objectivism," for example, are made in the service of encouraging a less binary and more relational approach. Nonetheless, they do tend to reinstitute (if only heuristically) the very opposition they contest. Moreover, Jenkins (1992, p. 113) suggests, Bourdieu's approach entails reifying social structure while developing an abstract model of it; it becomes too cut and dried, too total a system. Third, for Jenkins Bourdieu remains ultimately, and despite disclaimers, a Marxist, and a deterministic one at that. His concept of misrecognition is an epistemologically suspect recourse to the tradition of analyzing ordinary understandings as "false consciousness." This raises the problems that: (a) if ordinary people's consciousness is deeply shaped by misrecognition, their testimony as research subjects becomes dubious evidence; and (b) the claim to have the ability to uncover misrecognition privileges the perspective of the analysts (and may even function to conceal empirical difficulties). Jenkins's reading of Bourdieu is filtered through English-language concerns, theoretical history, and stylistic tastes. Nonetheless, his points are serious and shared with other readers.

Most prominently, despite the "sheep's clothing" of his emphases on culture and action, Bourdieu is held by many critics to be a reductionist wolf underneath. That is, he is charged with adhering to or at least being excessively influenced by one or both of two schools of reductionistic social science: Marx-

ism and rational choice theory. It seems to me clear, for reasons given above (and also elaborated by Bourdieu), that he is not in any strict sense a follower of either of these approaches. He is certainly influenced by Marxism, but also by structuralism, Weber, Durkheim and Durkheimians from Mauss to Goffman, and a variety of other sources. Bourdieu's language of strategy and rational calculation is a different matter. It does not reveal adherence to rational choice theory; indeed, it does not stem from that source but from more general traditions in English philosophy and economics. Nonetheless, Bourdieu is concerned to show that a logic of interest shapes action, even when it is not conscious, and that economies operate in a general sense even in social fields that explicitly deny interest and calculation. "Economies" in this sense mean distributional effects – that social actors enter into interactions with different resources and receive different resources as results of those interactions. That actions cannot be altogether distanced from effects of this kind means, for Bourdieu, that they cannot be removed altogether from interest. This said, Bourdieu has not consistently found ways to express this most general sense of economism without seeming to many readers to espouse a narrower reduction to specifically economic concerns (Jenkins, 1992; Evens, 1999).[11]

The most biting critique of Bourdieu's alleged reductionism has been mounted by Alexander (1995). His attack is partly an attempt to underpin Alexander's own preferred approach to overcoming oppositions of structure and agency, one that would grant culture more autonomy and place a greater emphasis on the capacity of agents to achieve liberation through "authentic communication." Bourdieu, Alexander suggests, tries to make the sociology of knowledge substitute for the analysis of knowledge. That is, he tries to make accounts of how people take positions do the work of analyses of those positions and their normative and intellectual merits. In short, he is a determinist. Moreover, somewhat in common with Jenkins, Alexander sees Bourdieu as covertly accepting too much of the rationalism, structuralism, and Marxism he has argued against:

> Since the early 1960s, Bourdieu has taken aim at two intellectual opponents: structuralist semiotics and rationalistic behaviorism. Against these perspectives, he has reached out to pragmatism and phenomenology and announced his intention to recover the actor and the meaningfulness of her world. That he can do neither . . . is the result of his continuing commitment not only to a cultural form of Marxist thought but to significant strains in the very traditions he is fighting against. The result is that Bourdieu strategizes action (reincorporating behaviorism), subjects it to overarching symbolic codes (reincorporating structuralism), and subjugates both code and action to an underlying material base (reincorporating orthodox Marxism). (Alexander, 1995, p. 130)

Alexander attempts to substantiate this critique by both theoretical argument and (curiously, because he seems to exemplify in more hostile form the very position he decries in Bourdieu) an account of Bourdieu's intellectual development and successive enmities. The latter side of the argument amounts to suggesting that Bourdieu is disingenuous about the sources of his work, but

carries little theoretical weight in itself (Alexander's intellectual history is also tendentious). The former side raises a basic issue.

The strengths of Bourdieu's work lie in identifying the ways in which action is interested even when it appears not to be, the ways in which the reproduction of systems of unequal power and resources is accomplished even when it is contrary to explicit goals of actors, and the ways in which the structure of fields and (sometimes unconscious) strategies for accumulating capital shape the content and meaning of "culture" produced within them.[12] Bourdieu's theory is weaker in offering an account of creativity itself and of deep historical changes in the nature of social life or deep differences in cultural orientation. No theoretical orientation provides an equally satisfactory approach to all analytic problems, and certainly none can be judged to have solved them all.

Alexander makes a false start, however, in presenting Bourdieu as simply "fighting against" two specific traditions. His relation to each is more complex, as is his relationship to a range of other theoretical approaches. From the beginning, and throughout his work, Bourdieu has sought precisely to transcend simple oppositions, and has approached different intellectual traditions in a dialectical manner, both criticizing one-sided reliance on any single perspective and learning from many. It is neither surprise nor indictment, for example, that Bourdieu incorporated a great deal of structuralism; it is important to be precise in noting that he challenged the notion that semiotics (or cultural meanings) could adequately be understood autonomously from social forces and practices. Likewise, Bourdieu has labored against the notion that the meanings of behavior are transparent and manifested in purely objective interests or actors' own labels for their behavior. But this does not mean that he has ever sought to dispense with objective factors in social analysis.

It is appropriate to close on a note of contention, not just because Bourdieu has critics but because his theory is critical. It is a contentious, and evolving, engagement with a wide range of other theoretical orientations, problems of empirical analysis, and issues in the social world. Bourdieu's theory is contentious partly because it unsettles received wisdom and partly because it challenges misrecognitions that are basic to the social order – like the ideas that education is meritocratic more than an institutional basis for the reproduction of inequality, or indeed that if the latter is true this is simply something done to individuals rather than something they (each of us) participate in in complex ways. As I have suggested – and, indeed, as Bourdieu himself has indicated – it is also in a strong sense incomplete. It is not a Parsonsian attempt to present a completely coherent system. It does have enduring motifs and recurrent analytic strategies as well as a largely stable but gradually growing conceptual framework. It does not have or ask for closure. Most basically, Bourdieu's theory asks for commitment to creating knowledge – and thus to a field shaped by that interest. This commitment launches the very serious game of social science, which in Bourdieu's eyes has the chance to challenge even the state and its operational categories. In this sense, indeed, the theory that explains reproduction and the social closure of fields is a possible weapon in the struggle for more openness in social life.

Notes

1 See Taylor (1993) on Bourdieu's account of the limits of rule-following as an explication of action and its relationship to Wittgenstein.

2 Biographical sources on Bourdieu are limited. The best available general discussion of his life and work is Swartz (1997); see also Robbins (1993) and Jenkins (1992). Various articles by Bourdieu's close collaborator Loïc Wacquant provide helpful interpretation; see especially his contributions to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992). Fowler (1997) situates Bourdieu in relation to cultural theory. The essays in Shusterman (1999) and Calhoun et al. (1993) consider several different aspects of Bourdieu's work.

3 Back in France, Bourdieu was responsible for introducing Goffman's work and arranging the translation of several of his books.

4 In this regard, Bourdieu differed from Alain Touraine, the other most prominent French sociologist of his generation and also a member of Aron's Center. Touraine embraced the student revolt more wholeheartedly and his sociology presented a much more voluntaristic cast. He also broke with Aron and formed his own center (see Colquhoun, 1986).

5 The concept has classical roots, and was revived for sociological use by Norbert Elias as well as Bourdieu; on Elias's version, see Chartier (1988).

6 The notion of "sense" carries, in French as in English, both cognitivist and bodily connotations: to "make sense" and to "sense something." When Bourdieu rewrote and slightly expanded *Outline* in the late 1970s – about the time it was first becoming known in English – he chose the French title *Le sens pratique*. This second version of *Outline* (which has never been comparably influential or as widely read as it deserves) has the English title *The Logic of Practice*, which sacrifices one side of the double meaning.

7 Writing sentences like this is part of Bourdieu's habitus, his connection to the academic game, not least because their very complexity forces us to make the effort to hold several ideas in mind at once, resisting the apparent simplicity of everyday formations. Nonetheless, they do not translate elegantly or read easily.

8 It is not always recognized – but should be – how much this aspect of Bourdieu's theory follows and extends Weber's (1922) analysis of class (economic position) and status.

9 Bourdieu's most sustained analysis of such issues occurs in *Distinction* (1979), a book that attempts "a social critique of the judgement of taste." It is a mixture of empirical analysis of the kinds of tastes characteristic of people at different positions in the French class hierarchy and theoretical argument against those who would legitimate a system of class-based classifications as reflecting a natural order. In other words, Bourdieu shows tastes not to reflect simply greater or lesser "cultivation" or ability to appreciate objective beauty or other virtues, but to be the result of a struggle over classification in which some members of society are systematically advantaged. Lower classes, he contends, make a virtue of necessity, while elites demonstrate their ability to transcend it. The results include working-class preferences for more "realistic" art and comfortable, solid furniture, and elite preferences for more "abstract" art and often uncomfortable or fragile antique furniture.

10 See Bourdieu's (1998) complaints about how he has been understood in translation.

11 Evens's (1999) critique also carries the interesting challenge that Bourdieu has not demonstrated an ability to grasp the radically other, and thus the situated rather

than universal and mutable rather than immutable character of the kind of action and social order he describes.

12 Alexander (1995, p. 152) terms "unconscious strategy" an oxymoron. It is true that the notion invites misunderstanding and confusion, since it is hard to distinguish when it means that results fell into place "as if" there had been a strategy at work, and when it means that actors make a million small choices that add up to a strategy of which they are never consciously aware as such. In any case, Alexander fails himself to consider either of these possibilities clearly. The former is basic to modern economic analysis; the latter is at the heart of the idea of "sense of play," which Bourdieu has argued should replace a mechanistic, rule-following approach to the production of action.

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