

**IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING BECAUSE IT COMES
WITHOUT SAYING: ON PIERRE BOURDIEU'S NOTION
OF *HABITUS***

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Abstract

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, one of the most influential contemporary theories of practice, is meant as a theoretical, empirical as well as political project, accounting for the way social order is constituted. His explanation is premised on the reduction of social relations to power relations, envisioning a social order predicated on conflict. Although he aims at identifying the ultimate logic according to which social order is constituted, Bourdieu himself, much like the agents he theorizes, takes something for granted: while conflict is essential for Bourdieu, he takes it as a force driving action, and not as something that has to be explained. I argue that Bourdieu resorts to a circular rhetoric when discussing how misrecognition and symbolic violence function at the level of everyday practice through *habitus*, *doxa* and *hexis*.

Key Words: Pierre Bourdieu, theory of practice, *habitus*, *doxa*, *hexis*, symbolic violence, misrecognition

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Introduction

Pierre Bourdieu is one of the social scientists whose work dominated the second half of the twentieth century. Throughout his works, he endeavored not to divorce theoretical developments from empirical research, the former being the product of constant re-appraisals of the latter. He is best known for his theory of practice, an attempt at transcending the great divide between agency and structure, if not the dichotomy between freedom and constraint, a topic of great popularity at the time he was accomplishing his training as a philosopher. What strikes in Bourdieu's work is the eclecticism of his theoretical development, as he manages to blend so many traditions and schools of thought that would otherwise seem irreconcilable. Thus, elements of Marxist, Weberian and Durkheimian sociology are intertwined with the epistemology of structural anthropology and the reflexivity of phenomenological philosophy in the pursuit of grasping social order in both its objective determinations and its subjective instantiations.

Bourdieu's theories aim to account for the way social order is constituted, operating the reduction of social relations to power relations masked by symbolic violence through the mechanism of misrecognition. However, I argue that, in his pursuit, Bourdieu cannot make the ultimate reduction. His theory provides a model of stability, but is not as strong in explaining how social structures are crystalized, how objective structures come into being. In order to do so, Bourdieu needs to resort to a vague notion of intentionality (which he never overtly does), a project which, despite the way he defines his central concept, *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977; 1990; 2000), does need a conductor. Furthermore, to make his theory valid, Bourdieu needs to take for granted a community of the unconscious, a *sui generis* essence to which, like Durkheim before him (Durkheim 1982), he attributes a social character, essential to account for the transmission of

practice and *habitus*, but also the exercise of symbolic violence (Turner 1994; Latour 2005).¹ In this situation, the social is taken almost as an *a priori* category (although never overtly, always implied), and the final reduction for Bourdieu means, in actuality, the reduction to the social, which is determined by political struggles. However, the shape and content of these struggles is never thoroughly discussed.

Bourdieu excluded from the very beginning the possibility that models constructed by the sociologist to be the very rules according to which society functions and is constituted. He dismisses the legalism imposed in structural anthropology by Claude Levi-Strauss and, in order to account for the constitution of social order, he turns to phenomenology, working towards a synthesis between the two traditions. However, against phenomenology, Bourdieu argues that society cannot be conceived as the product of intersubjectivity and everyday interactions between agents. The interactions themselves need to be explained as manifestations of something that is external to them, and to be taken as their own causes. The logic of social interaction is inscribed in a specific type of logic, from without the interaction itself and internalized by individuals; it is the logic of practice, inscribed in the reason of functioning of social order.

The world is ordered according to principles of classification established as products of symbolic struggles between different factions with divergent interests within society. These struggles result in principles of classification which are naturalized through an act of symbolic violence and the misrecognized naturalization of a cultural arbitrary. Thus, agents renounce, “of

¹ In *Reassembling the Social* (2005), Bruno Latour brings a very important stream of criticism to Pierre Bourdieu and to the sociologists of Durkheimian inspiration. He criticizes the resort to the social as the ultimate explanation of processes and phenomena, never as something to be explained. I take this to be essential in explaining the constitution of societies. Sociologists should not limit their efforts at showing what is social or of social nature, but they also need to take into account what makes the social take the configurations it does. However, I take Latour’s criticism of Bourdieu (“sociologists of the social” in general) to be far too radical, and I do not agree with tossing all concepts that hint at collective practices and beliefs. I do agree with him that when the sociologist identifies them, she should explain these beliefs, not circularly take them as both cause and result (Turner 1994).

their own will”, direct political representation and, through acts of institution, contribute to their own political alienation. Imposition appears as choice and constraint is expressed as free elections. The dichotomy between freedom and constraint (Bourdieu 1991) as instantiation of symbolic violence is blurred in the logic of practice and conceptualized the same way as Emile Durkheim’s constraint (Durkheim 1995): not as imposition, but as the respect society inspires to individuals.

Although he does pay a great deal of attention to the constitution of order, Bourdieu treats it not as something that has to be taken for granted but, rather, as something that needs to be further inquired into. Just like Karl Marx, Bourdieu places conflict at the constitution of society and just like Max Weber (and unlike Marx), the struggle is not seen as class struggle, but as symbolic struggle over legitimacy and authority. To depict regularities in the manifestation of practices, Bourdieu adopts the relational perspective imposed in structural anthropology by Levi-Strauss. To fight the structuralist determinism, he pays a whole lot of attention to the body and the way the objective world is lived and mirrored in the body: the perception of the world as embodied and externalized, agents bodily and practically oriented towards the achievement of their own projects, according to the phenomenological agenda.

Bourdieu’s theory of practice incorporates all these traditions following agents throughout their positions in social space, the capital resources available to them and the extent to which they are able to convert their capital whether in economic capital (Bourdieu 1997) or symbolic capital (Bourdieu 2000). Bourdieu tries to grasp all these movements in social space both in their determinations within fields, the frames which limit the *habitus*, and in the way *habitus* determines the position of individuals within fields, limiting and defining their anticipations, hopes and interests. Relationally defining the subjective (of phenomenological

origin) component of practices as well as their objective determinations, Bourdieu inevitably resorts to a circular rhetoric. There always has to be something taken for granted, and it has to be a community of convictions and beliefs (Turner 1994), which needs to be of a social nature and not a psychological one, so as to be able to reflect the manifestation of categories of classification, the product of struggles over imposing the principles of classification. Bourdieu's rhetoric runs in circles from his conceptualization of *habitus* – stable structure reflected on individuals as structural variants of objective reality – to his theory of practice. However, when developing his theory of change, Bourdieu seems to disinherit his previous work (Bourdieu 2005). Agents become more agentic, the *habitus* is more flexible and more prone to change, and transmission becomes training to the same extent that implicit, tacit knowledge becomes explicit.

My thesis is structured around the argument of Bourdieu's constant resort to a taken for granted, therefore unquestioned and unexplained by the sociologist himself, "community of the unconscious" (Bourdieu 1977). It comprises three parts that come together in the attempt at giving a complete view of Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus as well as of its tensions and shortcomings. First, I address the influence of Durkheim and Marx and, to a lesser extent, Weber, on Bourdieu's conceptualization of social order, *doxa*, and how misrecognition functions as a mechanism endorsing symbolic violence. In the second part, I analyze Bourdieu's relationship to both structuralism and phenomenology, both as lenses of grasping the world and as theoretical contributions that he integrates in his conceptualization of *habitus* and its performative component, bodily *hexis*. After clarifying my own view of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, I come to a close analysis of his theory of practice, with its emphasis on both structures and the way structures operate in everyday life. Here, I tackle with his vision of the possibility of

change and the tensions existing between Bourdieu's theory of change and that of reproduction, but also tensions within his own conceptualizations throughout years.

Order and classifications

Difficult to integrate into a particular theoretical tradition due to the very original synthesis he managed to do between traditions that would otherwise seem irreconcilable, an acknowledged "reflexive eclecticism" (Bourdieu 2011), Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the habitus owes a lot to classical theorists. Thus, the works of Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss and Karl Marx, as well as Alfred Schutz's phenomenology have been, from the onset, extremely influential in the development of his theories. This section of my thesis will elaborate on how Pierre Bourdieu took over the notions of constraint and collective consciousness as well as classifications, developed by Durkheim and Marcel Mauss. Next, I address the influence of Karl Marx's theory of *praxis* and the idea of concealed power relations over Bourdieu's theory of practice.

Although overtly admitting Emile Durkheim's influence in his work, Bourdieu attempted to take distance from Durkheim, as well as from the entire neo-Kantian tradition in the social sciences, opposing to their idealism an analysis of the material conditions determining social life (Bourdieu 1977; 1990). Nevertheless, Durkheim's influence on Bourdieu remained very strong in all his conceptualizations of habitus. This is not easily visible, first of all, because of the often unjust interpretations that Durkheim himself received, being casted in the structural-functionalist perspective by Talcott Parsons and remaining there until the ethnomethodological tradition took a closer look at his theoretical apparatus (Warfield Rawls 2001; Rawls 2003). Due to this understanding of Durkheim's theory, it is less obvious to Bourdieu's readers just how much he took from Durkheim. Secondly, due to the way Bourdieu uses Durkheim's concepts, this influence is difficult to depict, as the two authors depart from different premises in the

constitution of society and social order. Emile Durkheim takes social order as the main premise in the construction of his theory: his analyses are directed towards finding the mechanisms that lead to the emergence and maintaining of society and social order. Thus, he tries to identify the way religious thought emerges and how it is in fact reinforced by social forces, he analyses how traditional societies transition towards industrialized ones with their associated forms of sociality. Also, he puts great emphasis on the analysis of anomic types and processes that accompany this transition, trying to explain and to provide solutions for these. With Pierre Bourdieu and his notion of *habitus*, the perspective is completely different although the social mechanisms he depicts are practically the same. He predicates his theory on the premise of conflict – society constituted as the consequence of a struggle; this is where his descending from the Marxist tradition becomes transparent. Bourdieu’s entire conceptual apparatus is an attempt to unmask the relations of domination in society. If Marx was keen on revealing the inequalities of capitalist societies as direct antagonism between two classes, for Bourdieu, the process of unmasking has as its object the positioning of the dominant groups towards the dominated: Bourdieu’s object of analysis is an unuttered (neither by the dominant nor by the theorist), constant fear of usurpation the former foster toward the dominated.

The *habitus*, as a system of “structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” (Bourdieu 1977: 72) orients action and represents the principle of production of social practices which, in turn, “reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle” (Bourdieu 1977: 78). *Habitus* is the generative principle of social practices, thus, the principle generating its own perpetuation to the extent that, besides some “regulated improvisations”, social practices produce and reproduce the social world as it is made possible to envision by the “schemes of perception, conception and action

common to all members of the same group” (Bourdieu 1977: 86). Therefore, *habitus* not only orients social action, it also acts as the source of every individual’s sense of place in the world. *Habitus* is practical sense and it implies not knowledge about the principles that produce and reproduce practice, but practical mastery of these very principles – agents know exactly how to act in the social circumstances they find themselves in because they are equipped by the *habitus* to do so, but this is not theoretical or reflected-upon knowledge of their action. It is the practical mastery of what “goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned” because it “comes without saying” (Bourdieu 1977: 166-167).

This practical sense is the *doxa*, the “sense of limits” (Bourdieu 1984), an objectified system of classifications that imposes boundaries while blurring their bounding essence and revealing them in the form of practical mastery of the production and reproduction of the social order. Bourdieu emphasizes that this is not knowledge intentionally acquired, but, rather, practical mastery of classifications, the ability of each individual of behaving as she should in social space, according to her own position within it.² The *doxa*, although inspired by Edmund Husserl’s phenomenological philosophy, in Bourdieu’s development, it resembles Durkheim’s collective conscience (Myles 2004). As it results both from Bourdieu’s account of the workings of *doxa* in Kabyle society (Bourdieu 1977) and from Durkheim’s collective consciousness (1995), it is the taken for granted knowledge that is used in everyday life, whose existence is never acknowledged at a discursive level, but always enacted through social practice. Furthermore, *doxa* does, in everyday life, what ritual time does to members of traditional

² Although it is practically impossible to discover the essence of the habitus, we can argue that there are two components to it. They both relate to pre-reflective ways of knowing and managing the world, but they differ in their instantiations. The first, and the one I am going to discuss in the following lines, is the *doxa*, and it refers to mental structures that contain the view of the social order that leads to the reproduction of the very social order. The second, the body hexis, represents the corporeal imprint of society on the individual bodies, turning the body into an index of society (Strathern 1996: 27). This aspect of the habitus will be treated in detail in the next section.

(primitive) societies for Durkheim. Actually, Durkheim's account of ritual practices in primitive societies and Bourdieu's account of Kabyle society provide overlapping arguments on how society is continuously reconstructed through enacted practice.

Durkheim's theory of religious life encompasses all dimensions of life and all things included in it. For this purpose, the world is divided into two spheres – the sacred and the profane and each of them has their own tradition-designated time and space, as well as distinctive things and objects which are categorized as whether sacred or profane. Interference between the two spheres of life is the object of taboo. This order of things has its origin in society, as society is the only entity with sufficient moral authority as to ordain everyday life for the individuals.

The sacred and the profane are separate realms of life when it comes to time, space and objects, as well as when it comes to the way individuals behave. Thus, in the profane realm people go according to the rules of society, rules that are followed blindly and taken for granted during mundane activities. It is in the sacred realm that rules are made and reinforced, that society is constructed over and over again. In ritual time, the whole clan is summoned to gather for religious ceremonies (Durkheim 1995: 213). Individuals lose control, all rules and norms are trespassed only to be more strongly reinforced through ritual chaos. It is precisely in this highly regulated chaos that individuals enter a state of emotional excitement that makes them (by reproducing society, individuals themselves are confirmed as social entities) and bodily experience that gives them the feeling that they have come in contact with a higher power (Durkheim 1995: 220), with external forces that dominate all of them equally. Secular occupations are annulled and all other activity ceases in order for the ritual to take place. Social hierarchy is ritually dismayed and “in this effervescent social milieu and indeed from that very

effervescence the religious idea seems to have been born.” (Durkheim 1995: 220). Only the religious idea is, as Durkheim argues, the power of the clan to generate strong emotions, since society alone possesses the authority of stirring such strong reactions.

Anne Warfield Rawls (2001) shows that with Durkheim social practices are enacted through the experience of the ritual. The mechanism for stimulating emotion rests in the motion and the sounds that emerge during the performance of the ritual. Thus, it is not the representation of society – the totem – which is celebrated, but the union itself and by asserting that members of a society are one with the totem, what they are doing is to state their own nature and belonging. This is social practice. The narratives that accompany the ritual, the myths, instead of commemorating the glory of past events, serve rather as “an explanation of the present than they are of history.” (Durkheim 1995: 129) Therefore, there is a very down to earth dimension of rites. During ceremonies, society is not only reinforced. Identity proper is rebuilt through the ritual, as society itself is contained as a whole within the ritual: all rules of conduct, all kinship, social and hierarchical relationships are contained within the ceremony. Although they are all tossed away in the rapture, every member knows her own place within the ritual, as everybody knows their place within society in the profane realm.

Bourdieu takes the argument further and develops, through *doxa*, the idea of a stock of knowledge that reinforces social order, establishing every individual’s place within society. It sets forth the boundaries of legitimate expectations and renders the unattainable undesirable “at the cost of a *double negation* which inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, that is, to refuse what is anyway refused and to love the inevitable” (Bourdieu 1977: 77). *Doxa* engenders symbolic violence, “exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity” (1992: 167). It

turns social order into natural order, as symbolic violence exercises precisely this ability of turning the arbitrary into natural order, turning the arbitrary into the socially inevitable.

Just as with Durkheim, for Bourdieu too it is in the ritual act that, this time, symbolic violence and not social order, finds its legitimation. The rites that regulate life in celebration contain the provisions for legitimating the world as it is and for furthering the world-view that leads to the reproduction of the very social order generated by means of symbolic violence. The rites describe and thus, prescribe the categories where each agent is cast in the social space: males and females, the young and the elderly, the king and the servants. The *doxa* contains these very schemes of classification and cognitive structures that become manifest through an act of “cognition and misrecognition” (Bourdieu 1992: 172). The schemes of classification, the *habitus*, enforce and ensure the position each individual has in the social space. They determine which are the appropriate practices and objects that belong to each position and are, thus, within the reach of individual agents occupying certain positions in social space. The schemes of classification are given as objectified in the form of opposing pairs – expression of the power utterances have of describing and prescribing the world and the variation they allow. Therefore, social order is based on a network of oppositions within which the entire world is grasped and expressed at the same time. The matrix of binaries not only comprises the continuum along which the vision of the world is aligned but, at the same time, expresses the social organization of the world; at its extremes lie the dominated and the dominant, and a ceaseless struggle for the power to impose classification: “reduced to their formal structure, the same fundamental relationships, precisely those that express the major relations of order, reappear in all class divided societies” (Bourdieu 1984: 470). If control over schemes of classification is at stake, this is only due to the fact that whoever has the power of utterance has the power of the representation of groups, over the

vision of the world (Bourdieu 1984: 479). Uttering does not only mean describing the world as it is, but also enunciating how it should be (Bourdieu 1991). Those with license to provide frames for the way the world is experienced are those who set forth the meaning of the world, common sense, as well as distinctions, “discrete units out of invisible continuity, difference out of the undifferentiated.” (Bourdieu 1984: 479)

Bourdieu is inspired in stressing the power of classificatory principles by Emile Durkheim (Durkheim and Mauss 1903/1963), from whom the idea that the world is divided into categories that contain and organize the world. As Durkheim and Mauss point out, “the classification of things reproduces the classification of men” (1903/1963: 7). Ideas of the world are materialized in the organization of things, which are a mere reflection of the organization of society. Thus, just like Durkheim, Bourdieu considers that categories, as well as the principle of classification, are not things lying in plain sight, readily available for those constructing the categories and structuring the world according to these but that, rather, there are some underlying processes which follow a different logic. Where Durkheim and Bourdieu meet is the idea that the logical notions of classification, those that are meaningful and make sense, have a non-logical origin; they stem from a different source. Where Bourdieu departs from Durkheim is precisely in the conceptualization of the origin of these categories. While Durkheim takes society in itself as the ultimate stake of the categories, drawing from Marx and Weber, Bourdieu looks further and discovers that the social structure is in fact based on a perpetual struggle for domination over the principles of classification and this struggle is construed as everyday practice through a process of misrecognition. Thus, with Bourdieu, we are faced with the misrecognition of a social contract whose artificiality is in fact concealed by the naturalized legitimacy of the dominant over the dominated.

In his conception of misrecognition, Bourdieu goes further and further away from Durkheim not because he stops using the same logic in analyzing facts, but because he turns Durkheim's conceptualization upside down and resorts to the dialectic approach of Marxist inspiration. Thus, the social order theorized by Durkheim as natural is contended to be misrecognized as arbitrary, as the result of a convention, of a concealed social contract, and the foundation of society is sought not in order but in conflict. Just like Marx, Bourdieu looks at society and sees a struggle – not simply a class struggle as the former, but a struggle over the principles of classification that structure the world. This is an epistemological as much as it is a theoretical choice, as Bourdieu departs from idealism and takes over Marx's treatment of society, looking at the dialectical relationship between consciousness and material conditions of life (Marx 2000). The dominant seek to preserve the status quo, while the dominated are potentially also trying to take over and establish categories. The originality of the synthesis we find here resides in Bourdieu's use of Marxist, Weberian and Durkheimian theory. The permanent struggle, a key theme in Marxism is pictured differently with Bourdieu. It is not class struggle as it is for Marx, but a symbolic struggle. Here we find hints at the Weberian notion of theodicy: a theodicy of privilege, associated with the ruling classes and a theodicy of despair, or fatalism, usually found in the lower strata of society (Bourdieu 2011; Davidson and Pyle 2006). But for Bourdieu, the two are not in contradiction, as they are part of the *doxa* specific to agents coming from different groups. An agent's worldview is naturalized through the misrecognition of the arbitrariness of her own condition.

A very interesting thing to point out is that Marx argues that the ideas of the ruling class are the dominant ideas insofar as they are “the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas; hence of the relations which make

one the ruling class, therefore, ideas of its dominance” (Marx 1973: 67), and that this condition of domination is made possible by the division of labor which leads to estrangement, alienation and to the concealing of this estrangement by the naturalization of the commodification of man. Labor as sensuous activity disappears and it becomes alienated practice (Marx 1988). He condemns world-concealing practices which are deeply rooted in the power relations within society, which are, in their turn, to be found in the state of the relationships of production and reflected more crudely at the level of social interaction, where individuals are dispossessed of everything: their true nature, their fellow humans, their labor and the object of their effort (Marx 1973).³ But Marx was a prophet; he would write manifestoes and try to get the working class to rise above its own condition. He would overtly condemn industrial societies and the capitalists for keeping the proletariat in the condition that only led to the alienation of the worker from the product of his labor, from the process of production, from his fellow human beings and from himself (Marx 1988: 74). Bourdieu, on the other hand, has a finer way of analyzing, thus unmasking domination. He goes to the very essence of domination and tries to reveal the processes whereby it operates. He shows how “the cosmological and political order is perceived not as arbitrary, i.e. as one possible order among others, but as a self-evident and natural order” (1977: 166). The self-evidence of the social order is only made possible by a powerful crisis which can bring “the undiscussed into discussion” (1977: 168), and only in the case of crisis is the natural character of the social world challenged and the truth of its convention revealed. Just in cases of crisis, such as the war in Algeria, can the prevailing systems of classification allow for dissidence and the emergence of a critical discourse. Unless major events or crises take place, the habitus produces society by means of its act of misrecognition.

³ A point which Bourdieu himself stresses from his earliest writings (Bourdieu 1962;1968) and does not abandon later on, although takes them rather as an underlying assumption than a thesis (Bourdieu 1990; 2000).

A point that Marx raises in the *German Ideology* and which Bourdieu never clarifies is related to this very important concept – misrecognition. When discussing dominant ideas, Marx emphasizes the importance of always placing ideas in their historical context in order to trace the direct link that exists between the objective conditions of their production and the specific class that produced them

if we confine ourselves to say that these or those ideas were dominant at a given time, without bothering ourselves about the conditions of production and the producers of the ideas, [...] we can say, for instance, that during the time aristocracy was dominant, the concepts of honor and loyalty were dominant [...] The ruling class itself imagines this so. (Marx 1973: 68).

This raises then, the question, regarding Bourdieu's own notion of misrecognition, whether the dominant groups themselves are not touched upon by the workings of its processes. Is the process of naturalization of relations of domination one that spreads in the body of the whole society, thus rendering misrecognition a process that is above control from any social group or class? If so, how is it regulated? If we try to go to the problem of regulation of misrecognition processes, are we dealing with dominant groups that manage to escape the very principles of classification of the social world that they elaborate and which structure the world? Though he does not provide answers for these questions, Bourdieu does try to avoid them by conceiving of society as founded upon a concealed conflict whose concealment is predicated on a social order that is external and objective in a Durkheimian sense. Its externality comes from the power of society to constrain: not by oppressing dissidence but by making it practically impossible to arise, society having enough authority as to inculcate the extent to which individuals question the social order. Thus, Bourdieu's notion of habitus serves to depict not an account of a society that is torn apart by conflict between antagonist classes, but a society that is designed to remain unchanged, a society where not overt conflict, but the fear of usurpation

together with awareness of the illegitimacy of the status quo leads to the desire of its maintenance.

Bourdieu's misrecognition not only resembles in nature Marx's fetishization (Marx 1988). It encompasses the Durkheimian view of constraint: a hidden and external force exercised on individuals who are at no moment aware of the constraint they are subject to. However, in his conceptualization, Bourdieu returns to a notion of society that is taken for granted. It is not that society is stable and already constituted and needs no further reinforcement, but in order for misrecognition to take place, there has to be a community of belief, an entity or a structure over which the principles ensuring misrecognition can stand and function. This only makes sense when we return to Durkheim's *Rules of the Sociological Method* (Durkheim 1982), who takes the social character of social facts for granted because they are generated by society. Misrecognition, thus social order, has to stand on a taken for granted structure able to generate and reproduce order, something that is beyond the mind and grasp of individual agents and is, at the same time, something more than the sum of individual minds. The lack of clarity we are confronted with here is due to Bourdieu's reluctance at analyzing psychological structures and only trying to resort to social "facts", things belonging to the social, collectively shared order when putting forward his theory (Turner 1994). It is inevitable, in this conception, to resort to society and social order as both a cause for social processes and, at the same time, as something that needs to be explained. The social is taken as essence (Latour 2005) although he incorporates Marx's as well as Weber's analysis of the interplay between material conditions and the constitution of society, together with the importance of symbols in the configuration of social order. All these are relegated as reflections of their *sui generis* social nature, never being able to definitively argue the ontology of this interplay.

Body, structures and society

Pierre Bourdieu's critique of both subjectivist and objectivist approaches finds its realization in the concept of *habitus*, which reflects the author's promise of transcending this divide in the social sciences. In his effort to overcome the schism, Bourdieu constructs the concept of habitus incorporating both structural factors and elements of subjective experience. From the outset, it is crucial to emphasize the difficulty in pointing out the origin of his concepts, since Bourdieu is often vague with his sources, never mentioning them, and generally presenting his conceptualizations as an original synthesis. While he does succeed in doing so, Pierre Bourdieu's critique of the two traditions often seems unjust both towards structuralism, to which it is particularly indebted and to phenomenology, where his thinking draws substantially from.

In this section I examine the concept of *habitus* using as framework the dialogues Bourdieu had with both objectivism and subjectivism. Under objectivism Bourdieu unites structuralism and the neo-positivist approaches more generally, and the personality he engages in dialogue with the most is Claude Levi-Strauss and his model of structural anthropology. Bourdieu redefines his relationship to Levi-Strauss' theoretical model throughout his major books, while reworking his own positioning towards structuralism. Subjectivism is the term Bourdieu uses to refer to several traditions in sociology; he unites under the same name phenomenology as well as symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology. Although the three schools have different premises in researching the social world, Bourdieu puts them in the same category for being blind to the issue of power. I discuss Bourdieu's contradictory relationship to phenomenology, particularly, to the work of Alfred Schutz to whom Bourdieu is profoundly

indebted, more than he reveals.⁴ I am not only referring to the content of the notion of *habitus* (as I did in the first part), but also to the procedural preferences regarding the construction of the object of study, as well as to the practical means of giving shape to reality observed. Bourdieu's relationship to phenomenology and structuralism goes along the lines of constructing the method and grasping social reality, incorporating objective conditions and subjective experience in its relationship with the objective conditions where it takes place.

Structures and reality

Pierre Bourdieu acknowledges his indebtedness to Claude Levi-Strauss's structural analysis in the *Logic of Practice* (1990), where he discusses the importance of the relational approach structuralism contributed to the social sciences, breaking with ideas of substantialism and the endeavor of looking for essences. This has been incorporated by Bourdieu in his theorizing of notions such as fields and positions within social fields, in his theory of practice more generally, in his conceptualizations, but also particularly in his theory of the gift, the ritual etc.

From the onset, the relational perspective can be easily depicted throughout Bourdieu's work. He argues against grasping social processes and phenomena by themselves and for going one step further into the analysis, integrating the object of analysis within the system it is part of. This entails, and here comes Bourdieu's conception of the solution for the agency-structure schism in the social sciences, a double break. First of all, the sociologist must not take at face value the accounts of the peoples she is studying. Secondly, in the pursuit of the logic of social relations and social practice, the social scientist must reflect on her own relationship with the

⁴ I chose Alfred Schutz to illustrate Bourdieu's troubled relationship to phenomenology for a series of reasons. Of course, the phenomenologist most often present in Bourdieu's books is Jean-Paul Sartre, but the source of clashes between the two authors moves beyond the realm of conceptualizations of the social world. These clashes are deeply rooted in political convictions. At the same time, it appears to me that it is rather Sartre the man than Sartre the author which makes the object of Bourdieu's critique (Bourdieu 1967; 1977; 1980; 1990; 2000).

object of her study, understand how much of it comes from the observation of actual social reality and how much is, in fact, a projection of her own relationship with the object of study (Bourdieu 1990a: 27). Furthermore, Bourdieu advances the idea of participant objectivation instead of participant observation, pointing to the impossibility of “doubling one’s consciousness” – becoming both observer and observed, both subject and object of the act of observation (Bourdieu 1990a; 1990b; 2003). It means objectifying the observer, turning her also into an object of study, not a taken for granted objective presence into the field.⁵ While Bourdieu argues for introducing reflexivity into the act of observation, Levi-Strauss’s idea of the observer is completely distinct (Levi-Strauss 1987). The latter, in discussing the ability of the observer to grasp the unconscious structures ordering social life and social experience, argues that while there is quite a risk that the anthropologist might misunderstand the reality of the natives, there is a way this problem can be overcome. The realm where this solution can be found resides precisely in the unconscious, the place where the subjective and the objective meet (Levi-Strauss 1987: 34) Together with Mauss, Levi-Strauss argues that the unconscious is to be considered the place where the “self” and the “other” meet, as an intermediary which does not require the observer to get out of herself, as it is at the level of the unconscious that she can become acquainted with the object of her study.⁶

Through observation, the ethnologist can objectively grasp the unconscious forms of mental activity – “in ethnological inquiry [the unconscious structure] gives us access to the most foreign other as to another self” (Levi-Strauss 1987: 36).

⁵ As Bourdieu himself noted his notion of reflexivity is in no way close to that of Clifford Geertz, a textualization of culture and of the experience of the researcher. Quite the contrary, it involves the ability, on behalf of the researcher, to position herself within the field of research, within the academic field, with her own biography and trajectory, with the conditionings that made possible her being there.

⁶ It is not exaggerated to consider the unconscious to accomplish the function of intersubjectivity for the phenomenological approach (Schleffer 1966), which I will be detailing later on.

The problem of the unconscious and the operations of the unconscious, the rules and structures that govern unconscious mental activities, make the object of the ardent dispute between Bourdieu and Levi-Strauss. This lies at the very core of the notion of structure and how it should be employed in research. In an article in which he expressed his support for structuralism (Bourdieu 1968), Bourdieu argues that the social sciences could not have taken a step forward unless substance and essence (such as human nature) had been replaced by a relational approach (structuralism). Only this way, Bourdieu continues, can the structures and the objective conditions ordering the social world, concealed in the process of everyday life and individuals' accounts of their experiences, be revealed. This has been the greatest achievement of structuralism. On the other hand, structural analysis has to be carried on carefully. First of all, it cannot do away with subjective experience as such, which needs to be integrated within analysis as constitutive part of a system of relations and determinations between subjective experience and objective conditionings. Furthermore, the anthropologist must never understand structure as a literal translation of reality.

The theory is not a literal translation based upon a term by term correspondence with the "real", merely reproducing the apparent elements and properties of the object after the fashion of the mechanical models of ancient physics. The structure of symbols symbolizes the structure of relations established by experience in such a way that the relation between theory and facts, between reason and experience, is still a structural homology. (Bourdieu 1968: 688-689)

This means that the social scientist must always bear in mind the fact that her conceptual apparatus is a theoretical model of social reality and it has to answer to the principle of internal coherence and consistency. As it departs from the idea of taking phenomena at face value (as they are presented to appearance), it is a "system of facts created by and not for coherence of the theoretical hypotheses." (Bourdieu 1968: 686). This implies a work of formalization and codification, "introducing the possibility for logical control" (Bourdieu 1990b: 79). Furthermore, a theoretical model always has to place in opposition the formal and the real, scientific reason

and everyday life as it is experienced by actors, as experience itself has to be constituted as a system. Acknowledging formalization implies acknowledging that by the act of theoretical modeling one changes the nature of the object of study, performing a “change of ontological status” (Bourdieu 1990b: 80). We can find here the whole of Bourdieu’s critique of structuralism, particularly in its Levi-Straussian instantiation, inspired by the model of structural linguistics. Levi-Strauss, Bourdieu argues, fails to follow his own model, giving structure a reality of its own, converting it not in a descriptive model of social reality, but, rather, in a prescriptive rule that societies are supposed to follow. A double violence is committed here: *praxis* is turned into *logos* and then this knowledge of the social (which for Bourdieu is, in fact, nothing more than the relationship of the anthropologist to the object of her study) is applied in the study of social relations, conceived as a direct translation of the theoretical rules. This model grasps “action as execution” (Gerrans 2005). Thus, first, social practice is abstracted into theoretical rules and then the application of these very rules is what is sought for in practice (Bourdieu 1990a: 31). Furthermore, he accuses Levi-Strauss of playing on the ambiguities of the word “rule”, without specifying whether it has a correspondent in reality or it is a theoretical rule emerging in the process of analysis (Lamaison and Bourdieu 1986).

Levi-Strauss’s concept of structure and his idea of how the social is organized leave plenty of space for interpretation. While he insists that the structural model is a purely theoretical model, constructed by the scientist and applied when inquiring into the social, his formulations are ambiguous. For instance, although he specifies that it is the anthropologist who constructs the rules for grasping the logic of systems of communication (exchange, social transactions), he also emphasizes that “it should be kept in mind that culture does not consist exclusively of forms of communication of its own, like language, but also (and perhaps mostly), of rules stating how the

games of communication should be played both on the natural and on the cultural levels.” (Levi-Strauss 1993: 296). His idea of applying the same logic of linguistics to the study of the social is best exemplified in his approach to kinship systems (1969, 1993). The main criticism that Bourdieu brings him is that Levi-Strauss fails his own instructions when he discusses the way kinship systems work, whether societies decide to adopt or not given rules for marriage (Levi-Strauss 1969). This is where the reader is left with the idea that the rules structuring kinship systems are readily available and that it is up to societies as collective entities to adopt them or not. Going further into the conceptualization of kinship systems, they have two components. First, there is the taxonomic component (*system of terminology*), which refers to the terms used by natives to express and define the nature of the relationships between them. These are the native categories and, Levi-Strauss argues, they cannot be used for structural analysis, as, from a social scientific perspective, they are not helpful in providing insights into the organization of the social. It is on the *system of attitudes* that attention has to be placed, and this way, anthropologists could access the unconscious principles which govern relationships between kinsmen, allowing her to look at kinship systems from the perspective of “not what it retains from nature [blood ties], but rather the essential way in which they differ from nature.” (Levi-Strauss 1993: 50). But this very creation of an abstraction of the principles of organization leads to the “grammatician error” (Bourdieu 1990: 31), whereby the author gives reality to his own rules, stops from applying them as descriptive principles of reality and takes these rules as prescriptions of social reality, “constantly slip [ping] from the substantive to substance, objectivist discourse tends to constitute the model constructed to account for practices as a power really capable of determining them”. Looking for a solution to integrate native categories in

explaining the logic of the social order, Bourdieu turns towards phenomenology and its approach to common-sense and scientific knowledge.

The body and the life-world

There are two threads in Bourdieu's polemic with phenomenology. One of them is the matter of intersubjectivity and whether this can be accepted as the foundation of social interaction. The second direction is related to the importance of the body as a constitutive means for the reproduction of social order. To understand Bourdieu's relationship to phenomenology, we must take his program for what it is: a theoretical and empirical endeavor aiming at revealing the concealed relations of power and domination characteristic to the social world. Here is where his criticism of phenomenology is the most virulent, in the idea that it bases all its assumptions of the social world on the postulate of intersubjectivity, instead of looking further for its underlying structures. As his critique is politically grounded, Bourdieu argues that the structures that phenomenology does not manage to grasp are power configurations, very important in setting the systems of knowledge and classification (Endress 2005); also, he accuses phenomenology of never managing to perform the ultimate reduction, to the political structures (Throop and Murphy 2002). According to Bourdieu, phenomenology fails to see that the truth of the situation and inter-individual interaction never lies in the very situation (Bourdieu 1968; 1977; 1990a). While structuralism fails to incorporate native categories and individual experience, phenomenology fails to move past them.

In his article on the importance of structuralism for the sociology of knowledge (1968), Bourdieu argues against the possibility that social relations are based exclusively on the principles premised by the postulate of intersubjectivity. According to Alfred Schutz (1953; Heritage 1984), the social world is founded on the idea of intersubjectivity and differences in

individual agents' perspectives are overcome by means of two idealizations: *the interchangeability of standpoints* (individuals assume that if another would be in their position, the latter would have the same take on a matter as they do) and *the congruency of the system of relevancies* (agents' actions are oriented towards the others under the assumption that social objects have the same meaning for them as they have for others). While Bourdieu never questions these assumptions, he proposes taking the argument further and looking for the social mechanisms that make these two postulates possible. Thus, his critique of phenomenology is that it ignores "the objective reference to objective relations of position which define their form and content." (Bourdieu 1968: 690).

The extent to which Bourdieu's critique of the phenomenological program is justified or even just is highly debated in the social sciences (Crossley 2001; Murphy and Throop 2002; Endress 2005; Atkinson 2010). What is certain is the fact that although Schutz does not provide a politicized account of the social world, his theory is not formulated in terms of individual-to-individual interactions. Thus, the life-world, a key notion for phenomenology, is "that province of reality which the wide awake and normal adult simply takes for granted in the attitude of common sense." (Schutz and Luckman 1973: 3). It is a structured stream of reality which includes everything that is unproblematic, that goes unquestioned, everything that is given to experience, that was already there when the individual agent came into the world and remains there when the agent ceases to be (Schutz 1953). The life-world is a common frame of interpretation which emerges from intersubjectivity, and its foundation is a stock of knowledge which is, at the same time, internal and external to the individual, to the extent that it is taken for granted, unquestioned and, at the same time, not the creation of the individual. The unproblematic character of the life-world is translated into the "natural attitude", which

incorporates past experiences (both direct and passed along to the agents by means of their intersubjective character). This is Bourdieu's forgotten history, history become second nature in the habitus (Bourdieu 1977; 1990). Translated into Bourdieu's terms, the life-world reflects experience and social practice both in its subjective and external character. It sums up the positions of the agent in social space, with all its interactions and determinations, with the knowledge it necessitates – including the practical sense, translated in terms of “I know how, not I know that” (Gerrans 2005) and all the schemes of classification patterning and ordering social life.

The way concepts overlap for Bourdieu and for Schutz is already evident. Schutz's natural attitude is Bourdieu's logic of practice, the un-reflected-upon mastery of the game using the knowledge that is at once subjective and collective. As a matter of fact, Bourdieu takes Schutz's heuristic strategy and performs a few more operations in order to unveil the objective structures underlying daily life. Phenomenological notions are integrated in his analysis of the body *hexis*. This is the performative component of the habitus (Murphy and Throop 2002). The body ensures the reproduction of social practices without their logic ever achieving the level of consciousness.

Bodily *hexis* speaks directly to the motor function, in the form of a pattern of postures that is both individual and systematic, because linked to a whole system of techniques involving the body and tools, and charged with a host of social meanings and values... (Bourdieu 1977: 87)

The body, is the sensible means for expressing the practical sense, the feel of the game. The practical sense is “not a state of mind; it is a state of body” (Bourdieu 1990: 67), enacted belief which engenders *doxa* as adherence to the taken for granted world. The body is practical sense in the flesh, it is the phenomenologist's natural attitude as it expresses the way the world is ordered.

“What is comprehended in the world is a body for which there is a world, which is included in the world but in a mode of inclusion irreducible to simple material and spatial inclusion. *Illusio* is that way of *being in* the world, of being occupied by the world, which means that an agent can be affected by something very distant, even absent, if it participates in the game in which he is engaged.” (Bourdieu 2000: 135)

The world as it is given to agents is sensed and reproduced through the body. The order of things and the social order have their correspondence in the way the body is situated in the very order. The agent adheres to the social world by means of her own body: the chores she must carry on, the posture she has, walking, speaking, etc. Practical sense is enacted through the body as “social necessity turned into nature” (Bourdieu 1990: 69), rendering social practices informed by common sense. As for Schutz, for whom the life-world is “the province of practice, of action” (Schutz and Luckman 1973: 18), so too for Bourdieu, the position of the actor in the social space is regulated by the practical sense, by a practical apprehension of one’s sense of limits and place in the world. Only for Bourdieu, the natural attitude is not so much natural, as it is naturalized, it is arbitrary turned into nature by the exercise of a symbolic power and the process of misrecognition (Bourdieu 1990).

By far the most important debt Bourdieu needs to acknowledge to phenomenology is his emphasis placed against giving theoretical models a reality of their own. I am referring here particularly to his objections to structuralism. Although in his later writings the descent of his idea is less obvious, in his article from 1968 he clearly states that the job of the sociologist is to realize that there are three orders of relations that have to be taken into consideration when analyzing the social world. First, there are the objective relations that frame and regulate the world as given. Secondly, subjective experience and accounts need to be taken into consideration, not at face value, but placed in relation to the objective relations, which define their conditions of existence, thus providing an explanation for individual behavior. Third, the social scientist needs to conceptualize “the unity of practice” (Bourdieu 1968: 704), which

allows grasping lived-through experience better than the experience itself allows it. This is in clear reference with Schutz's first order categories – typifications – or native categories, and second order, or scientific typologies, conducted by the researcher.

Bourdieu's constructivist structuralist program (Bourdieu 1989) has to be seen as one encompassing the objectivist view of social relations correlated with the attempt at integrating native categories, not in and of themselves, but as expressions of the principles of classification that structure order. His resort to phenomenology only aims at explaining how objective structures work at an individual level, to move from the idealism of structure to the realism of everyday life as it is inscribed in practice and, more importantly, in agents' bodies. Everyday, lived activity is therefore not explained as the product of meaning-making processes regulated between agents in their interactions. Meaning is already made in the form of *habitus*, mind and body, *doxa* and *hexis*, and Bourdieu moves closer to Levi-Strauss's unconscious structure than he is willing to acknowledge, while everyday practice is nothing else than expression of meaning at hand, not something that has to be explained, but something that already explains. He rejecting intersubjectivity as the generative postulate of order and looking further into the social and political spheres for the "real" causes of the constitution of society. For this reason he is bound to return over and over again to a state (located both in the body and in the mind) that renders objective structures and relations of domination intelligible at an individual level and contribute to the reproduction of the very objective relations that engender it.

Practice, reproduction and change

Bourdieu's entire theoretical and empirical endeavor can be summarized as the search for the principles generating social order – the notions beyond which there is nothing else to look for. From the very beginning, his work is an exploration of the foundation of the social world, of the

way it is ordered and ordained. His main argument is that will is of little importance in the economy of the social world as in the economy of social practice; the *habitus* as practical sense is the entity which regulates order and practice. Social order functions according to the logic of practice, that is, agents' ability to master the world they inhabit. As a constructivist-structuralist account of individuals' everyday lives (Bourdieu 1989), Bourdieu's theory of practice aims at grasping the visible aspects of daily life, conducts, activities and interactions in their determination and relations with underlying objective structures that orient the course of practice. His theory is to be conceived of as a third system of knowledge of the social, a synthesis between objectivism and subjectivism (Bourdieu 1968; 2000). According to Bourdieu's formula, practice reflects the relationship between *habitus* and capital understood in the frames of the position agents occupy within different social fields (Bourdieu 1984).

Bourdieu's method for exposing the objective structures bearing influence on the constitution of social practices reflects the pursuit of the ultimate reduction, of revealing the forces that drive the constitution of the social order. Bourdieu finds it in the symbolic struggle over imposing the meaning of the world, the vision containing the principles of division of the social world (Bourdieu 1984; 1991). I argue that, despite his efforts at making the ultimate reduction and discovering the ultimate generative principle of order, in accounting for social practice, Bourdieu himself fails to grasp his own methodological need for a structured world which he takes for granted and on which actors' everyday lives are grounded and practice is deployed. In order to provide an account for the production and reproduction of practice and social order, Bourdieu resorts to a circular argument of *habitus* as a principle that generates its own reproduction, governing activity and leaving little room for variation.

Habitus as a set of schemes of perception, conception and action (Bourdieu 1977: 87) functions as the principle regulating activity of individuals situated within a very particular social space. In and of itself, *habitus* cannot be taken into account to explain practice (Crossley 2001). It needs to be placed in relationship with field and capital. The social world, the arena for social practice, is a space constructed according to “principles of differentiation and distribution constituted by the set of properties active in the social universe under consideration, that is, able to confer force or power on their possessors in that universe.” (Bourdieu 1991: 229). The field would be made of power relations imposed on those belonging to a certain portion in social space.⁷ The social world is made of multiple fields, and what characterizes them is a specific activity and a specific type of resource which materialize in capital. The positions agents have in different fields determine the position of an agent within the social world: agents are not positioned in only one field, as social fields are not segregated areas in social space. The intertwining of different fields – economic, intellectual, political, etc. and the combined amount of power an agent has within each field determines the position the agent occupies in the social space, in the stratified structure of society. Only by looking at agents in their multiple positions in social space can the researcher grasp their belonging to the dominant or to the dominated groups.⁸ Although Bourdieu’s model of society is a stratified one, he refuses the Marxist analysis

⁷ Bourdieu’s notion of space must not be confused with geographical proximity. When I say “a portion of social space”, I do not refer to a given surface, but a socially constituted sphere in which activity is characterized by the domination of a certain type of resource. For instance, the academic field is made of the agents and social institutions involved in the field of intellectual production, by the amount of formal education and, more generally cultural capital that agents in this sphere possess, as well as the relationships established between the parties involved in this field.

⁸ The distinction between dominant and dominated should not be considered as a polar view of social space in Bourdieu’s conception. Actually, the dominant-dominated axis should be conceived of as a continuum: there are several degrees of domination and they are determined to a large extent by the position individuals have in social space, by the amount of different forms of capital they can mobilize, etc. The mechanism of misrecognition is vital in understanding the different forms of domination existing in social space, how agents fail to grasp their own domination because they take the social order for granted. Thus, agents with the least capital of any sort are to be considered at the lower extreme of the dominant-dominated axis, agents with little economic capital, but plenty of

of class and class struggle. Thus, for Bourdieu, social practices occur in social fields of different types, and classes are mere theoretical constructs that sociologists use to understand better the way agents live in the social space, with their multiple positions in varied fields. The class is a category constructed by the social researcher, and it is made of

sets of agents who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and submitted to similar types of conditionings, have every chance of having similar dispositions and interests, and thus, of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances. (Bourdieu 1991: 231)

The social space is, according to Bourdieu, a real space, just as real as geographical space, and its reality is based on the social relations established between agents in their various positions, agents who need to be invested in the social world and believe in its reality. Agents' investment in the world involves labor on their behalf, in the sense of effort, energy and, especially time. The conditions and the conditionings Bourdieu is talking about refer, at the same time, to the possession and availability of capital for agents in different positions in social space. The distribution of capital reflects the objective structures of the social sphere as a whole, "determining the chances of success for practices." (Bourdieu 1997: 46). Agents' activities are always interested, that is, invested in the world. Capital is accumulated labor, always unwittingly oriented towards its own maximization. It does not only include economic capital, the measurable dimension, but also other forms of capital which, although not as easy to measure, prove their social efficacy in agents' ability to convert them into economic capital. The economy of practices can only be understood when the sociologist stops looking only at visible economic capital and pays attention also to misrecognized forms of economic capital, those that cannot be recognized as such, cultural, social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1997). Cultural capital is to be found in three forms: embodied, institutionalized and objective. In the embodied state, it is in

cultural capital are closer to the upper extreme, but still in dominated condition, while those with most capital of all sorts can be found near the dominant position in social space. I will come back later to the problems that arise from this conceptualization of Bourdieu's.

the dispositions agents have as a result of a life-time labor of inculcation of the inclination towards the intellectual field. In its institutionalized state, it encompasses all the titles and credentials held by an individual, while in the objective state it encompasses the possession of items belonging to the field of legitimate cultural production, such as books and rare art collections.

Social capital comprises the connections of an agent in social space, her network of relations of mutual acquaintance and recognition. The essential feature of the social capital of an agent is that its volume is dependent on the size of the network and on the amount of capital that each individual member of the network can mobilize in different fields (Bourdieu 1997). The network as based on mutual recognition, is instated through rites of institution, marking the identity, the rights and obligations of agents within their network, as well as the division between those who are part of the group and those that are bound to become part of the group on the one hand, and those that will never be part of it on the other, because they are, through naturalization, ultimately classified as outside the object of the rite (Bourdieu 1991; 1997). And being instituted, beyond having rights and obligations, means counting for others, being recognized, “and finding in the permanent plebiscite of testimonies of interest – requests, expectations, invitations – a kind of continuous justification for existing.” (Bourdieu 2000: 240). Through social consecration, symbolic capital is constituted as reasons for living.

Constantly responding to criticism regarding his own utilitarianism, Bourdieu reworks his conception of interest and symbolic capital, as well as actors’ orientation towards maximization of profits in the social world. In *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), where he designates the social world through the metaphor of the market, Bourdieu treats the *habitus* as being objectively adjusted to the maximization of profits (which are always considered not in their economic, but

in their symbolic form) and the unwitting anticipation of market sanctions. Here, all anticipated profits are filtered by means of a process of implicit and unconscious censorship whereby the field “governs expression by governing both access to expression and the form of expression, and not some legal proceeding which has been specially adapted to designate and repress the transgression of a kind of linguistic code.” (Bourdieu 1991: 138). More clearly, the *habitus* as the practical sense containing the sense of one’s place in the world together with agents’ positions in different fields regulate self-censorship, preventing agents from acting as it is not their place to act. Symbolic capital and success in converting different forms of capital into symbolic capital, are, thus, regulated by the objective structures and the internalized externalities that exert constraint on individuals. To this almost mechanistic description of the way agents act and pursue their interests, we can oppose a different view of the social world, where symbolic capital as agents’ quest for social recognition is seen as produced by the actions of an agent who does not look for maximization of profits but, instead, for a *raison d’être*. Therefore, in *Pascalian Mediations*, symbolic capital is to be understood as the social recognition of the other forms of capital, referring to more than mere increase in utility:

Every kind of capital (economic, cultural, social) tends (...) to function as symbolic capital (so that it might be better to speak, in rigorous terms, of the *symbolic effects of capital*) when it obtains an explicit or practical recognition, that of a habitus structured according to the very structures of the space in which it has been engendered. In other words, symbolic capital (...) is not a particular kind of capital but what every kind of capital becomes when it is misrecognized as capital, that is, as force, a power or capacity for (actual or potential) exploitation, and therefore recognized as legitimate. (Bourdieu 2000: 242)

Therefore, although Bourdieu (1991) argues, just like utilitarianism, that agents are involved in the game in pursuit of interests and the maximization of their own capital, his view in *Pascalian Meditations* is different. What results here is an agent that is not oriented towards profit, but rather, an agent turned towards the world, seeking its recognition and looking at the different

kinds of resources as a way of becoming acknowledged as part of the world.⁹ Still, this does not fully conflict with prior conceptualizations as, in the same book, Bourdieu argues that “One is always surprised to see how much people’s wills adjust to their possibilities, their desires to the capacity to satisfy them; and to discover that, contrary to all received ideas, *plenorexia*, the desire to always have more is the exception.” (Bourdieu 2000: 216). So there is no tension between objective possibilities and subjective expectations, as the *habitus* is adjusted to bring forth “legitimate” claims for profit of agents within their own positions in social space.

Bourdieu’s theory of practice with all its dimensions – habitus, field and capital driven by agents’ pursuit for maximizing their profits (whether economic or symbolic) – is satisfactory with few amendments for a theory of social reproduction. His conceptual apparatus can only stand as long as practices are accounted for within societies with relative stability, where practices have regularity and the *doxa* can engender practices according to the principles of classification dominant in that society. When corroborating his theory of practice with the theory of the possibility for social change, we face quite a few problems because, while in situations of stability, social life is highly determined by objective structures, in cases of change, where the entire structure is subject to transformation, Bourdieu’s theory cannot last the examination.

At a closer look, Bourdieu’s theory of practice is, in fact, a theory of the logic of practice, where the practical sense or the logic of practice is to be understood as an enactment of a lie socially devised for agents to make sense of the impositions exercised upon them (Bourdieu 1977: 43). Everyday as well as ritual practices are deeply rooted in the logic of classifications which are the result of a labor of imposition by means of a struggle between competing views of the world. The struggle is between different forms of description and prescription, over the

⁹ A very challenging issue that Bourdieu does not fully develop is why agents, bearing society on their bodies through the dispositions engendered by the *habitus*, who are part of society because society is part of them (Bourdieu 2000), need the constant reinstating of their condition of members of society.

imposition of an orthodoxy which, while pretending to describe the way the world is, in fact, shows the way it should be (Bourdieu 1977; 1984; 1991). The orthodox view of the world is what shapes everyday practices: every agent knows her place in social space, having contained within it the division of sexual labor, the rights and responsibilities of each agent according to their own positions in different fields, as well as to the resources available to them and the expectations the *habitus* allow them to utter.

What Bourdieu tells us is that the struggle in establishing a legitimate ethical vision of the social is constant; it never ceases. There is a constant conflict over establishing what is right and what is wrong, what is normal and what is deviant and how every behavior needs to be sanctioned. But this view is problematic as Bourdieu's account is one of social reproduction rather than one of social change, and this happens despite the constant, boiling struggles that allegedly underlie the constitution of society. Problems with Bourdieu's conceptualization appear when we compare his theory of reproduction with that of social change. Let's take it for granted that social order is grounded on a constant, albeit concealed, struggle. As he clearly states it in *Language and Symbolic Power*, action on the world, that is, social change, is only possible when acting on the knowledge agents have of the world they inhabit and which, at the same time, inhabits them in the form of *habitus*. Social change can only occur when agents' adherence to the social contract can be denounced as arbitrary. This is only possible when critical discourse and a crisis of order take place concomitantly and challenge the established order. The critical discourse is to be understood as the labor of enunciation with the ability to "name the unnamable, to break the censorships, institutionalized or internalized, which prohibit the return of the repressed; and first of all in the heresiarch himself." (Bourdieu 1991: 129).¹⁰

¹⁰ But Bourdieu does not account for how critical discourse can emerge, seeing how it needs to be emic, and not coming from the outside.

Therefore, Bourdieu's vision of change can only take place once there is a possibility of envisioning a different view of the world, of imposing a different principle of classification that would produce an institutionalized group by revealing relevant properties while annulling, thus concealing, those deemed irrelevant. In the equation of society as grounded on a constant struggle over classifications, in order to be able to break with the *doxic* relation to the social world, the dominated need to be able to question the very categories of perception of order (Bourdieu 1991: 131).

The implications of this view over the possibility of change within Bourdieu's theory of practice are manifold. How is it, in fact, that agents can question the principles of social order, when this order is part of them, body and mind? Taking the account Bourdieu provides for change at face value forces us to look back to his definition of *habitus* and there are some severe tensions that we find here. While in explaining social reproduction, Bourdieu relies on the *habitus* as the principle which generates and ensures order, when discussing change, he advances the possibility of a complete, radical transition. However, questioning the principles of classification does not only mean changing the knowledge agents have of the world they inhabit and which inhabits them. It means a change in habitus, a change in cognitive structures and bodily dispositions, an annulment of the work of inculcation of generation after generation. The *habitus* as forgotten history has to be discontinued and subject to a similarly radical process of change, where prior dispositions toward enforcing the previous order have to be erased and replaced with new ones, suitable for the new dominant discourse. I say erased and not changed, as, in order to maintain its coherence, the habitus needs to be founded on implicit, tacit

knowledge, the kind that goes without saying, that is never the product of formal training, but the product of social concealment.¹¹

Only by looking at Bourdieu's theory of change do we have a complete understanding of his theory of habitus and the tensions that it entails. Stephen Turner (1994), in a radical critique of the entire theoretical body on social practice, argues that Bourdieu uses practices to solve the problem of understanding what and people say and do in everyday life and what drives them to this. According to Turner, Bourdieu keeps switching from the explanation to the thing explained in a circular argumentation where something always needs to be taken for granted, positing that only – “a collective fact of some sort – some shared mentality – can explain the order”. (Turner 1994: 35).¹² Although the notion of *habitus* as a device in maintaining stability could be accepted with mild amendments, when we try to use the habitus as a tool in understanding the transition from a form of social order to another one, we run into severe problems, because we are faced with the issue that he never addresses: the problem of the beginning, the moment when habitus is created.

Bourdieu's theory of practice is the theory of the *fait accompli*, *habitus* and practices are theorized for already existing social orders; we get the sense of an account of something that just happened. Changes in the structure of a society would imply changes of the structure of fields, of capital, of social valuation, of the way interests are legitimately defined and censorship is imposed once again. The *illusio*, agents' investment in the game, the commitment to the

¹¹ I think this is an important point to make, as never does Bourdieu mention that the newly instated order is one that brings forth social justice and removes relations of power and the problem of inequality from discussion. If there are chances for the new order to function on misrecognition just as the previous one, the *habitus* needs to preserve its function, only its content is to be changed.

¹² Turner's agenda is to completely dismantle all theories of practice and approaches resorting to tacit, implicit assumptions necessary to enact social practice and to provide meaning for the similarity of practices, introducing the problem that Bourdieu himself treated with great attention when discussing structuralism – the relationship of the sociologist with her object of study. Although Turner's radical program is highly problematic in itself, the point he makes regarding Pierre Bourdieu's views of practices, reproduction and transmission are all valid.

presuppositions of the game (Bourdieu 1990: 66) is subject to a new process of social labor. But what we have in Bourdieu is an incomplete theory of both social transmission and social change, as we never see the agent becoming member of her own society, but always the agent that is already a member, the agent as a competent member of society, with the power to perform her membership (Barnes 2002).

In order for his theory of practice to hold, to be able to account for stability and reproduction, Bourdieu, as a staunch Durkheimian sociologist, needs to resort to a circular argument of an ultimate force that drives social order. More precisely, to account for how practices in their externality are intelligible to agents, Bourdieu needs to go back to the “community of the unconscious” that he laid out in the *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and never abandoned throughout his entire work. Unless he takes a community of shared belief for granted (regardless of the form and content it has), as the support on which the struggle over classification imposes the dominant discourse and vision of the world, Bourdieu cannot explain practices, which would otherwise be mere random manifestations of everyday activities.

Conclusion

By focusing on Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of habitus and, more generally, on his theory of practice, I intended to show how he synthesizes the theory of social order as concealing conflict and moreover, a constant struggle over the control and imposition of the principles of legitimate classification within society. With Bourdieu, social order is predicated on conflict, concealed by means of a process of misrecognition, concealed power relations and a notion of constraint which is never, in fact, expressed as such at the level of practice, but rather as a view of the normal. Transgression of normality (as defined through the imposition of a legitimate discourse) attracts violence, acknowledged as legitimate, upon the perpetrator. The conflict does not surface

through transgression; it can only become manifest when the very standard of normality is questioned and challenged.

The *habitus* not only comes as the solution for the structure-agency and freedom-constraint tensions in the social sciences. It is society made nature through body and mind, objective structures manifested in everyday practice through the individual agent, who is a structural variant of objective structures.

Social order is prescribed in the ritual, performed world-view in ritual time and enforced in everyday life through acts of symbolic violence. Women and men have their place in the world and this is reflected in the sexual division of labor: the activities each gender group performs are devised as a work of inculcation meant to educate and discipline both mental structures and bodily dispositions. Agents' own perceptions of being men or women are dependent on the principles of classification that define everyone's place in the world. Symbols are incorporated in social practice and the world-view "goes without saying because it comes without saying", never being the product of formal or explicit training.

To understand the way conflict is concealed and order is enacted, Bourdieu proposes taking a look at both the regularities of social practice and to the way agents make sense of them, although, for him, the meaning is already there, the agents bear it in their minds and on their bodies, leaving little room for improvisation. Grasping agents' life-world is envisioned by Bourdieu as understanding their positions in social space, with all the mutual determinations occurring between habitus and the field, while both condition the extent to which agents can improvise, hope and project into the future.

In accounting for habitus, but also for social practices, Bourdieu aims towards the ultimate reduction: everyday life, social interactions and social order reduced to the struggle over imposing principles of classification as the legitimate world view. However, in attempting to perform the reduction and in insisting on the concealed form of conflict, Bourdieu fails to grasp that he (somewhat similar to the agents he theorizes) is taking something for granted. First of all, he fails to theorize the intentionality of the groups that have a project to bring forth: the world-view they want to impose as legitimate. He relegates this intentionality as a function of the habitus of these groups, as defined and confined by the habitus. Furthermore, he does not establish the project through which agents are able to break with the constraint imposed by their own habitus, thus failing to account for how previously dominated groups manage to question the natural character of their own domination, and to reveal the socially devised lie that kept them as dominated. Moreover, in order to account for the institution of the mechanism of misrecognition, Bourdieu would have to delve more on the moment of the initial utterance and denunciation of a social order as arbitrary. Although in *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991) Bourdieu thoroughly develops the theory of the possibility of change (through description and prescription, through the performative change effected on the knowledge agents have of the world they inhabit), the reader does still not get the account of the initial imposition, of the initial intention and program devised to dominate.

For this reason, the reader has to take for granted that there has been such a moment and that it was then when social order became predicated on conflict. Not just the reader, but Bourdieu himself proceeds this way so that, in order to elaborate his theory, he needs to take his own assumption as an axiom and he keeps referring to it both as something to be revealed and as something that explains social order.

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