

Bourdieu's Intellectual Biography

Abstract This chapter outlines Bourdieu's intellectual biography. It contends that his work can be understood in terms of a world-view. It then places his writings within the intellectual and political context within which they emerged. It argues that his work can be understood in terms of five major overlapping phases. Finally, it outlines and summarises his most important theoretical concepts, including habitus, field, capital, strategies and the economy of practices.

Keywords World-view · Habitus · Field · Capital · Practices · Symbolic power

Born 1st August 1930, in Lasseube, a small village in the South Western Pyrenees, the son of a peasant who subsequently became a postal worker, Bourdieu was raised in a Béarnese (a Gascon dialect) speaking home. After studying at the lycée in Pau followed by the *Lycée Louis-le-Grand* in Paris, he gained entrance to the prestigious *École Normale Supérieure*, where he studied an equally prestigious subject, philosophy. Following his *agrégation* in 1954, he began work teaching in a provincial lycée in Moulin. In 1954, he started but later abandoned a thesis under the supervision of George Canguilhem on 'Temporal structures of affective life', before being reluctantly conscripted into the army in October 1955 and sent to Algeria during the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962) at

the age of 25. Posted in an air force unit of the military staff in the Chelif valley, he was later moved to the *Service de Documentation et d'Information* of the *Gouvernement Général*.¹

After undertaking fieldwork and collecting information on the rural and urban context of Algerian life and society while travelling throughout the country, especially in Oran, Constantine, Mascara, Tlemcen as well as in the remote mountains of Kabylia, he eventually secured a position teaching sociology and philosophy at the University of Algiers in 1957. He returned to France in 1960 in order to work as an assistant to Raymond Aron at the Sorbonne. In 1961, he joined the faculty of letters in Lille as a lecturer in sociology, becoming director of a research group, the *Centre de sociologie européenne* (CSE). In 1964, he became *Directeur d'études* at the *École pratique des hautes études en sciences sociales* in Paris. In 1972, he published his groundbreaking work on kinship, ritual and social exchange based on his Algerian fieldwork, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.² In 1975, he founded the journal *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* to promote the cause of a scientific sociology. In 1979, he published another major work which impacted heavily on the social sciences, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*.³ On the recommendation of Michel Foucault, he was appointed Professor of Sociology at the *Collège de France* in 1981. The 1980s also saw the publication of a number of other important works; the most relevant for the state include *Homo Academicus*, *Language and Symbolic Power* and *The State Nobility*.⁴ He died on 23rd January 2002, from cancer.

¹ Yacine, Tassadit, 'Introduction' in Bourdieu, Pierre. *Algerian Sketches*. Edited by Yacine, Tassadit, Cambridge: Polity, 2013, p. 18.

² Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. 14th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

³ Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

⁴ Bourdieu, Pierre. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity, 1991; Bourdieu, Pierre. *Homo Academicus*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990; Bourdieu, Pierre. *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998.

SOCIOLOGY AS A WORLD-VIEW

Drawing on the sociology of knowledge, it will be argued that Bourdieu's work can usefully be examined in terms of a 'world-view' expressing social, ethical and political interests which act as causal determinations affecting the content and coherence of his work. Such a theoretical manoeuvre permits us not only to understand some of the contradictions which occur within his copious writings but also to account for shifts in his sociological perspective and his attitude to a number of other theoretical approaches. In Bourdieu's case, his world-view is itself a dynamic one. His very early writings, especially some essays on Algeria, bear a strong imprint of Sartrean Marxism, though he was also heavily critical of that approach. Nevertheless, his world-view is that of a left republican/socialist.⁵ Many of his analyses of Algeria, education and class express a critical engagement with the ideas and ideals of French republicanism and their instantiation, and deformation, in actual practice. In that regard, his political project bears striking parallels with the aloof form of scientifically and rationally grounded socialism of Durkheim, which had distinguished itself from Marxism by advocating a reformist and revisionist type of French republican-socialism led by Jaures. With Durkheim, Bourdieu shares an intellectual and evolutionary rather than revolutionary view of society,⁶ the belief in a future socialist society based on the scientific and rational prognosis of its counterpart sociology, with its statistical and comparative findings, and that society required a powerful and active state albeit transformed from the current type.⁷ There are many other parallels with

⁵ Lane, Jeremy. *Bourdieu's Politics: Problems and Possibilities*. New York: Palgrave, 2006.

⁶ As Lukes notes of Durkheim's politics: He had a 'faith neither in the activities of politicians in parliament nor in the possibilities of proletarian revolution; least of all did he believe in the internationalism of the working class' in Lukes, Steven. *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work*. 2nd ed. United Kingdom: Penguin Books Australia, 1992, p. 322.

⁷ As Clarke argues: 'After the Franco-Prussian war, the Third republic set itself the task of rebuilding France and it was on this basis that Durkheimian sociology with its promotion of a secular education had flourished. Durkheim's collectivistic, sociologistic, rationalistic, positivistic, and secular social philosophy centered on a secular state ensured that his thought became identified with the Republic as the embodiment of the collective conscience. Liberal republican intellectuals sought to

the work of Durkheim in addition to the Republican socialism, and an Enlightenment faith in the transformative potential of science and intellectuals. These include: the setting up of a journal to advance the cause of sociology *L'Année Sociologique and Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*; an emphasis on the social nature of classifications; foregrounding of education; that processes which in appearance stem from individual and psychological motives are actually the effect of social processes; that social transformations in society result from processes of social morphology – the structural relationships between individuals and an increase in dynamic density.⁸

By contrast, however, Bourdieu places considerably more weight than Durkheim on social class in his explanatory analysis and does not see the major malaise of modern societies deriving from anomie in the industrial and commercial sphere so that in this respect, his writings draw more heavily from a Marxist emphasis on class conflict. In this sense, Bourdieu's politics are perhaps closer to the younger generation of Durkheimians, including Mauss. Moreover, from the mid- to late 1980s in a context where neo-liberalism as a doctrine – entailing the entry of the market into unlimited social spheres, tropes of individual responsibility, the growing retrenchment of the social and protectionist state – becomes increasingly dominant in Western Europe and France in particular, Bourdieu's work becomes *explicitly* more political. Henceforth, Bourdieu becomes less concerned with providing an immanent and acerbic critique of French republicanism than in also defending its attributes of universalism and social equality in the face of this ideological onslaught.⁹ But it is of

protect society as a whole by acting as a moral collective force aimed at transforming educational institutions into secular rationalist institutions to impose a morality on an anomic social order... The Durkheimian republicans found themselves positioned between a nationalistic Catholic and monarchist militarism seeking to overthrow the Republic on the one side, and a working-class increasingly taking on syndicalist forms seeking a transformation of the whole society on the other.' Clarke, Simon. *The Foundations of Structuralism: A Critique Levi-Strauss and the Structuralist Movement*. Sussex: Harvester, 1970, p. 11.

⁸ See L. Wacquant 'Durkheim and Bourdieu: The Common Plinth and Its Cracks' in B. Fowler (ed.) *Reading Bourdieu in Society and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, pp. 105–120.

⁹ For a discussion of Bourdieu's republican critique of culture see Yair, Gad. *The Last Musketeer of the French Revolution*. Plymouth: Lexington, 2009. For an

note that despite this overt shift from implicit interventions mediated through the scientific status of sociology to explicit forms of political engagement, all his work bears the mark of a political intervention of some sort.¹⁰

To speak of a world-view¹¹ is not to belittle or denigrate his work in a pejorative sense but to help us understand it and its underpinnings and implications more fully. Equally, it does not mean that his work should be flattened out on some political anvil. Bourdieu rightly argues that commentators that categorise his work in terms of one thinker – Marx, Weber or Durkheim – do so for polemical reasons.¹² It is more plausible to understand Bourdieu's sociological *oeuvre* by employing a framework he used in his study of Heidegger (1990). This saw Heidegger's work as the product of an overlap between two related semi-autonomous fields: the intellectual field and political field. This assessment, however, requires two connected qualifications. First, there is a sociological and epistemic reflexivity in Bourdieu's approach which, together with his fieldwork, provides the grounding for a social scientific analysis which is entirely missing from Heidegger's revolutionary conservatism. Consequently, Bourdieu's work rather falls within a third overlapping, semi-autonomous scientific field – which underpinned his idea of scholarship with commitment. Second, we need to understand the role that Bourdieu's personal and social trajectory played in shaping

overview of Bourdieu's political interventions see Poupeau, Franck and Thierry Discepolo. 'Scholarship with Commitment: On the Political Engagements of Pierre Bourdieu' in L. Wacquant (ed.) *Pierre Bourdieu and Democratic Politics: the Mystery of Ministry*. Cambridge: Polity, 2005, pp. 64–90; Bourdieu, Pierre. *Political Interventions: Social Science and Political Action*. Edited by Franck Poupeau and Thierry Discepolo. United Kingdom: Verso Books, 2008; and Lane, Jeremy *Bourdieu's Politics*.

¹⁰ Poupeau, Franck and Thierry Discepolo. 'Scholarship with Commitment: On the Political Engagements of Pierre Bourdieu' in L. Wacquant (ed.) *Pierre Bourdieu and Democratic Politics: the Mystery of Ministry*, pp. 64–90; Bourdieu. *Political Interventions*.

¹¹ I take the concept from Mannheim.

¹² Bourdieu, Pierre. *In Other Words*. Cambridge: Polity, 1990, pp. 27–8.

his subsequent work while simultaneously avoiding what he calls the 'biographical illusion'.¹³

THE FRENCH INTELLECTUAL FIELD

As we shall see, Bourdieu's intellectual development draws heavily on the *sociological* work of Marx, Weber and Durkheim, using each to criticise and complement the insights of the other. But his overall theory is modified by the *anthropological* work of structuralism and based on the *philosophical* work of phenomenology, and later in the 1980s, the ordinary language philosophy of John Austin.

The post-war French intellectual field included within it both sociological and philosophical writers including the phenomenologists and existentialists, Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, as well structuralists, including Levi-Strauss, Dumezil, Braudel and Althusser, all of whom were to play an important role in shaping Bourdieu's work. His early education was as a philosopher and, as Decombes notes, the generation of philosophers in France between 1930 and 1960 were preoccupied by three dominant H's – Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger – while an older generation from the 1960s were more concerned with the three masters of suspicion – Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.¹⁴ Hegel became especially prominent following Kojève's anthropological reading of the master-slave dialectic in which the 'fight for recognition' becomes central for philosophy.¹⁵ This struggle between humans for recognition where oppressors gain recognition by dominating and oppressing others, but ultimately in a contradictory and self-defeating way, played a major role in shaping Sartre's work as well as the writings of Fanon and Lacan. It also has an influence, albeit modified, on Bourdieu's philosophical anthropology.

Although Sartre was intellectually the dominant figure in French phenomenology, it is really Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty who play

¹³ Bourdieu, Pierre. *Sketch for a Self-Analysis*. Chicago, IL; London: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

¹⁴ Decombes, Vincent. *Modern French Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981

¹⁵ Kojève, Alexandre, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the 'Phenomenology of Spirit'*. Edited by Allan David Bloom. New York: Cornell University Press, 1980.

a more direct and significant role in the development of Bourdieu's thinking.¹⁶ Husserl, who saw phenomenology as the descriptive, non-reductive science of what appears, especially through and in the subjective and inter-subjective medium of consciousness, attempted to provide a grounding for the conditions of possibility of objective knowledge, a philosophical account of conscious cognition which also discussed the environments, horizons or world (as the horizon of horizons) within which it functioned. Heidegger took phenomenology further by opening Husserl's phenomenological brackets and distinguishing between objects that were ready-at-hand (*Vorhanden*) to be used immediately in an unthinking way and those present-at-hand (*Zuhanden*) of a theorist or scientist looking at or observing something.¹⁷ In Merleau-Ponty's work, a sharp distinction was made between the intentional or cognitive relation to objects, activity and space and a bodily 'motor' intentional understanding which contains a wholly divergent logical structure. Here, the body was not seen as an object in the world 'but as our means of communication with it, to the world not conceived as a collection of determinate objects, but as the horizon latent in all our experience and itself ever-present and anterior to every thought'.¹⁸ The unreflexive bodily understanding of space and activity could be counterposed to reflexive, cognitive, intentional acts in terms of a spatiality of situation rather than position. Understanding was not through representations or articulations but contained in bodily memory, a pre-reflexive understanding, which was beyond an actor's consciousness and independent of his or her will.

Phenomenology, especially the Sartrean variety, was to be later challenged by structuralism, especially following the work of Levi-Strauss in the *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949) and *Tristes Tropiques* in 1955.¹⁹ For Levi-Strauss, examining both kinship and myth, the way to move beyond positivism and humanism was by identifying an autonomous

¹⁶ Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, p. 5.

¹⁷ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. New York: Harper Row, 1962.

¹⁸ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge, 1962, p. 92.

¹⁹ Levi-Strauss, 1949. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969; Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1955. *Tristes Tropiques*. London: Penguin, 2012.

order of reality, the symbolic order where cultural meanings inhere, and which exists prior to and independently both of the material world symbolised and the individuals who undertake the symbolisation. This objective meaning of the symbolic order existed in the unconsciousness, which mediates between people and the world and can be understood scientifically. Although structuralism and phenomenology are often regarded as dialectically opposed – structure against history, object against subject, unconscious versus conscious, determinacy versus free will, immanence to transcendence, philosophical versus anthropological – as schools they actually share a great deal in common. This is illustrated by the relatively seamless move of a number of thinkers from phenomenology and existentialism to structuralism such as Lacan, Foucault, Poulantzas²⁰ and Bourdieu.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Many of the arguments of the post-war French philosophers have to be situated in relation to the optimistic arguments of the Third Republic in which philosophy was seen as part of the mission of the state to foster Republican institutions.²¹ Given restrictions of space, it is impossible to discuss these in any depth but only to point to some superficial markers. Post-war France under the watch of De Gaulle was characterised by a period of rapid economic boom following the introduction of high-technology modernisation but also effected by a number of crises entailing colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria, the latter stretching into the Fifth Republic. It was also a society characterised by enormous contradictions: on the one hand, immediately following the Second World War, a peasant class consisting of up to 45 % of the population; on the other, a country where cultural and literary production, and intellectual journals boomed, especially in the philosophical, literary and human sciences.²² France's national ideological stance centred on equality and universalism, but it was a nation riven by class distinctions and rule over

²⁰ Clarke, *The Foundations of Structuralism*, p. 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Anderson, Perry. *The New Old World*. London: Verso, p. 140.

subjugated colonies. It was especially the latter, specifically the war in Algeria, as Le Sueur rightly points out, that shaped the work of a number of French intellectuals including Bourdieu.²³

Although implicitly informed by his analysis of Algeria, it is in a later socio-political conjuncture that Bourdieu's work on the state emerges. His writings on the state began in the mid-1980s and as an attempt to reassert what he calls the 'left hand' of the state – the social aspects of the state tied to its universalism, public interests and the provision of welfare in the context of abruptly changing social conditions with the correlative increase in market liberalisation and rising neo-liberalism – an aspect of the 'right hand of the state'. Neo-liberalism, already a widespread and expanding global phenomenon by the 1980s, arguably took hold in France under Mitterrand's Socialist Presidency and its turn towards global financial markets from 1983 onwards.²⁴ It is in this sense that Bourdieu's writings on the state need to be read as much as a political intervention within the political field, as a theoretical intervention in the intellectual field.

OUTLINING BOURDIEU'S WORK

Bourdieu's work, in the UK in particular, has been read as that of a *social* theorist who had also focused on reproduction of domination in education, culture, consumption and power. His association with social theory particularly was a result of an unhelpful preoccupation with conceptual discussions of the binaries of subjective and objective, agency and structure that characterised the increasingly specialised British sociological field during the 1980s and 1990s where *sociological* theory increasingly became an autonomous discipline labelled *social* theory. It is, however, more reasonable to see Bourdieu's sociology as always driven by specific empirical research questions, agendas and problems, albeit theoretically informed. It is in these empirical contexts of examining cultural dislocation, ritual practices, economic behaviours, education and schooling, art and literature that his concepts develop and evolve. And it is also as a result

²³ Le Sueur, James. *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics during the Decolonization of Algeria*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

²⁴ Anderson, *Old New World*.

of being shaped by specific empirical contexts and redeployed in others that his concepts can sometimes appear contradictory.

Given his substantial output including almost 40 books and over 200 articles covering almost half a century, his *oeuvre* is not of one piece. It may be useful to draw attention to five major phases in his development to facilitate a heuristic and conceptual mapping of his work. These phases are not exclusive, but rather overlapping, reflecting a shift of emphasis in his work as he recursively elaborates on concepts that previously remained implicit, or draws and develops on others according to the empirical question at hand. They include: (1) An early phase on Algeria and the Béarn peasantry; (2) a second phase looking at education and class reproduction; (3) a third phase analysing practice and domination; (4) a fourth phase foregrounding symbolic power; (5) a final phase in which his work increasingly becomes an overt form of political intervention. Although divergent in a number of respects, all five phases focus on how actor's are perceived and perceive themselves, modes of domination, their dissimulation and reproduction within specific empirical domains.

Bourdieu's writing on the state are an extension and development of his broader sociological writings and his political world-view. It may therefore be useful to give a brief general outline of some of the key concepts informing his theory of practice, especially the concepts of habitus, field, capital, the economy of practices and epistemological reflexivity, within a review of the first four phases of his development.

1. Algeria and the Bearn Peasantry

Although not generally discussed²⁵ – partly because the concepts of habitus, field and capital remain absent – his writings on Algeria had a profound impact on his subsequent work.

²⁵ For exceptions see Lane, Jeremy. *Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Pluto, 2000; Calhoun, Craig. 'Pierre Bourdieu and Social Transformation.: Lessons from Algeria' *Development and Change*, 37(6). 2006, pp. 1404–1415; Goodman, Jane E. and Paul A. Silverstein (eds.) *Bourdieu in Algeria: Colonial Politics, Ethnographic Practices, Theoretical Developments*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009; Loyal, Steven. 'The French in Algeria, Algerians in France: Bourdieu, Colonialism and Migration' *The Sociological Review*, 57(3). 2009, pp. 406–427.

Bourdieu's decision to carry out systematic fieldwork into the harsh realities and brutal policy of 'pacification' and 'resettlement' by the colonial French authorities set him apart from other intellectuals writing on the war, both those who supported it and those opposed to it.²⁶ The charged situation of the war in which as many as 400,000 died²⁷ and as many as 2 million Algerians underwent some form of social upheaval precipitated his shift from philosophy to anthropology and sociology. Together with his work on the Béarn peasantry of his own childhood,²⁸ this intellectual transition provided the basis for the development of an epistemic reflexivity, allowing him to balance science and politics and to avoid the paradox in which 'good intentions so often make bad sociology'.²⁹ The emphasis on carrying out socio-political analysis but firmly anchored in a social scientific framework, in both a Weberian and Durkheimian sense, was to strongly mark his subsequent output. The work on Algeria which attempted to analyse how Algerian's fashioned by economic dispositions acquired in a pre-capitalist world attempted to adjust to a new colonially imposed world of capitalist dispositions, constituted a theoretical-cum political intervention in ongoing intellectual and policy debates extant at the time of the war, including those of Tillion, Sartre and Fanon. Moreover, right at the outset, his use of the sociological writings and ideas of Marx, Weber and Durkheim is evident though importantly, as we noted above, they are developed upon a prior philosophical understanding of the work of Husserl – on whose analysis of temporal structures he was writing his doctorate – and Merleau-Ponty's work on bodily perception.³⁰

In his first book, *The Algerians* written in 1958, and reprinted and expanded in 1961 and 1962,³¹ together with his work *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (Bourdieu et al. 1963), and *Le Déracinement* (1964) with Abdelmalek Sayad,³² Bourdieu focuses primarily on revealing the universal

²⁶ Le Sueur. *Uncivil War*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre. 'Algerian Landing' *Ethnography*, 5(4). 2004, p. 438.

²⁹ Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, p. 5.

³⁰ See Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, pp. 6–7.

³¹ Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Algerians*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1961.

³² Pierre Bourdieu, Darbel, Alain, Rivet, Jean-Pierre, and Seibel, Claude. *Travail et Travailleurs en Algérie*, Paris and the Hague: Mouton, 1963; Bourdieu, Pierre

laws tied to acculturation, deculturation and cultural interpenetration – the spread of cultural values between the various groups as part of a ‘kaleidoscopic mechanism’. Bourdieu notes how structural and cultural similarities lead groups to employ strategies aimed at constructing differences. What he would later refer to as ‘group making’³³ involves agents actively pursuing a logic of distinction and differentiation. This pursuit of recognition and distinction constitutes a central dimension of his philosophical anthropology focusing upon recognition and misrecognition.³⁴ Expanding the discussion of cultural interpenetration and contagion by examining it in terms of a clash of civilisations between a traditional Algerian society ‘that has always looked to the past for its ideal way of life’³⁵ and a dynamic forward-looking European civilisation, Bourdieu argued that the result was ‘social, economic and psychological disaggregation’.³⁶ The enormous power difference between the two groups was to find expression through the rigid caste like relations between them. The extreme differences in power influenced the self-perception, or what he would later call the ‘habitus’, of all the actors concerned as dominated groups came to see themselves through the eyes of the dominant. Stereotypes of Algerians as uneducated and feckless, and of Europeans as holding positions of prestige and power, became generalised frameworks for interpreting one another’s behaviour: ‘the colonial system can function properly only if the dominated society is willing to assume the very negative nature or “essence” (the Arab cannot be educated, is improvident, etc.) that the dominating society holds up for it as its destiny’.³⁷ Bourdieu would later term such processes as ‘symbolic violence’.

However, this process of self-identification and evaluation through the eyes of the more powerful was not a simple one-way process of domination but rather a complex and dialectical one, especially within the context of war. In a situation in which he attempts to understand the conditions of

and Abdelmalek Sayad. *La Deracinement: La crise de l'agriculture traditionnelle en Algérie*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1964.

³³ Bourdieu, Pierre. ‘What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups’ *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 32, pp. 1–18.

³⁴ Bourdieu, Pierre. *Pascalian Meditations*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.

³⁵ Bourdieu, *Algeria*, p. 94.

³⁶ Bourdieu, *Algerian Sketches*, p. 40.

³⁷ Bourdieu, *Algeria*, p. 134.

possibility of revolution, Bourdieu notes that discrimination, domination and widening inequality generated by colonial policy had led to a sense of resignation and fatalism amongst the Algerians, but it also resulted in resentment and revolt. Cultural interpenetration made social reflexivity possible: the arrival of a new European tradition allowed Algerians to evaluate and assess the value of their own traditions by way of contrast.

Studies on the Béarn Peasantry

Equally important to Bourdieu's intellectual development was research he carried out in his native Béarn on the fundamental changes affecting the peasantry during France's post-war boom, as seen through the prism of bachelorhood: 'bachelorhood is the privileged occasion to experience the wretchedness of the peasant condition'.³⁸ This research, first published in 1962, the same year as many of his articles on Algeria, also marked a further development in his intellectual framework and included the introduction of the concept of habitus, though used in a restricted sense. In parallel with Algeria, the focus was on the erosion of a rural way of life or ethos driven by capitalism and urbanism and the social, moral and psychological effects engendered by such a process. The central importance of land, its values centred on honour and authority relations were also discussed. Here, in Durkheimian terms, we see the disruption of a societal equilibrium as bachelorhood among the second eldest sons in the 'old society' shifts from being an exception, to becoming 'abnormal', and engendering *anomie* especially in large and poor families. Bourdieu again focuses on objective processes and how these are mediated, perceived and created through subjective understandings so that 'economic and social condition influences the vocation to marriage mainly through the mediation of the consciousness that men attain of that situation'.³⁹ Following Durkheim's analysis in *Suicide*, he also attempts to account for processes that are experienced and perceived as personal failings, as actually a consequence of broader social phenomena.

The Christmas ball held in a rural village – like French cultural imposition in Algeria – represents 'the scene of a real clash of civilizations'

³⁸ Bourdieu. *Algerian Sketches*, p. 93.

³⁹ Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Bachelors Ball: The Crisis of Peasant Society in Béarn*. United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2007.

through which 'the whole urban world, with its cultural models, its music, its dances, its techniques for the use of the body, bursts into peasant life'.⁴⁰ Specifically old style dances marked and bearing the peasant way of life in terms of their rhythms and names give way to urban dances from the towns. For Bourdieu, the body rather than consciousness becomes the locus of this shift, and it is this that bears the stamp of the old peasant way of life, rather than their temporal consciousness. As he notes, 'it is clear that the truly *empaysanité* ("empeasanted") peasant is not in his element at the ball'. Instead, like the uprooted peasantry of Algeria they experience 'the wretchedness of the peasant condition' in terms of an 'existence that has no present and no future'.⁴¹ It is here that he first introduces the concept of *habitus* as 'a synthetic unity':

Now, it is clear that the techniques of the body constitute systems, bound up with a whole cultural context.

This is not the place to analyse the motor habits characteristic of the Béarn peasant, the *habitus* that betrays the *paysanas*, the lumbering peasant. Spontaneous observation perfectly grasps the *hexis* that serves as a foundation for stereotypes. "Peasants in the old days", said an old villager, "always walked with their legs bowed, as if they had crooked knees, with their arms bent". To explain this attitude, he evoked the posture of a man wielding a scythe. However, the peasant is unable to meet the changing demands imposed on the body, by the Charleston or cha cha, for example, since bodily *habitus* is what is experienced as most "natural", that upon which conscious action has no grip'.⁴² That is reshaping the techniques of the body or what he also terms, using the more traditional Aristotelian concept, 'hexis', is beyond their conscious control.

The work markedly bears the continuing imprint of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in focusing on both the actor's perception and self-perceptions but also on the role of the body. The bodily habitus becomes

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

so ingrained that the peasant becomes locked into it. To all intents and purposes habitus becomes fate.

2. Education and Social Reproduction

Bourdieu's work on schooling and education was to remain a consistent theme throughout his work featuring in numerous books including *Reproduction in Education and Society*, *Academic Discourse*, *Homo Academicus* and *The State Nobility*.⁴³ The central arguments concerning education and social reproduction are, however, most cogently and clearly expressed in his earliest work exploring these themes, *The Inheritors*, jointly written in 1964 with Jean-Claude Passeron whilst at the CES.⁴⁴ Composed at a time of rapid expansion in French higher education, the central concern of the book is the relation to culture of French university students and how this contributes to social inequality. Social classes, Bourdieu & Passeron note, are unequally represented in higher education where the children of workers make up only 6 % of the student population and where a senior executive's son is 80 times more likely to enter a university than a farm worker's son.⁴⁵ Not only are their hierarchies between universities, but there are also class differences within them. However, economic factors cannot solely account for such 'educational death rates'.⁴⁶ Rather cultural processes, which follow a similar logic to economic factors, are foremost. There is, according to Bourdieu, a strong elective affinity between the culture of school and higher education and the 'general culture' of the elite classes. Hence, educational culture is a class culture. Schools and universities presuppose previously gained

⁴³ Bourdieu, Pierre and Jean-Claude Passeron. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. 2nd ed. London: Sage, 1990; Bourdieu, Pierre, Jean Claude Passeron, Monique de Saint Martin, Richard Teese, Guy Vincent, and Christian Baudelot. *Academic Discourse: Linguistic Misunderstanding and Professorial Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996; Bourdieu, Pierre. *Homo Academicus*. Cambridge: Polity. 1984; Bourdieu, Pierre. *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998.

⁴⁴ Bourdieu, Pierre and Jean-Claude Passeron. 1964. *The Inheritors: French Students and their Relation to Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

cultural habits and social values themselves acquired through family background – the structure of language spoken, familiarity with culture in the home, the theatre, galleries and concerts – extra-curricular culture which together with educational certificates he will later term ‘cultural capital’. This capital is acquired by the dominant classes, and especially those coming from Paris, largely implicitly through osmosis, rather than explicit instruction. These ‘socially conditioned predispositions’ structure both the students ease in assimilating school-transmitted culture and their propensity to acquire it.⁴⁷ Through this affinity, the school and higher education serve as social mechanisms of class reproduction while masking that reproduction beneath the ideological veneer of individual talent or giftedness.

This elective affinity between school and family culture also allows the children of the middle classes to ‘feel at home’ in educational institutions which is expressed in a confident self-belief in their giftedness and abilities and manifest in the diversity and breadth of subjects they study and cultural interests they adopt as well as their manner of elegance and assuredness. Their family background has provided them not only with ‘habits, skills and attitudes, which serve them directly in scholastic tasks but also knowledge and know-how, tastes and “good-taste” whose scholastic profitability is no less certain for being direct’.⁴⁸ By contrast, those students from the working class and lower middle class, who do not share the same cultural past, feel out of place. Lacking the ‘cultural hereditary’ of the elite, the latter’s cultural habits and past serve as a handicap expressed in terms of early ill-informed decisions and forced choices. The school remains their only means for acquiring culture – which, using a term from the early book on Algeria, is for them a form of distinctive acculturation.⁴⁹

The differential objective opportunities for access result in different subjective expectations of entering into higher education as something ‘impossible’ for the lower classes, ‘possible’ for the middle, and a ‘natural’ future for the highest social classes, which in turn structure the jobs they eventually take up. That is, all classes adjust their behaviour and subjective expectations according to their objective chances.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

As was the case in his earlier writings, broad social processes, and their effects, are perceived by those who experience them in terms of personal failings. Bourdieu also repeats his claims from earlier studies that the self-perception of the dominated is structured according to the values and world-view of the dominant social groups, and secondly that those from the lower classes participate in their own domination, fostering the reproduction of social inequality. Issues of culture, temporality, categorisation and self-perception, objective processes and subjective expectations, social processes interpreted through an individual lens, again all play key roles in this analysis. But in addition, Bourdieu also talks of how those who enter into the student system enter into a 'game with rules' almost akin to a Wittgensteinian language game embedded in a form of life.⁵⁰ The game analogy forms a central theme in his subsequent thinking.

3. *Ritual and Social Practice*

It was on the basis of this early fieldwork that Bourdieu developed his subsequent theoretical and empirical work on education, his studies of the Kabylia and social practice in *Outline of Theory of Practice* and the *Logic of Practice*⁵¹ and his analysis of class and consumption in *Distinction*⁵² as well as developing his key concepts of capital, strategies, reflexivity, recognition, field, and the economy of practices. The rationale underpinning these concepts is to overcome a number of oppositions that Bourdieu identifies as having plagued the social sciences, principally between subjectivism – how the constructed social world appears to individuals as in phenomenology – and objectivism – how the objective structures of the social world over and beyond individuals' perceptions structure and determine their actions as in structuralism. The concept of 'habitus' – a term with long intellectual pedigree going back to Aristotle, the scholastics, but also used in the work of Durkheim, Mauss, Husserl and Elias – is introduced in order to 'get out from under the philosophy of consciousness without doing away with the agent'.⁵³ Occupying a

⁵⁰ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1957.

⁵¹ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*.

⁵² Bourdieu. *Distinction*.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

space between historical determinism and contingent future action, he defines habitus as 'durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices'.⁵⁴ Habitus refers to dispositions which incline social agents to acts in determinate ways, without fully determining them. It can be usefully contrasted with Parsons's theory of socialisation. Rather than referring to explicitly taught values or rules that are consciously acquired or implanted in people's heads, these dispositions are unconscious or, at least, semi-conscious, they produce a social order without consciously following rules and they refer not to the mind but to the whole body. However, like processes of socialisation, these structured dispositions are acquired primarily in early childhood and form the sedimented basis upon which future experience and practices are shaped. Importantly, such dispositions reflect the social conditions of existence in which they have been acquired, becoming internalised through the body primarily through 'osmosis' within an environment. Hence, individuals from similar social or class conditions will share similar dispositions; they will tend to think, act and judge the social world in similar ways, as well as acquiring a similar practical sense of social situations, or a homogeneous 'feel for the game'. This includes semi-consciously calculating chances of success or failure terms of future actions, *anticipations*, gained through past experience, which are internalised and transformed into individual aspirations and expectations. Such dispositions are also durable and transposable in the sense they can be employed and adjusted to new and different situations and circumstances as they arise, thereby generating new actions and novel practices. Some critics have wrongly argued that Bourdieu's schema is deterministic.⁵⁵ His indebtedness to phenomenology proves this false. Bodily subjectivity and motor skills, as Merleau-Ponty argues, have the 'power to reckon with the possible';⁵⁶ for Bourdieu, they allow us to

⁵⁴ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, p. 50.

⁵⁵ Alexander, Jeffrey. 'The Reality of Reduction: The Failed Synthesis of Pierre Bourdieu' in Jeffrey Alexander. *Fin de Siecle Social Theory: Relativism, Reduction and the Problem of Reason*. London: Verso Books, 1995, pp. 128–217; Jenkins, Richard. *Pierre Bourdieu*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

⁵⁶ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Phenomenology of Perception*, London: Routledge. 2012. p. 112.

move beyond actual situations into future situations. Individuals are creative improvisers to the extent that they apply their acquired habitus, as embodied representations and practices, in new contexts and situations within determinate and shifting social contexts.

However, there is a sense in which his work does detract from the fully self-aware and conscious agent of, for example, Husserlian phenomenology and ethnomethodology. For Bourdieu, these imprints on the body remind us that we need to treat the body and the principles and cosmology it embodies, as beyond conscious manipulation.

The similar conditions of existence of a group or social class, especially in terms of their early upbringing, produce a homogenous group whose practices are harmonised without any conscious intention, or reference to a norm or explicit co-ordination. Despite the ability to adjust and improvise in situations, the habitus is a product of objective conditions and likely to undergo a *hysteresis effect* when it finds itself in an environment radically different from which it emerged. This can lead to dislocation but also to social conflict, as between different generations raised in different objective conditions, who possess different definitions of what is possible, impossible or probable.

According to Bourdieu, the concept of habitus can only be understood *relationally* in terms of what he calls social *fields*, the various social spheres and contexts within which agents act. The term 'field', which is only briefly discussed in *Outline* but more extensively in *The Logic of Practice* and through its empirical application elsewhere,⁵⁷ allows Bourdieu to move beyond visible interactions of symbolic interactionism to the concealed objective social positions that these agents occupy in the social world, or in his terminology, 'social space'. Fields refer essentially to the structure and patterning of social relationships:

In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively

⁵⁷ Bourdieu, Pierre. 'The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field' *Hastings Journal of Law*, 38. 1987, pp. 814–853; Bourdieu, Pierre. 'Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field' *Comparative Social Research*, 13. 1991, pp. 1–44. Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993; Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996; Bourdieu, Pierre. *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998.

defined, in their existence and in the determinations they have upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present or potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (capital) whose possession demands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.⁵⁸

Fields develop historically and as societies diversify so more fields arise: 'the historic process is one of differentiation of the world into spheres'.⁵⁹ Such a view follows readily from Durkheim's social morphology, which points to increasing social differentiation, and dynamic density, as populations increase and societies develop. Fields take a variety of forms such as the educational field, economic field, the cultural field, the political field, the scientific field, the religious field etc. and can be further divided into sub-fields, the field of higher education for example. These fields shape and structure the actions of agents who enter into them, eliciting and triggering specific responses from agents with a particular habitus. Strictly speaking, economic and cultural power lie not in wealth or in educational titles but, in the relations between these forms and their associated fields of economic and educational relations.

Although each field has distinctive characteristics and unique logic or procedural rules, all fields contain or express certain universal properties. Firstly, they are semi-autonomous from each other, and thereby *relatively* impervious to the external influences and determinations of other fields – art is followed for art's sake, politics for power, action on the stock market for wealth, etc. Second, fields are 'fields of force', like magnetic fields, which attract and repel, they are characterised by tension and struggle, in which agents compete with one another to preserve or alter the constellation of positions that exists within the field. Consequently, fields can change and develop within the context of historical struggles. Fields – conceived as social fields of forces – solicit, instill and reproduce internal organizational criteria. Moreover, it is only in modern formations that autonomous fields have developed, become institutionalised and self-reproducing. According

⁵⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre and Loic Wacquant. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, p. 97.

⁵⁹ *On the State*, p. 75.

to Bourdieu, along with habitus, the concept of field enables him to transcend the dichotomy between reproduction and transformation, statics and dynamics, and structure and history.

Bourdieu's third key and inter-related concept is capital. This refers to any resource that enables people to appropriate profits from participating within specific fields. Bourdieu talks about a variety of forms of capital though he tends to focus on four main types: economic capital referring to money (including very high salaries), material and financial assets and private property; cultural capital refers to scarce symbolic goods, educational credentials and titles; social capital refers to social connections and profits accruing from group membership; and symbolic capital refers to recognition and prestige or the effects of any form of capital when they are not perceived for what they are, but are instead misrecognised. These capitals can also appear in various manifestations. Economic capital is generally *objectified* in goods or things, whereas cultural capital can be objectified in books, but can also take on an *embodied* state as dispositions of the mind/body, and an *institutional* state as rare educational qualifications.

For Bourdieu, a person's position in social space is determined by both the amount of capital they possess – the overall *volume*, and the type of capital they possess, the *composition* of their capital: 'The structure of the distribution of the different types and sub-types of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, that is, the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of the world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices'.⁶⁰ This distribution determines the agents' power and how they act within fields or different markets, or 'play' within various games:

We can picture each player as having in front of her a pile of tokens of different colours, each corresponding to a given species of capital she holds, so that her relative force in the game . . . depend both on the total number of tokens and of the composition of the piles of tokens she retains, that is on the volume and structure of her capital.⁶¹

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁶¹ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation*, p. 99.

People who play or participate in games within fields do so because they agree to do so, because they believe they have stakes or vested interests in the game, that is in terms of an *illusio*, that the game is worth playing.

Modifying Durkheim and Mauss's discussion of the social nature of the categories,⁶² Bourdieu argues that the forms of categories and classifications are not only social, but also, embody power relations. Moreover, because of the direct and spontaneous correlation between social categories and social structures, they have the political effect of naturalising the social world.

This confusion of what is in fact a social and arbitrary order but which is perceived and understood as a natural and inevitable order entails *doxa*, which can be distinguished from orthodox or heterodox beliefs to the extent that the latter imply an awareness and recognition that different or contrary beliefs could exist.

Bourdieu develops his arguments concerning habitus, field and capital both in determinate empirical contexts, especially in analysing the logic of a gift and honour economy in Algeria, and in terms of a general science of the 'economy of practices'. In terms of the former and restating the importance of temporality, Bourdieu argues the structuralist approach, which sees gift exchange solely in terms of mechanical necessity, ignores the temporal structure of gift exchange which in fact 'defines the full truth of the gift'.⁶³ Gifts may not be returned either because of ingratitude or as an insult. 'In every society it may be observed that, if it is not to constitute an insult the counter-gift must be deferred and different, because the immediate return of an exactly identical object clearly amounts to a refusal'.⁶⁴ It is the lapse of time interposed between receiving and giving a gift that 'enables the gift or counter-gift to be seen and experienced as an inaugural act of generosity, without any past or future, i.e. without calculation'.⁶⁵ This time-lag, which consists of manipulating time or the tempo of action also allows us to introduce agents, their strategies and improvisation. An emphasis on practice, strategies, playing a game and the regulated

⁶² Durkheim, Emile and Marcel Mauss. *Primitive Classification*. London: Cohen & West, 2009.

⁶³ *Outline*, p. 5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

improvisation of agents in place of reified, de-temporalised, abstract, static models based on 'mechanical laws' of the 'cycle of reciprocity' and predictability means recognising that uncertainty is inherent in social life. Gift exchange is not a ritualised exchange but a confrontation of strategies.

In addition to his insightful discussion of temporality, Bourdieu in *Outline* also discusses what he calls an 'economy of practices'. Using the concept of economic in a wide sense, the framework implies that all practices – including economic, cultural, political, and scientific practices – aim at increasing or augmenting one's capital holding. That is, all practices are economic and cultural practices directed towards the maximising of material or *symbolic profits*, which follow an 'economic logic' in the broad sense of the term.

Within the contexts of fields and struggles, and according to their position in social space, actors employ 'strategies' to either maintain or improve their position. These strategies are not conscious strategies as in rational choice theory, but embodied strategies incorporated in the body as dispositions. The form the strategies take and the type of agent involved – individual, institutional or collective – is historically and socially determined by the logic of the field. Human agents enter the field of struggle with historically given endowments, either in an *incorporated* state within the habitus as dispositions and competences, or in an *objectified* state as material goods. Two areas of especial importance for influencing a class habitus are family background in terms of father's occupation and family lifestyle, and the school in terms of qualifications as standardised markers of education since these provide sources of both economic and cultural capital. For Bourdieu, class is a central fact of modern societies. He also talks of 'strategies of reconversion' in which one form of capital may be converted for another. For example, economic capital may be used to fund private education to secure cultural capital. It is the mutual relation, correspondence or 'elective affinity' between habitus and field, mediated by capital, that generates social practice.

In *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and *The Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu discusses the different strategies and modes of domination that exist in pre-capitalist or traditional societies, and modern differentiated capitalist societies, in a discussion that draws sparingly on Marx's *Grundrisse* (1973).⁶⁶ In traditional forms of society characterised by the absence of

⁶⁶ Marx, Karl. 1858. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. London: Allen Lane, 1973.

a self-regulating market, a state, or an institutionalised education system, domination can only be maintained through strategies that need to be continually renewed in a personal and direct way through interactions. In addition, in pre-capitalist societies such as Kabylia, where overt brutal violence is collectively frowned upon, for example, between a master and his *khammes* (servants), such violence may lead the victim to flee or to initiate forms of counter-violence and effectively end the relationship of exploitation. Here, therefore, under the veil of enchanted relationships, symbolic violence predominates. This is 'the gentle, invisible form of violence, which is never recognized as such, and is not so much undergone as chosen, the violence of credit, confidence, obligation, personal loyalty, hospitality, gifts, gratitude, piety – in short, all the virtues honoured by the code of honour – cannot fail to be seen as the most economical mode of domination'.⁶⁷ As a hidden form of violence, symbolic violence involves gaining the 'consent' of the dominated to their own domination. Not only are the negative sanctions tied to overt violence and the censorship of direct personal interest stronger, but, economic capital is endlessly transformed into symbolic capital in order for the dominant to maintain their domination and to acquire the complicity of the dominated group. In such a context, domination must be euphemised and misrecognised by all concerned. An ethic of honour suits both the peasant–master as well as his *khammes* – through 'an honourable representation of his condition' in which the former treats the latter as an associate rather than servant.

By contrast, in modern capitalist differentiated societies where forms of capital have become accumulated, autonomous fields and social mechanisms institutionalised and objectified, power and domination are self-reproducing, masked and remain opaque. Symbolic violence is less dependent on being continually renewed through interpersonal relations but instead exists through institutional mechanisms such as education and philanthropy. Given the complexity and dissimulation entailed in such processes, the central role for sociology becomes to reveal the hidden mechanisms through which social domination reproduces itself.

Reflexivity

A further central feature of Bourdieu's sociological approach is its emphasis on epistemological reflexivity. The introduction of a systematic

⁶⁷ *Outline*, p. 192.

reflexivity constitutes a core factor in the foundation of any adequate social science. Rather than referring to a personal or narcissistic reflexivity, epistemological reflexivity enables sociologists to scientifically ground a sociological standpoint by scrutinizing what are taken as subjective and objective presuppositions in the social world. Stated briefly, for Bourdieu, it is not only the particular power relation between a Western anthropologist (Bourdieu) and the tribe or people he is studying (in this case the Kabylia) that needs to be acknowledged by the anthropologist, but *all* intellectual/academic forms of projection when studying human behaviour. Unreflexive intellectuals, writing from a standpoint characterised by *skole*, leisure or the 'scholastic point of view',⁶⁸ unvariably project their passive academic relation to the world onto their subjects and understand what for these subjects are practical practices, involving semi-conscious bodily activity, as a spectacle that needs to be decoded or interpreted, for example by recreating the meanings the actors employ in their activity.

In such a context the intellectual observer, given his or her subjective and objective relation to the world, is more concerned with the *opus operatum* of social actions than the *modus operandi*. A social scientific basis for the study of human behaviour crucially entails a break with 'scholastic reason' and involves a reflexive analysis of the social separation between the intellectual and his or her object of study. This reflexive moment must be included in all social analysis by subordinating 'all operations of scientific practice to a theory of practice and practical knowledge'.⁶⁹ It is only by instituting such a reflexive moment that one can bring to light the 'practical mode of knowledge in all practice'.

Although not discussed in great detail his theory of practice as elaborated in *Outline*, a central rationale underlying his whole approach is to establish sociology as an autonomous science as the ground upon which social criticism can unfold. In the *Craft of Sociology* written with Jean-Claude Chamboredon and Jean-Claude Passeron,⁷⁰ Bourdieu attempts to provide

⁶⁸ See Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*.

⁶⁹ *Outline*, p. 4.

⁷⁰ Bourdieu, Pierre, Jean Claude Chamboredon, and Jean Claude Passeron. *The Craft of Sociology: Epistemological Preliminaries*. Germany: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1991.

an epistemological grounding for the social sciences in general, and sociology in particular, which he develops in other work.⁷¹ Drawing heavily on the historians of science Koyré, and Canguilhem, he argues that the philosophy of science generally overemphasises the importance of verification and validation at the expense of examining theory and hypotheses construction. Drawing on Bachelard he argues that the scientific act has to be won, constructed and confirmed. Epistemological facts contain a logical order initially entailing a break with ordinary concepts and phenomenal appearances, followed by the construction of hypotheses using a coherent theoretical model, and finally the testing of these hypotheses against this model. Such a process of winning, constructing and confirming facts takes place within the historical emergence of a semi-autonomous scientific field that is continually under threat from the external interests prevalent in other fields, including the economic field.⁷²

4. *Symbolic Power*

An article on symbolic power, written in 1977, marks an important turning point and development in Bourdieu's work. In this condensed essay, he synthesises a number of heretofore divergent theoretical traditions and frameworks that deal with symbolism and language in an attempt to create a sociology of symbolic forms and power, entailing a conception in which power is less visible or misrecognised. Synthesising a neo-Kantian and idealist position that emphasises the productive activity of consciousness deriving from Cassirer, Sapir and Whorf, with the work of structuralists who emphasise the structured nature of language as a medium of communication, Bourdieu argues that symbolic power functions as a power of constructing social reality by establishing a *gnoseological* order (philosophical order of cognition), providing the immediate shared meaning individuals have of the social world. Here Durkheim's distinction between

⁷¹ Bourdieu, Pierre. 'The Specificity of the Scientific Field of the Progress of Reason, *Social Science Information* 14(6). 1975, pp. 19–47; Bourdieu, Pierre. 'Animadversiones in Mertonem' in J. Clark, C. Modgil and S. Modgil (eds) *Robert K. Merton: Consensus and Controversy*, London: Falmer Press. 1990, pp. 297–301; Bourdieu, Pierre. *Science of Science and Reflexivity*. Cambridge: Polity, 2004.

⁷² Bourdieu, *Science of Science*, p. xii.

logical and moral integration is of crucial importance. The former refers to the 'homogenous conception of time, space, number and cause, one which makes it possible for different intellects to reach agreement'. This in turn makes moral integration possible. Here there is a consensus on the meaning of the world 'which contributes fundamentally to the reproduction of the social order'.⁷³ Sense and consensus become tied. In a second synthesis, this is conjoined with Marxist and Weberian approaches that examine the political function of symbolic productions as instruments of domination and power, serving particular interests usually presented as universal interests. Henceforth, all relations of meaning and communication are seen inseparably as power relations that depend on the material or symbolic power that agents possess:

It is as knowledge structured and structuring instruments of communication and knowledge that 'symbolic systems' fulfil their political function, as instruments which help to ensure that one class dominates another (symbolic violence) by bringing their own distinctive power to bear on the relations of power which underlie them and thus by contributing, in Weber's terms, to the 'domestication of the dominated'.⁷⁴

The essay on symbolic power is Bourdieu's attempt to provide a less class reductionist account of ideological production without at the same time conferring the latter an absolute autonomy. Symbolic power is a power of making people see the social world in a specific way, of creating a vision of divisions that affirms or transforms the vision of the world that social agents possess, and therefore the social world itself. In his understanding of language, language, words, symbols are forms of action at a distance, 'an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic), by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization'.⁷⁵ For Bourdieu symbolic capital and power are a transformed or misrecognised form of other forms of power, that is, they depend upon the conversion of different types of capital-economic, cultural, political capital etc. into symbolic capital. Symbolic capital 'is any property (any form of capital

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.167.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

whether physical, economic, cultural or social) when it is perceived by social agents endowed with categories of perception which cause them to know it and to recognize it, to give it value'.⁷⁶ Symbolic power and symbolic violence, by contrast, are exercised in an invisible way so that those beholden to them remain unaware of their very existence.⁷⁷ Symbolic violence and domination 'really begins when the misrecognition implied by recognition, leads those who are dominated to apply the dominant criteria of evaluation to their own practice'.⁷⁸

The discussion of symbolic forms also point to the fundamental performative role played by language. The work of Austin on performatives and speech-acts,⁷⁹ or what Searle calls 'declaratives',⁸⁰ and on Anscombe's famous distinction between *cognitive states*, which describe the world and are derived from the facts of the world, and *conative states* which bring something about in the world, is central here.⁸¹ Language and speech do not simply describe the social world but simultaneously constitute the very reality they describe.⁸² Words, dictums and ritualised forms of expression

⁷⁶ *Rethinking the State*, p. 9.

⁷⁷ As a result, individuals: 'unwittingly contribute to wielding the symbolic violence that is wielded upon them, that is upon their unconscious, inasmuch as – and only inasmuch as – their mental structures are objectively in agreement with the social microcosm in which their specific interests are engendered and invested, in and by this very agreement' Bourdieu, Pierre. *In Other Words*, Cambridge: Polity, p. 12).

⁷⁸ Bourdieu Pierre and Boltanski, Luc. 'La Production de L'Ideologie Dominante' *Actes de la recherche en sciences social* Juin 3(3).1976, p8.

⁷⁹ Austin, John. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.

⁸⁰ Searle, John. *The Construction of Social Reality*. London: Penguin. 1979.

⁸¹ Anscombe, Elizabeth. *Intention*. Harvard: Harvard University Press. 2000; The work of Wittgenstein and Nelson Goodman is also directly of relevance. The latter discusses multiple worlds constructed differently according to the categories used by the observer. Goodman, Nelson. *Ways of Worldmaking*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing. 1978.

⁸² It is important to note here, that unlike speech act theorists, language is not an autonomous realm of communication and meaning but integrally tied to power. As Wacquant notes, 'The efficacy of performative discourse is directly proportional to the authority of the agent who enunciates it and to its degree of congruence

are part of the symbolic struggles of everyday life, which imply claims to symbolic authority, which itself is a socially recognised power to impose a particular vision and division of the social world. For Bourdieu, the power of words is not to be located in the words themselves, but comes from 'outside' so to speak - from the institution that mandates and gives the individual the authority to speak. Social science is itself caught up in this struggle through the 'theory effect', 'which by helping to impose a more or less authorized way of seeing the social world, helps to construct the reality of that world'.⁸³ Language, theory, statements etc. operate, as Barry Barnes notes elsewhere, akin to a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁸⁴ Theories, descriptive and constative expressions and statements about a state of affairs are in fact performative discourses 'executing an action which attempt to bring about that very state of affairs or make individuals interpret and understand reality according to that discourse.'⁸⁵ Theory is thereby a programme of perception which contributes 'practically to the reality of what it announces by the fact of uttering it, of predicting it and making it predicted, of making it conceivable and above all credible and thus creating the collective representation and will which contribute to its production'. As a result 'one can modify social reality by modifying the agents' representation of it'.⁸⁶ Bourdieu argues that all science, even one that provides an 'objective measure of the degree of realism of the respective positions' by 'describing the space in which these struggles take place and where what is at stake, among other things is the representation of the forces engaged in the struggle and their chances of success'⁸⁷ will also produce a theory effect. In this discussion Bourdieu vacillates rather problematically between a constructivism based on representation and constructing social reality and a realism based on a pre-given reality. Hence, for example, he argues that the theory effect is more powerful

with the objective partitions of society' Wacquant, *Pierre Bourdieu and Democratic Politics*, p. 15.

⁸³ Bourdieu, *Language*, p. 106.

⁸⁴ Barnes, Barry. 'Social Life as Bootstrapped Indiction' *Sociology* 17. 1983, pp. 524–545; Barnes, Barry. *The Nature of Power*. Cambridge: Polity. 1988.

⁸⁵ Bourdieu, *Language*, p. 128.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

'when the processes of objectification and of rendering things explicit are rooted in reality, and hence the divisions in thought correspond more precisely to real divisions'.⁸⁸

He further argues that the social sciences must take the acts of naming and the rites of institution through which they are accomplished as an object of study. This involves examining the role of words in constructing social reality – as acts of constitution, and the struggle over social classifications in constructing classes of individuals based on age, sex, social position, but also social groups including clans, tribes, ethnic groups, and nations. These acts of naming are important as modes of 'group-making'.

Recognition and Misrecognition

Rather than his concept of cultural capital, for which he has become justly renowned, it is the concepts of symbolic power and symbolic capital – which became increasingly foregrounded in his work as it developed and where the concepts of recognition and misrecognition are to be found – that constitutes the core of his approach. The latter concepts underpin his entire *oeuvre*. They are constructed as part of his philosophical anthropology in which humans require recognition from others in order to justify their otherwise meaningless, contingent and finite existence. This existentialist vision of humans, and their desire to emerge from their absurd, indifferent existence and give meaning to life and death by participating in society, is discussed in one of his last major works, *Pascalian Meditations*.⁸⁹ But the theme of recognition and misrecognition, of how groups are seen and thereby see themselves, is also present at the outset, in his work on Algeria. As we noted earlier, the concepts of recognition and misrecognition were common currency in France in the 1950s and 1960s, drawn

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Here if he argues that beliefs constitute the social world viz-a-viz performativity of language then how can they be measured according to an objective reality independent of it? It is impossible to collectively define beliefs as true or false (or real and unreal) objective or not, when these beliefs do not exist independently of what they are referring but are instead partially constitutive of that very objective reality. There is no criterion by which to judge them – that is, as Wittgenstein remarks elsewhere, 'there is no standard of correctness' Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* para 130.

⁸⁹ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, pp. 237–245.

from the work of Hegel via Alexandre Kojève, and deployed in the work of a number of thinkers including Sartre, Fanon, Lacan and Althusser. They are also clearly evident in *Distinction* where individuals aim to differentiate themselves through distinction and pretension strategies through consumption. Similarly, in his writings on the state, where symbolic processes take centre stage, individuals strive to become consecrated and acquire identities through state nomination, categorisation and titles. That is they aim to become recognised and validated by the supreme social entity, a collectively alienated objectification that is akin to a god, the state. In the context of discussing Kafka's trial, he notes the importance of esteem and honour from other social actors:

As in *The Trial*, where the slander is present from the first phase, the most categorical categories are there, from the beginning, from entry into life, which – and Kafka, a Jew in Prague, knew this well – starts with an assignment of identity designating a category, a class, an ethnic group, a sex or, for racist eyes 'a race'. The social world is essentialist, and one has that much less chance of escaping the manipulation of aspirations and subjective expectations when one is symbolically more deprived, less consecrated or more stigmatized, and therefore less well placed in the competition for the 'esteem of men', as Pascal puts it, and condemned to uncertainty as to one's present and future social being, which vary with one's power or impotence. With investment in a game and the recognition that can come from cooperative competition with others, the social world offers human beings that which they most totally lack: a justification for existing.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Bourdieu, *Pascalian*, pp. 238–239. He adds: 'So without indulging in the existential exhalation of *'sein-zum-Tode'*, one can establish a necessary link between three indisputable and inseparable anthropological facts: man is and knows he is mortal, the thought he is going to die is unbearable or impossible for him, and, condemned to death, an end (in the sense of *termination*) which cannot be taken as an end (in the sense of a *goal*), since it represents as Heidegger put it, 'the possibility of impossibility', he is a being without reason for being, haunted by the need for justification, legitimation, recognition. And as Pascal suggest, in this quest for justifications for existing, what he calls 'the world' or 'society' is the only recourse other than God. *Ibid.*, p. 240.

As we shall see, it is the state which is the central bank for symbolic capital and therefore the site *par excellence* of social struggle. Having examined some of Bourdieu's key concepts, we can now turn to examine some of theories of the state that he selectively engages with.