

INTRODUCTION TO PART VI

The most influential and original French sociologist since Durkheim, Pierre Bourdieu (b. 1930) is at once a leading theorist and an empirical researcher of extraordinarily broad interests and distinctive style. In fact, Bourdieu has strongly criticized what he calls "theoretical theory" – that is, work that is more concerned with building abstract systems of categories and concepts than with using them to understand the world. Bourdieu's unique theoretical perspective has been stated most systematically in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) and *Logic of Practice* (1990). But the theory has been developed in an wide array of empirical investigations – among them, studies of labor markets in Algeria (*Algeria 1960* [1979]), class distinctions in France (*Distinction* [1984]), education (*Homo Academicus* [1988]), and artistic and literary fields (*The Rules of Art* [1996]). His recent work has also examined the ways that globalization threatens the achievements of social struggles and the building of relatively autonomous social fields.

Born in the Béarn region of southwestern France, Bourdieu went on to study at the Ecole Normale Supérieure. He spent time in Algeria, where he did his early field work, and later began to gain academic notice in France. In 1981, Bourdieu was awarded a chair at the prestigious Collège de France, a position he held until his recent retirement. He remains active in a wide variety of research projects, and is the subject of a feature-length documentary, "La sociologie est un sport de combat" ("Sociology is a Combat Sport").

Structure and Action: False Dichotomies

Bourdieu has described one of his central motivations as a determination to transcend the closely related but misleading dichotomies of objectivism/subjectivism and of structure/action.¹ Taken together, these dichotomies have marked relatively stable poles in the social sciences, with structural explanation tending to see social life as completely external and objective, and action-oriented sociology looking at social life through subjective experience. Bourdieu suggests that it is crucial not just to see both sides of the issue, but also to see how they are inseparably related.

In recent French social theory, the structuralist anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss was the dominant representative of objectivist thinking. Structuralism was in many ways the descendant of Durkheim's work, especially his later examinations of culture. Bourdieu himself was heavily influenced by structuralism – a good example is his continued interest in explaining the stable cultural oppositions that appear in language, physical space, and social space. But structuralism attempted to understand the meaning of such oppositions by taking up an objective, "scientific" point of view from outside of the action. It thus tended to explain the structuring of action only as the result of external forces that either push us in one direction or constrain us from going in another. Bourdieu, by contrast, has argued for a social science based on the study of the doings of actors who always have some practical knowledge about their world, even if they cannot articulate that knowledge. In other

words, social structure is internalized by each of us because we have learned from the experience of previous actions a practical mastery of how to do things that takes objective constraints into account.

Bourdieu's stress on the presence of social structure inside the actor is not only a challenge to objectivism, but also to most forms of subjectivism. In subjectivist accounts, the observer takes the individuals' own motivations as the source of the action. The major representative of this approach in France was Jean-Paul Sartre, but it was also characteristic of the phenomenology of Alfred Schütz and some forms of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology. Bourdieu has criticized this way of thinking because it tends to miss the cultural or material constraints that shape people's actions, making each action appear to be "a kind of antecedent-less confrontation between the subject and the world."² In other words, 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. As a result, subjectivist approaches commonly present social life as much less structured, and much more contingent, than it really is.

In short, objective accounts can help us understand structure, and subjective accounts can help us understand action. But both are one-sided in that they divorce action from structure. Bourdieu's effort has been 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 in action. Understood in this way, structures are "structuring" in the sense that they guide and constrain action. But they are also "structured" in the sense that they are generated and reproduced by actors. Bourdieu thus insists on a dialectic of structure and action, but he also makes 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. The "objective truth" is not simply the sum total of the facts that happen to exist (as a purely empiricist view might suggest). Rather, 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. This is hard, because it demands that we call into question our taken-for-granted, preconscious understandings of the world and our place in it.

Habitus and Misrecognition

The way to get an empirical handle on the dynamic relationship between structure and action, Bourdieu contends, is through what he terms a relational analysis of social tastes and practices. By "relational," Bourdieu means that tastes and practices are organized by actors' relative locations in social space. This relational analysis is organized by three central concepts – positions, dispositions ("*habitus*") and position-taking (or "practices").

Actors occupy positions in social space relative to one another. Such positions may be defined by occupation, education, or proximity to power. What matters is not exactly how such positions are measured, but that people stake their claims to social status on them, and therefore use them to understand their place in the world.

Positions are maintained and signaled to others through a process of position-taking (translations sometimes retain the French term "*prises de position*"). For example, certain social positions are signaled by styles of dress, leisure activities, or consumer choices. Bourdieu stresses that there is no direct, mechanical connection between positions in the social structure and the practices that attach to them. In different times and different places, different sets of practices work just as well to signal a given position. In one of the readings included below, Bourdieu uses the example of names that businesses chose for themselves – high-status shops in New York often have French names, while similar ones in Paris often have English names. In other cases, practices can either gain or lose prestige over time.

If there is no direct connection between practices and positions (Bourdieu calls this the "substantialist" position), then what ties the two together? Bourdieu argues that the *habitus* is the site of the interplay between structure and practice. It is on the basis of *habitus* that Bourdieu defines social groups (including social classes), since those who occupy similar positions in the social structure will have the same *habitus*. The problem is that while positions and practices can be observed directly, *habitus* cannot. Because of this, Bourdieu's empirical studies often follow a similar method. First, he outlines the "social space" of positions and the "symbolic space" of practices, and shows how they map onto one another. Then, he uses this correspondence as a guide to reconstruct the *habitus* that links them together. *Habitus* refers to the relatively stable systems of dispositions that are shaped by the experiences of actors in particular positions in the social structure, which "generate and organize practices and representations."³ The *habitus* is thus the site of our understanding of the world. In order for us to live in the social world, we require the kind of orientation to action and awareness that *habitus* gives.

In this sense, the *habitus* is not only constraining, it is also enabling. It does not operate as a set of strict rules about what to do or not to do, what to like or not to like. Instead, it works as a set of loose guidelines of which actors are not necessarily aware. Because they are loose guidelines, these dispositions are flexible, even though they are deeply rooted. They leave a great deal of room for improvisation and are easily applied to new settings, but in a way shaped by rules and social learning. As the word suggests, *habitus* is acquired through repetition, like a habit; we know it in our bodies, not just our minds. A former rugby player, Bourdieu often uses the metaphor of games to convey his sense of social life. But by "game" he doesn't mean mere diversions or entertainments. Rather, he means the experience of being passionately involved in a kind of activity in which the physical and mental are merged in action. In a game there are formal rules but also a constant need to improvise strategy according to unarticulated but deeply ingrained "sense" of the game. Out of what meets with approval or doesn't, what works or does not, we develop a characteristic way of generating new actions, of improvising the moves of the game of our lives. The resistance we confront in struggling to do well teaches us to accept inequality in our societies. Although it often reflects class or other aspects of social structure, it comes to feel natural. We learn and incorporate into our *habitus* a sense of what we can "reasonably" expect. This shapes how we choose careers, how we decide which people are "right" for us to date or marry, and how we raise our children.

These taken-for-granted dispositions of the *habitus* also imply misrecognitions, partial and distorted understandings. The idea of misrecognition allows 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 conform to either power structures or the requirements of the social order as a whole. "Ideology" is commonly understood as a set of partial and distorted beliefs that serves some specific set of social interests. 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. Bourdieu rejects this. One can shake the effects of specific ideologies, but one cannot live without taken-for-granted assumptions that come with *habitus*. Misrecognition is built into the very practical mastery that makes our actions effective.

Because of this, sociology is itself a "combat sport," according to Bourdieu. Sociologists must struggle against the tendency everyone has to accept the products of social history as though they were natural. This means also that we should not accept people's everyday accounts of their action as fully explaining it. We may say, for example, that holiday gifts are given without expectation of return, but in fact where there is no reciprocity we tend to stop giving. More generally, participation in any set of social practices embeds us in characteristic misrecognitions. Bourdieu saw this starkly in his early research in Algeria. The French colonists understood themselves as part of a civilizing mission in which modern France would help traditional Algeria. But they systematically misrecognized the power and exploitation that were basic to the French presence. These sparked the Algerian struggle for independence and became manifest in the bloody French effort to repress it.

Fields and Capital

One of the ways in which Bourdieu uses the metaphor of "games" is to describe the different fields on which distinct games are played. Like a soccer field or a rugby field, a social field is simply the terrain upon which the game is played. Broadly speaking, a field is a domain of social life that has its own rules of organization, generates a set of positions, and supports the practices associated with them. Like players in a game, participants in social fields have different positions. For example, a small town lawyer and a Supreme Court Justice are both participants in the legal field. But their different positions open different sets of opportunities for them, and different sets of strategies that they may take. Bourdieu sees action in a field not simply as a static reflection of established positions, but as the result of many contending projects of position-taking.

The possession of different forms of "capital" provides the basic structure for the organization of fields, and thus the generation of the various *habitus* and practices associated with them. "A capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field," Bourdieu claims.⁴ 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. By conceptualizing capital as taking many different forms, 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.

Bourdieu's analysis of the differences in forms of capital and dynamics of conversion between them is one of the most original and important features of his theory (though it builds on Weber's distinction between class and status). There are two senses in which capital is converted from one form to another. One is as part of the intergenerational reproduction of capital. Wealthy people try to make sure that their children go to good colleges. In America at least, this often involves the use of significant economic capital, since good colleges are often expensive colleges. But it also involves cultural capital, for example in knowing which expensive schools are "good" – that is, prestigious – and which are not. The second sense of conversion of capital is more immediate. By attending a prestigious college, and gaining lots of social connections among the people there, a person may then attempt to turn social and cultural capital into economic capital by landing a highly paid job.

In his empirical investigations, Bourdieu generally discusses two ways in which capital orders the social space. The most basic is what he calls "capital volume," which distinguishes between positions with a great deal of capital overall (and the practices associated with them) and those without much capital of any kind. Of course, this contrast between high and low is so obvious to most members of society that not much energy has to go into maintaining the social distance that goes along with it. Much more energy goes into maintaining the second dimension, which might be called the capital mix. This distinguishes between positions that are high on one dimension (for example, cultural capital) and those that are high on another (such as economic capital). Those positions with relatively high capital volume are most invested in maintaining this opposition. This is interesting, because it shifts attention from the opposition between the elites and the masses to the struggle between different privileged groups over the control of symbolic goods. As Bourdieu claims, "minimum objective difference in social space can coincide with maximum subjective distance. This is partly because what is 'closest' presents the greatest threat to social identity."⁵

Bourdieu situates his logic of multiple fields and specific forms of capital in relation to a more general notion 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 power in other institutional domains. By contrast, business people and lawyers are more able to do this. The question is not just who is higher or lower in terms of overall capital, but also how different groups relate to each other based on the kind of capital they control. This is true at all levels of the social hierarchy, as for example holders of a "white collar" job may feel superior to "blue collar" workers even if they are paid no more. This is based on a claim to cultural capital and its prestige. It also reflects a general tendency to make social classifications tools of domination. More generally, Bourdieu draws attention

to "symbolic violence," the ways in which people may be harmed by the ways they are labeled or categorized socially.

Structure and Practice in Social Life

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 mechanically, in the abstract, but at work in sociological analysis. Indeed, Bourdieu is virtually unique among major theorists in the extent to which he has focused on and been influential through empirical research.

Bourdieu's theory is thus often embedded in empirical analyses, but he constantly tries to signal his theoretical positions to his readers. He does this not only in his arguments, but also in his writing style. This can make it difficult to read his work for the first time. Understanding what Bourdieu is doing and why he is doing it can help, however. There are two stylistic elements that are most baffling to new readers. The first is the self-conscious circularity of the sentences. English-language readers who are used to a more linear writing style are often bothered by this, though the style will seem more familiar to those who have some practice reading French social theory. By writing in this manner, Bourdieu hopes to show where his argument might diverge from the reader's assumptions. The second element that causes some confusion is the use of what Bourdieu calls a "hierarchy of text." The main text is broken by passages that are offset or printed in a smaller font. This is meant to break the formal facade of scientific argument with less formal asides and examples that show the development of the ideas. It is also intended to bridge the distance between author and reader by making the text more like a conversation.

The three readings that follow are not meant to cover the entire range of Bourdieu's writing. Instead, they illustrate key points of his theoretical arguments, and Symbolic Space" is an argument for the importance of relational analysis. It is the most plainly written of the three essays, since it was originally presented as a lecture to introduce his work on French society to a Japanese audience. The second reading, "Structures, *Habitus*, Practices," from *The Logic of Practice*, is a more theoretical treatment of the concept of *habitus* and the way it mediates between the social space of positions and the symbolic space of positions-taking. The stress is on the way that the *habitus* is oriented to concrete practices. It is only by studying practices, Bourdieu tells us, that we can see the connection between structure and action. Bourdieu also stresses the social nature of the *habitus*. Even when we are set of internalized dispositions that is a result of social interaction. The *habitus* is therefore social in the same way as the concept of "self" in the writing of George Herbert Mead. The last reading, "The Field of Cultural Production, Or: The Economic World Reversed," discusses the way different forms of capital structure a particular field. The case in question is the literary field, which Bourdieu uses as an example of artistic production more generally. Bourdieu shows that while the literary field has its own organizing logic, it is not completely separate from consid-

erations of power. Oppositions between different sets of positions are structured simultaneously by relation to the economic market and by claims to artistic purity. High status in the field demanded not just talent, or vision, but also a commitment to "art for art's sake." This meant producing works specifically designed for the field of art, rather than the market.

Notes

- 1 See Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 7).
- 2 Bourdieu (1990: 42).
- 3 Bourdieu (1990: 53).
- 4 Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 101).
- 5 Bourdieu (1990: 137).

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20 Structures, Habitus,

Practices

Pierre Bourdieu

Objectivism constitutes the social world as a spectacle offered to an observer who takes up a 'point of view' on the action and who, putting into the object the principles of his relation to the object, proceeds as if it were intended solely for knowledge and as if all the interactions within it were purely symbolic exchanges. This viewpoint is the one taken from high positions in the social structure, from which the social world is seen as a representation (as the word is used in idealist philosophy; but also as in painting) or a performance (in the theatrical or musical sense), and practices are seen as no more than the acting-out of roles, the playing of scores or the implementation of plans. The theory of practice as practice insists, contrary to positivist materialism, that the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorded, and, contrary to intellectualist idealism, that the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions. It is possible to step down from the sovereign viewpoint from which objectivist idealism orders the world, as Marx demands in the *Theses on Feuerbach*, but without having to abandon to it the 'active aspect' of apprehension of the world by reducing knowledge to a mere recording. To do this, one has to situate oneself *within* 'real activity as such', that is, in the practical relation to the world, the preoccupied, active presence in the world through which the world imposes its presence, with its urgencies, its things to be done and said, things made to be said, which directly govern words and deeds without ever unfolding as a spectacle. One has to escape from the realism of the structure, to which objectivism, a necessary stage in breaking with primary experience and constructing the objective relationships, necessarily leads when it hypostatizes these relations by treating them as realities already constituted outside of the history of the group – without falling back into subjectivism, which is quite incapable of giving an account of the necessity of the social world. To do this, one has to return to practice, the site of the dialectic of the *opus operatum* and the *modus operandi*; of the objectified products and the incorporated products of historical practice; of structures and *habitus*.

The bringing to light of the presuppositions inherent in objectivist construction has paradoxically been delayed by the efforts of all those who, in linguistics as in anthropology, have sought to 'correct' the structuralist model by appealing to 'context' or 'situation' to account for variations, exceptions and accidents (instead of making them simple variants, absorbed into the structure, as the structuralists do). They have thus

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avoided a radical questioning of the objectivist mode of thought, when, that is, they have not simply fallen back on to the free choice of a rootless, unattached, pure subject. Thus, the method known as 'situational analysis', which consists of 'observing people in a variety of social situations' in order to determine 'the way in which individuals are able to exercise choices within the limits of a specified social structure',¹ remains locked within the framework of the rule and the exception, which Edmund Leach (often invoked by the exponents of this method) spells out explicitly: 'I postulate that structural systems in which all avenues of social action are narrowly institutionalized are impossible. In all viable systems, there must be an area where the individual is free to make choices so as to manipulate the system to his advantage.'²

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.

It is, of course, never ruled out that the responses of the *habitus* may be accompanied by a strategic calculation tending to perform in a conscious mode the operation that the *habitus* performs quite differently, namely an estimation of chances presupposing transformation of the past effect into an expected objective. But these responses are first defined, without any calculation, in relation to objective potentialities, immediately inscribed in the present, things to do or not to do, things to say or not to say, in relation to a probable, 'upcoming' future (*un à venir*), which – in contrast to the future seen as 'absolute possibility' (*absolute Möglichkeit*) in Hegel's (or Sartre's) sense, projected by the pure project of a 'negative freedom' – puts itself forward with an urgency and a claim to existence that excludes all deliberation. Stimuli do not exist for practice in their objective truth, as conditional, conventional triggers, acting only on condition that they encounter agents conditioned to recognize them. The practical world that is constituted in the relationship with the *habitus*, acting as a system of cognitive and motivating structures, is a world of already realized ends – procedures to follow, paths to take – and of objects endowed with a 'permanent teleological character', in Husserl's phrase, tools or institutions. This is because the regularities inherent in an arbitrary condition ('arbitrary' in Saussure's and Mauss's sense) tend to appear as necessary, even natural, since they are the basis of the schemes of perception and appreciation through which they are apprehended.

If a very close correlation is regularly observed between the scientifically constructed objective probabilities (for example, the chances of access to a particular good) and agents' subjective aspirations ('motivations' and 'needs'), this is not because agents consciously adjust their aspirations to an exact evaluation of their chances of success, like a gambler organizing his stakes on the basis of perfect information about his chances of winning. In reality, the dispositions durably influenced by the possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in the objective conditions (which science apprehends

through statistical regularities such as the probabilities objectively attached to a group or class) generate dispositions objectively compatible with these conditions and in a sense pre-adapted to their demands. The most improbable practices are therefore excluded, as unthinkable, by a kind of immediate submission to order that inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, that is, to refuse what is anyway derived and to will the inevitable. The very conditions of production of the *habitus*, a virtue made of necessity, mean that the anticipations it generates tend to ignore the restriction to which the validity of calculation of probabilities is subordinated, namely that the experimental conditions should not have been modified. Unlike scientific estimations, which are corrected after each experiment according to rigorous rules of calculation, the anticipations of the *habitus*, practical hypotheses based on past experience, give disproportionate weight to early experiences. Through the economic and social necessity that they bring to bear on the relatively autonomous world of the domestic economy and family relations, or more precisely, through the specifically familial manifestations of this external necessity (forms of the division of labour between the sexes, household objects, modes of consumption, parent-child relations, etc.), the structures characterizing a determinate class of conditions of existence produce the structures of the *habitus*, which in their turn are the basis of the perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences.

The *habitus*, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the ‘correctness’ of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms. This system of dispositions – a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices, an internal law through which the law of external necessities, irreducible to immediate constraints, is constantly exerted – is the principle of the continuity and regularity which objectivism sees in social practices without being able to account for it; and also of the regulated transformations that cannot be explained either by the extrinsic, instantaneous determinisms of mechanistic sociology or by the purely internal but equally instantaneous determination of spontaneist subjectivism. Overriding the spurious opposition between the forces inscribed in an earlier state of the system, outside the body, and the internal forces arising, instantaneously as motivations springing from free will, the internal dispositions – the internalization of externality – enable the external forces to exert themselves, but in accordance with the specific logic of the organisms in which they are incorporated, i.e. in a durable, systematic and non-mechanical way. As an acquired system of generative schemes, the *habitus* makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the particular conditions of its production – and only those. Through the *habitus*, the structure of which it is the product governs practice, not along the paths of a mechanical determinism, but within the constraints and limits initially set on its inventions. This infinite yet strictly limited generative capacity is difficult to understand only so long as one remains locked in the usual antinomies – which the concept of the *habitus* aims to transcend – of determinism and freedom, conditioning and creativity, consciousness and the unconscious, or the individual and society. Because the *habitus* is an infinite capacity for generating products – thoughts,

perceptions, expressions and actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, the conditioned and conditional freedom it provides is as remote from creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning.

Nothing is more misleading than the illusion created by hindsight in which all the traces of a life, such as the works of an artist or the events at a biography, appear as the realization of an essence that seems to pre-exist them. Just as a mature artistic style is not contained, like a seed, in an original inspiration but is continuously defined and redefined in the dialectic between the objectifying intention and the already objectified intention, so too the unity of meaning which, after the event, may seem to have preceded the acts and works announcing the final significance, retrospectively transforming the various stages of the temporal series into mere preparatory sketches, is constituted through the confrontation between questions that only exist in and for a mind armed with a particular type of schemes and the solutions obtained through application of these same schemes. The genesis of a system of works or practices generated by the same *habitus* (or homologous *habitus*, such as those that underlie the unity of the life-style of a group or a class) cannot be described either as the autonomous development of a unique and always self-identical essence, or as a continuous creation of novelty, because it arises from the necessary yet unpredictable confrontation between the *habitus* and an event that can exercise a pertinent increment on the *habitus* only if the latter snatches it from the contingency of the accidental and constitutes it as a problem by applying to it the very principles of its solution, and also because the *habitus*, like every ‘art of inventing’, is what makes it possible to produce an infinite number of practices that are relatively unpredictable (like the corresponding situations) but also limited in their diversity. In short, being the product of a particular class of objective regularities, the *habitus* tends to generate all the ‘reasonable’, ‘common-sense’, behaviours (and only these) which are possible within the limits of these regularities, and which are likely to be positively sanctioned because they are objectively adjusted to the logic characteristic of a particular field, whose objective future they anticipate. At the same time, ‘without violence, art or argument’, it tends to exclude all ‘extravagances’ (‘not for the likes of us’), that is, all the behaviours that would be negatively sanctioned because they are incompatible with the objective conditions.

Because they tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the conditions in which their generative principle was produced while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures that constitute the *habitus*, practices cannot be deduced either from the present conditions which may seem to have provoked them or from the past conditions which have produced the *habitus*, the durable principle of their production. They can therefore only be accounted for by relating the social conditions in which the *habitus* that generated them was constituted, to the social conditions in which it is implemented, that is, through the scientific work of performing the interrelationship of these two states of the social world that the *habitus* performs, while concealing it, in and through practice. The ‘unconscious’ which enables one to dispense with this interrelating, is never anything other than the forgetting of history which history itself produces by realizing the

objective structures that it generates in the quasi-natures of *habitus*. As Durkheim³ puts it:

In each one of us, in differing degrees, is contained the person we were yesterday, and indeed, in the nature of things it is even true that our past *personae* predominate in us, since the present is necessarily insignificant when compared with the long period of the past because of which we have emerged in the form we have today. It is just that we don't directly feel the influence of these past selves precisely because they are so deeply rooted within us. They constitute the unconscious part of ourselves. Consequently we have a strong tendency not to recognize their existence and to ignore their legitimate demands. By contrast, with the most recent acquisitions of civilization we are vividly aware of them just because they are recent and consequently have not had time to be assimilated into our collective unconscious.

The *habitus* – embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. This autonomy is that of the past, enacted and acting, which, functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so ensures the permanence in change that makes the individual agent a world within the world. The *habitus* is a spontaneity without consciousness or will, opposed as much to the mechanical necessity of things without history in mechanistic theories as it is to the reflexive freedom of subjects 'without inertia' in rationalist theories.

Thus the dualistic vision that recognizes only the self-transparent act of consciousness or the externally determined thing has to give way to the real logic of action, which brings together two objectifications of history, objectification in bodies and objectification in institutions or, which amounts to the same thing, two states of capital, objectified and incorporated, through which a distance is set up from necessity and its urgencies. This logic is seen in paradigmatic form in the dialectic of expressive dispositions and instituted means of expression (morphological, syntactic and lexical instruments, literary genres, etc.) which is observed in the interactionless invention of regulated improvisation. Endlessly overtaken by his own words, with which he maintains a relation of 'carry and be carried', as Nicolai Hartmann put it, the virtuoso finds in his discourse the triggers for his discourse, which goes along like a train laying its own rails.⁴ In other words, being produced by a *modus operandi* which is not consciously mastered, the discourse contains an 'objective intention', as the Scholastics put it, which outruns the conscious intentions of its apparent author and constantly offers new pertinent stimuli to the *modus operandi* of which it is the product and which functions as a kind of 'spiritual automaton'. If witticisms strike as much by their unpredictability as by their retrospective necessity, the reason is that the *trouaille* that brings to light long buried resources presupposes a *habitus* that so perfectly possesses the objectively available means of expression that it is possessed by them, so much so that it asserts its freedom from them by realizing the rarest of the possibilities that they necessarily imply. The dialectic of the meaning of the language and the 'sayings of the tribe' is a particular and particularly significant case of the dialectic between *habitus* and institutions, that is, between two modes of objectification of past history, in which

there is constantly created a history that inevitably appears, like witticisms, as both original and inevitable.

This durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations is a practical sense which reactivates the sense objectified in institutions. 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 of an individual history, imposing its particular logic on incorporation, and 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. Or rather, the *habitus* is what enables the institution to attain full realization: it is through the capacity for incorporation, which exploits the body's readiness to take seriously the performative magic of the social, that the king, the banker or the priest are hereditary monarchy, financial capitalism or the Church made flesh. Property appropriates its owner, embodying itself in the form of a structure generating practices perfectly conforming with its logic and its demands. If one is justified in saying, with Marx, that 'the lord of an entailed estate, the first-born son, belongs to the land', that 'it inherits him', or that the 'persons' of capitalists are the 'personification' of capital, this is because the purely social and quasimagical process of socialization, which is inaugurated by the act of making that institutes an individual as an eldest son, an heir, a successor, a Christian, or simply as a man (as opposed to a woman), with all the corresponding privileges and obligations, and which is prolonged, strengthened and confirmed by social treatments that tend to transform instituted difference into natural distinction, produces quite real effects, durably inscribed in the body and in belief. An institution, even an economy, is complete and fully viable only if it is durably objectified not only in things, that is, in the logic, transcending individual agents, of a particular field, but also in bodies, in durable dispositions to recognize and comply with the demands immanent in the field.

In so far – and only in so far – as *habitus* are the incorporation of the same history, or more concretely, of the same history objectified in *habitus* and structures, the practices they generate are mutually intelligible and immediately adjusted to the structures, and also objectively concerted and endowed with an objective meaning that is at once unitary and systematic, transcending subjective intentions and conscious projects, whether individual or collective. One of the fundamental effects of the harmony between practical sense and objectified meaning (*sens*) is the production of a common-sense world, whose immediate self-evidence is accompanied by the objectivity provided by consensus on the meaning of practices and the world, in other words the harmonization of the agents' experiences and the constant reinforcement each of them receives from expression – individual or collective (in festivals, for example), improvised or programmed (commonplaces, sayings) – of similar or identical experiences.

The homogeneity of *habitus* that is observed within the limits of a class of conditions of existence and social conditionings is what causes practices and works to be immediately

intelligible and foreseeable, and hence taken for granted. The *habitus* makes questions of intention superfluous, not only in the production but also in the deciphering of practices and works. Automatic and impersonal, significant without a signifying intention, ordinary practices lend themselves to an understanding that is no less automatic and impersonal. The picking up of the objective intention they express requires neither 'reactivation' of the 'lived' intention of their originator, nor the 'intentional transfer into the Other' cherished by the phenomenologists and all advocates of a 'participationist' conception of history or sociology, nor tacit or explicit inquiry ('What do you mean?') as to other people's intentions. 'Communication of consciousnesses' presupposes community of 'unconsciousnesses' (that is, of linguistic and cultural competences). Deciphering the objective intention of practices and works has nothing to do with 'reproduction' (*Nachbildung*, as the early Dilthey puts it) of lived experiences and the unnecessary and uncertain reconstitution of an 'intention' which is not their real origin.

The objective homogenizing of group or class *habitus* that results from homogeneity of conditions of existence is what enables practices to be objectively harmonized without any calculation or conscious reference to a norm and mutually adjusted in the absence of any direct interaction or, *a fortiori*, explicit co-ordination. The interaction itself owes its form to the objective structures that have produced the dispositions of the interacting agents, which continue to assign them their relative positions in the interaction and elsewhere. 'Imagine', Leibniz suggests, 'two clocks or watches in perfect agreement as to the time. This may occur in one of three ways. The first consists in mutual influence; the second is to appoint a skilful workman to correct them and synchronize constantly; the third is to construct these two clocks with such art and precision that one can be assured of their subsequent agreement'. So long as one ignores the true principle of the conductorless orchestration which gives regularity, unity and systematicity to practices even in the absence of any spontaneous or imposed organization of individual projects, one is condemned to the naive artificialism that recognizes no other unifying principle than conscious co-ordination. The practices of the members of the same group or, in a differentiated society, the same class, are always more and better harmonized than the agents know or wish, because, as Leibniz again says, 'following only (his) own laws', each 'nonetheless agrees with the other'. The *habitus* is precisely this immanent law, *lex insita*, inscribed in bodies by identical histories, which is the precondition not only for the co-ordination of practices but also for practices of co-ordination. The corrections and adjustments the agents themselves consciously carry out presuppose mastery of a common code; and undertakings of collective mobilization cannot succeed without a minimum of concordance between the *habitus* of the mobilizing agents (prophet, leader, etc.) and the dispositions of those who recognize themselves in their practices or words, and, above all, without the inclination towards grouping that springs from the spontaneous orchestration of dispositions.

It is certain that every effort at mobilization aimed at organizing collective action has to reckon with the dialectic of dispositions and occasions that takes place in every agent, whether he mobilizes or is mobilized (the hysteresis of *habitus* is doubtless one explanation of the structural lag between opportunities and the dispositions to grasp them which is the cause of missed opportunities and, in particular, of the frequently observed

incapacity to think historical crises in categories of perception and thought other than those of the past, however revolutionary). It is also certain that it must take account of the objective orchestration established among dispositions that are objectively coordinated because they are ordered by more or less identical objective necessities. It is, however, extremely dangerous to conceive collective action by analogy with individual action, ignoring all that the former owes to the relatively autonomous logic of the institutions of mobilization (with their own history, their specific organization, etc.) and to the situations, institutionalized or not, in which it occurs.

Sociology treats as identical all biological individuals who, being the products of the same objective conditions, have the same *habitus*. A social class (in-itself) – a class of identical or similar conditions of existence and conditionings – is at the same time a class of biological individuals having the same *habitus*, understood as a system of dispositions common to all products of the same conditionings. Though it is impossible for all (or even two) members of the same class to have had the same experiences, in the same order, it is certain that each member of the same class is more likely than any member of another class to have been confronted with the situations most frequent for members of that class. Through the always convergent experiences that give a social environment its physiognomy, with its 'closed doors', 'dead ends' and 'limited prospects', the objective structures that sociology apprehends in the form of probabilities of access to goods, services and powers, incline the 'art of assessing likelihoods', as Leibniz put it, of anticipating the objective future, in short, the 'sense of reality', or realities, which is perhaps the best-concealed principle of their efficacy.

To define the relationship between class *habitus* and individual *habitus* (which is inseparable from the organic individuality that is immediately given to immediate perception – *intuitus personae* – and socially designated and recognized – name, legal identity, etc.), class (or group) *habitus*, that is, the individual *habitus* in so far as it expresses or reflects the class (or group), could be regarded as a subjective but non-individual system of internalized structures, common schemes of perception, conception and action, which are the precondition of all objectification and apprehension; and the objective co-ordination of practices and the sharing of a world-view could be founded on the perfect impersonality and interchangeability of singular practices and views. But this would amount to regarding all the practices or representations produced in accordance with identical schemes as impersonal and interchangeable, like individual intuitions of space which, according to Kant, reflect none of the particularities of the empirical ego. In fact, the singular *habitus* of members of the same class are united in a relationship of homology, that is, of diversity within homogeneity reflecting the diversity within homogeneity characteristic of their social conditions of production. Each individual system of dispositions is a structural variant of the others, expressing the singularity of its position within the class and its trajectory. 'Personal' style, the particular stamp marking all the products of the same *habitus*, whether practices or works, is never more than a deviation in relation to the style of a period or class, so that it relates back to the common style not only by its conformity – like Phidias, who, for Hegel, had no 'manner' – but also by the difference that makes the 'manner'.

The principle of the differences between individual *habitus* lies in the singularity of their social trajectories, to which there correspond series of chronologically ordered determinations that are mutually irreducible to one another. The *habitus* which, at every moment, structures new experiences in accordance with the structures produced by past experiences, which are modified by the new experiences within the limits defined by their power of selection, brings about a unique integration, dominated by the earliest experiences, of the experiences statistically common to members of the same class. Early experiences have particular weight because the *habitus* tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information, if exposed to it accidentally or by force, and especially by avoiding exposure to such information. One only has to think, for example, of homogeny, the paradigm of all the 'choices' through which the *habitus* tends to favour experiences likely to reinforce it (or the empirically confirmed fact that people tend to talk about politics with those who have the same opinions). Through the systematic 'choices' it makes among the places, events and people that might be frequented, the *habitus* tends to protect itself from crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible, that is, a relatively constant universe of situations tending to reinforce its dispositions by offering the marker most favourable to its products. And once again it is the most paradoxical property of the *habitus*, the unchosen principle of all 'choices', that yields the solution to the paradox of the information needed in order to avoid information. The schemes of perception and appreciation of the *habitus* which are the basis of all the avoidance strategies are largely the product of a non-conscious, unwilld avoidance, whether it results automatically from the conditions of existence (for example, spatial segregation) or has been produced by a strategic intention (such as avoidance of 'bad company' or 'unsuitable books') originating from adults themselves formed in the same conditions.

Even when they look like the realization of explicit ends, the strategies produced by the *habitus* and enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and constantly changing situations are only apparently determined by the future. If they seem to be oriented by anticipation of their own consequences, thereby encouraging the finalist illusion, this is because, always tending to reproduce the objective structures that produced them, they are determined by the past conditions of production of their principle of production, that is, by the already realized outcome of identical or interchangeable past practices, which coincides with their own outcome only to the extent that the structures within which they function are identical to or homologous with the objective structures of which they are the product. Thus, for example, in the interaction between two agents or groups of agents endowed with the same *habitus* (say A and B), everything takes place as if the actions of each of them (say a_1 for A) were organized by reference to the reactions which they call forth from any agent possessing the same *habitus* (say b_1 for B). They therefore objectively imply anticipation of the reaction which these reactions in turn call forth (a_2 , A's reaction to b_1). But the teleological description, the only one appropriate to a 'rational actor' possessing perfect information as to the preferences and competences of the other actors, in which each action has the purpose of making possible the reaction to the reaction it induces (individual A performs an action a_1 , a gift for example, in order

to make individual B produce action b_1 , so that he can then perform action a_1 , a stepped-up gift), is quite as naive as the mechanistic description that presents the action and the riposte as so many steps in a sequence of programmed actions produced by a mechanical apparatus.

To have an idea of the difficulties that would be encountered by a mechanistic theory of practice as mechanical reaction, directly determined by the antecedent conditions and entirely reducible to the mechanical functioning of pre-established devices – which would have to be assumed to exist in infinite number, like the chance configurations of stimuli capable of triggering them from outside – one only has to mention the grandiose, desperate undertaking of the anthropologist, fired with positivist ardour, who recorded 480 elementary units of behaviour in 20 minutes' observation of his wife in the kitchen: 'Here we confront the distressing fact that the sample episode chain under analysis is a fragment of a larger segment of behavior which in the complete record contains some 480 separate episodes. Moreover, it took only twenty minutes for these 480 behavior stream events to occur. If my wife's rate of behavior is roughly representative of that of other actors, we must be prepared to deal with an inventory of episodes produced at the rate of some 20,000 per sixteen-hour day per actor... In a population consisting of several hundred actor-types, the number of different episodes in the total repertory must amount to many millions in the course of an annual cycle'.⁶

The *habitus* contains the solution to the paradoxes of objective meaning without subjective intention. It is the source of these strings of 'moves' which are objectively organized as strategies without being the product of a genuine strategic intention – which would presuppose at least that they be apprehended as one among other possible strategies. If each stage in the sequence of ordered and oriented actions that constitute objective strategies can appear to be determined by anticipation of the future, and in particular, of its own consequences (which is what justifies the use of the concept of strategy), it is because the practices that are generated by the *habitus* and are governed by the past conditions of production of their generative principle are adapted in advance to the objective conditions whenever the conditions in which the *habitus* functions have remained identical, or similar, to the conditions in which it was constituted. Perfectly and immediately successful adjustment to the objective conditions provides the most complete illusion of finality, or – which amounts to the same thing – of self-regulating mechanism.

The presence of the past in this kind of false anticipation of the future performed by the *habitus* is, paradoxically, most clearly seen when the sense of the probable future is belied and when dispositions ill-adjusted to the objective chances because of a hysteresis effect (Marx's favourite example of this was Don Quixote) are negatively sanctioned because the environment they actually encounter is too different from the one to which they are objectively adjusted. In fact the persistence of the effects of primary conditioning, in the form of the *habitus*, accounts equally well for cases in which dispositions function out of phase and practices are objectively ill-adapted to the present conditions because they are objectively adjusted to conditions that no longer obtain. The tendency of groups to persist in their ways, due *inter alia* to the fact that they are composed of individuals with durable dispositions that can outlive the economic and social conditions in which they were produced, can be the source of misadaptation as well as adaptation, revolt as well as resignation.

One only has to consider other possible forms of the relationship between dispositions and conditions to see that the pre-adjustment of the *habitus* to the objective conditions is a 'particular case of the possible' and so avoid unconsciously universalizing the model of the near-circular relationship of near-perfect reproduction, which is completely valid only when the conditions of production of the *habitus* and the conditions of its functioning are identical or homothetic. In this particular case, the dispositions durably incultured by the objective conditions and by a pedagogic action that is tendentially adjusted to these conditions, tend to generate practices objectively compatible with these conditions and expectations pre-adapted to their objective demands (*amor fati*).⁷ As a consequence, they tend, without any rational calculation or conscious estimation of the chances of success, to ensure immediate correspondence between the *a priori* or *ex ante* probability conferred on an event (whether or not accompanied by subjective experiences such as hopes, expectation, fears, etc.) and the *a posteriori* or *ex post* probability that can be established on the basis of past experience. They thus make it possible to understand why economic models based on the (tacit) premise of a 'relationship of intelligible causality', as Max Weber⁸ calls it, between generic ('typical') chances 'objectively existing as an average' and 'subjective expectations', or, for example, between investment in the propensity to invest and the rate of return expected or really obtained in the past, fairly exactly account for practices which do not arise from knowledge of the objective chances.

By pointing out that rational action, 'judiciously' oriented according to what is 'objectively valid',⁹ is what 'would have happened if the actors had had knowledge of all the circumstances and all the participants' intentions'¹⁰, that is, of what is 'valid in the eyes of the scientist', who alone is able to calculate the system of objective chances to which perfectly informed action would have to be adjusted, Weber shows clearly that the pure model of rational action cannot be regarded as an anthropological description of practice. This is not only because real agents only very exceptionally possess the complete information, and the skill to appreciate it, that rational action would presuppose. Apart from rare cases which bring together the economic and cultural conditions for rational action oriented by knowledge of the profits that can be obtained in the different markets, practices depend not on the average chances of profit, an abstract and unreal notion, but on the specific chances that a singular agent or class of agents possesses by virtue of its capital, this being understood, in this respect, as a means of appropriation of the chances theoretically available to all.

Economic theory which acknowledges only the rational 'responses' of an indeterminate, interchangeable agent to 'potential opportunities', or more precisely to average chances (like the 'average rates of profit' offered by the different markets), converts the immutable law of the economy into a universal norm of proper economic behaviour. In so doing, it conceals the fact that the 'rational' *habitus* which is the precondition for appropriate economic behaviour is the product of particular economic conditions, the one defined by possession of the economic and cultural capital required in order to seize the 'potential opportunities', theoretically available to all; and also that the same dispositions, by adapting the economically most deprived to the specific condition of which they are the product and thereby helping to make their adaptation to the generic

demands of the economic cosmos (as regards calculation, forecasting, etc.) lead them to accept the negative sanctions resulting from this lack of adaptation, that is, their deprivation. In short, the art of estimating and seizing chances, the capacity to anticipate the future by a kind of practical induction or even to take a calculated gamble on the possible against the probable, are dispositions that can only be acquired in certain social conditions, that is, certain social conditions. Like the entrepreneurial spirit or the propensity to invest, economic information is a function of one's power over the economy. This is, on the one hand, because the propensity to acquire it depends on the chances of using it successfully, and the chances of acquiring it depend on the chances of successfully using it; and also because economic competence, like all competence (linguistic, political, etc.), far from being a simple technical capacity acquired in certain conditions, is a power tacitly conferred on those who have power over the economy or (as the very ambiguity of the word 'competence' indicates) an attribute of status.

Only in imaginary experience (in the folk tale, for example), which neutralizes the sense of social realities, does the social world take the form of a universe of possibles equally possible for any possible subject. Agents shape their aspirations according to concrete indices of the accessible and the inaccessible, of what is and is not 'for us', a division as fundamental and as fundamentally recognized as that defined by law and by the profane. The pre-emptive rights on the future that are merely the explicitly guaranteed form of the whole set of appropriated chances through which the power relations of the present project themselves into the future, from where they govern present dispositions, especially those towards the future. In fact, a given agent's practical relation to the future, which governs his present practice, is defined in the relationship between, on the one hand, his *habitus* with its temporal structures and dispositions towards the future, constituted in the course of a particular relationship to a particular universe of probabilities, and on the other hand a certain state of the chances objectively offered to him by the social world. The relation to what is possible is a relation to power; and the sense of the probable future is constituted in the prolonged relationship with a world structured according to the categories of the possible (for us) and the impossible (for us), of what is appropriated in advance by and for others and what one can reasonably expect for oneself. The *habitus* is the principle of a selective perception of the indices tending to confirm and reinforce it rather than transform it, a matrix generating responses adapted in advance to all objective conditions identical to or homologous with the (past) conditions of its production; it adjusts itself to a probable future which it anticipates and helps to bring about because it reads it directly in the present of the presumed world, the only one it can ever know. It is thus the basis of what Marx¹¹ calls 'effective demand' (as opposed to 'demand without effect', based on need and desire), a realistic relation to what is possible, founded on and therefore limited by power. This disposition, always marked by its (social) conditions of acquisition and realization, tends to adjust to the objective chances of satisfying need or desire, inclining agents to 'cut their coats according to their cloth', and so to become the accomplices of the processes that tend to make the probable a reality.

Notes

- 1 Cluckman, M. 1961: Ethnographic Data in British social anthropology. *Sociological Review*, 9: 5-17; cf. also Van Velsou, J. 1964: *The Politics of Kinship: A Study in Social Manipulation among the Lakeside Tonga*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- 2 Leach, F. 1962: On certain unconsidered aspects of double descent systems. *Man*, 62: 133.
- 3 Durkheim, E. 1977: *The Evolution of Educational Thought*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p.11.
- 4 Ruyer, R. 1966: *Paradoxes de la conscience et limites de l'autonatisme*. Paris: Albin Michel.
- 5 Leibnitz, G. W. 1866: *Second éclaircissement du système de la communication des substances* (first pub. 1696). In *Œuvres philosophiques*. Ed. P. Janet. Paris: Ladrangé.
- 6 Harris, M. 1964. *The Nature of Cultural Things*. New York: Random House.
- 7 For some psychologists' attempts at direct verification of this relationship, see Brunswik, E. 1949: Systematic and representative design of psychological experiments. In J. Neyman (ed.), *Proceedings of the Berkeley Symposium on Mathematical Statistics and Probability*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press; Preston, M. G. and Baratta, P. 1948: An experimental study of the action-value of an uncertain income. *American Journal of Psychology*, 61: 183-93; Attneave, F. 1953: Psychological probability as a function of experienced frequency. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 46: 81-6.
- 8 Weber, M. 1922: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*. Tübingen: J. C. Mohr.
- 9 Weber, *ibid.*
- 10 Weber, M. 1968: *Economy and Society*, vol. 1. New York: Bedminster, p. 6.
- 11 Marx, K. 1956: *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. In K. Marx, *Early Writings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.