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# From Marx to Bourdieu: The Limits of the Structuralism of Practice<sup>1</sup>

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## I. Marx

### *(1) The Question of Anthropological Distinctiveness: The Production of the Means of Subsistence as the Foundation of Society*

Let me begin by quoting Marx from the *German Ideology*:

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion, or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life. (Marx and Engels, 2000/1977 [1846]: 177)

From a materialist point of view, the main criterion for distinguishing one species from another is its way of asserting itself as a living species. Thus, *one can distinguish humans from animals on the basis of their capacity to distinguish themselves from other species through the physical organisation of their life forms*. This distinctiveness, which cannot be brought into being by reference to an external force – such as consciousness, thought, or religious sentiment – is rooted in a given activity, namely in production, that is, in *the production of the means of subsistence*. The human body is designed to produce, and reproduce through its production, and thereby ensure its own existence. As the existential importance of the verb ‘to produce’ suggests, *anthropological specificity* is derived from *human productivity*: in the last instance, to be able to produce means to be able to produce the means of subsistence. Humans do not find themselves

immersed in a world where all necessary means of subsistence are always already given, but they have to act – and act collectively – upon the world to produce *their own* means of subsistence, that is, means of subsistence that *they themselves* bring into existence.

It is worth emphasising the centrality of this simple criterion: a species which produces its means of subsistence, and which is therefore capable of *controlling* the process of its own reproduction, affirms its distinctive identity as a species within a given life form. To be more precise, it intervenes *indirectly* upon the process of its own reproduction, that is, from outside by *using the means* that it produced itself to guarantee the reproduction of its own existence. Hence, rather than focusing solely on the act of production – which is central to the Marxist world view – we also need to take into consideration the notion of *means* and, more importantly, the status attributed to it by Marx. Humans live literally *within* their means of subsistence. Their life consists of nothing but the *search for the means of subsistence*, which they produce themselves. To be sure, the relation humans establish with their means of subsistence is far from straightforward. Their means of subsistence are not externally given instruments used exclusively to pursue a previously fixed aim. Rather, their *means of subsistence constitute life as such* – that is, they constitute, in Marx's words, 'life forms' (Marx and Engels, 1968 [1846]: 46). As a consequence, human life is subject to permanent transformation determined by the various means of subsistence produced by humans themselves.

As Marx remarks, technological progress is so dynamic that the human species succeeds in emancipating itself from the cycle of reproduction by which other species are determined. Progress (*Fortschritt*), which literally makes society proceed (*fortschreiten*), situates the human species within a sociohistorical process: what is produced by one generation will be passed on to the next generation; every generation is confronted with the task of acting upon what has been transmitted from the past by generating new means for its subsistence, which it then hands down to the next generation, and so on.

## ***(2) The Question of Anthropological Contradiction: The Critique of the Division between Producers and Non-Producers***

In light of the above, one can understand the *importance of critique* in relation to the exploitation of resources derived from the *gradual differentiation of social activity*. Something occurs in the very heart of the activity that is aimed at the production of the means of subsistence: as an activity undertaken by various subjects, *it divides by producing differentiation and differentiates by producing inequality*. At the core of this inequality lies a contradiction – namely, the fact that the very process of social production undermines itself. Production, understood as

social production, is divided into *production* and *non-production* – that is, into two *contradictory* processes. Certain agents are ‘kept in reserve’ through a process which creates a division between those who own and those who do not own their labour power, thereby contributing to the continuous reproduction of their respective existence. The collective agent that is kept in reserve reproduces itself without producing anything, for its conditions of existence depend on its *exclusion* from the production process. Indeed, the production of its means of subsistence is a form of non-production. At the heart of this curious reality lies a paradoxical structure derived from the means of subsistence, through which humans collectively develop their lives and through which their lives are inevitably shaped.

On the basis of the previous reflections, we can understand the particular meaning given to *critique* in Marxian thought. The force of critique, in the Marxian sense, is not rooted in a principle of justice situated *outside* the social process or founded on an *independently* existing ideal order: inequality is not denounced from an *a priori* position of equality; rather, it is conceived as the *effect* – or, to be exact, as the *contradictory effect* – of a sociohistorical process. Based on the social production of means, and reflected in people’s capacity to assert themselves as social producers of their means of life (Marx and Engels, 1968 [1846]: 58–60), production is doomed to affirm itself by negating itself and to negate itself by affirming itself. It is in the *paradoxical interdependence of negation and affirmation* that we find a resource not so much of a critical *view* or *interpretation*, but rather of a critical *situation*, that is, of a social state of affairs whose main point of reference is the *capitalist mode of production*.

Social conditions are determined by the division of labour and, in class-divided societies, the evolution of the former cannot be dissociated from the existence of private property, which underlies the constitution of the latter. Social conditions, insofar as they are determined by the division of labour, emerge when producers and non-producers, who are divided in terms of their positionally differentiated relation to the means of production, enter into a determinate relation within a given mode of production. The task of a materialist critique, therefore, is to shed light on the *material foundations of society*. This is precisely what makes it materialist: it is not a critique put forward by an interpreter who observes his or her object from the outside, but it is a critique *anchored* in the reality it describes, thereby facing up to the contradictory movement of society by following the transformations of history. Critique, in the materialist sense, is prepared to confront the contradictory nature of its own existence. In other words, *materialist critique is, by definition, a critique based on contradiction*. Critique, in this sense, is indeterminate, for it exists in the heart of an indeterminate – that is, still-to-be-produced-and-reproduced – reality.

In order to mobilise critique effectively, it needs to accept that it is itself socially embedded.

Thus, the Marxian critique rejects the very idea of a detached interpretation of reality: the main fault of 'ideological' thinkers in Germany was that they failed to take into account their own embeddedness in German reality. In fact, the key mistake of interpreters, no matter how critical they may *claim* to be, is to conceive of critique *regardless* of the situation by which they are themselves conditioned. From a Marxian point of view, this limitation is, first and foremost, an expression of the *socio-material contradiction* that exists *between producer and non-producer*. Given its central importance, this contradiction is a major point of concern in the *German Ideology*, where it is examined in terms of the *opposition between material labour and intellectual labour*.

### ***(3) The Question of Anthropological Development: The Critique of the Division between Material Labour and Intellectual Labour***

In order to do justice to the significance of the opposition between material labour and intellectual labour, we need to acknowledge that it plays a pivotal role in the *German Ideology*: by uncovering, and indeed situating himself in the heart of, the opposition between material labour and intellectual labour, Marx immerses himself in the exercise of critique. In so doing, he recognises that *contradiction* is fundamental to the emergence and development of thought – understood as a dynamic dimension, rather than as a static representation, of reality. *Human beings develop their capacity to think always in relation to a determinate stage of production*. When analysing the process of production as well as the intrinsic contradictions of this process, intellectual labour appears as a form of activity that is founded on a gap between its own existence and the existence of the process of production, and consequently on the fact that, paradoxically, intellectual labour remains materially caught up in an already given reality and hence in an already given product.

According to Marx, the ownership of the means of production *marginalises* certain agents *by excluding* them from participating in the production process. Why, then, should it be necessary to conceptualise this process of exclusion in terms of an opposition between material labour and intellectual labour? Should we regard this division as the most crucial source of the segmentation of tasks in modern society? And, if so, how can we make sense of what Marx refers to as 'the production of ideas'? Can, at least under certain conditions, 'the production of ideas' be treated in the same way as 'the production of things'? These questions touch upon a dilemma which Marx, without any doubt, located in the sort of critical activity that is associated with his own endeavour. This dilemma has never ceased to reappear in the history of

Marxism – particularly in recurring charges of theoreticism, which is often regarded as the supreme form of betrayal of the revolutionary project.

The following discussion seeks to explore the ways in which the above problem manifests itself in the way in which critique is conceived of in a sociology that claims to be part of the Marxian heritage: *the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. It is worth pointing out, however, that this problem is particularly important with regard to the aforementioned passages from the *German Ideology*, all of which are concerned with the fundamental contradiction arising from the capitalist division of labour. When examined more carefully, it becomes clear that Marx's analysis of the opposition between material labour and intellectual labour is an attempt to develop a critical study of social relations which seeks to be more than a mere interpretation of things, since it is explicitly oriented towards the transformation of reality, or at least clearly aimed at contributing to its transformation.

Yet, in what way does Marx emphasise the importance of the opposition between these *two types of labour*? In essence, he does so by uncovering the *material conditions* which underlie the activity of thinking. As a consequence, the non-producers are considered as specialised agents of thought. Do they, however, regard themselves as non-producers? How exactly should we conceive of the activity of thinking in relation to other activities that are structured by the division of labour? How can we make sense of the activity of thinking in terms of the social contradictions that permeate the production of the means of subsistence? From Marx's point of view, the thought that is generated by non-producers emerges through the contradictory development of production as a process that is always already confronted with its own negation. In this sense, it is not a positive dimension of production to which the producers are materially attached. Non-producing subjects are able to think because of, rather than despite, the fact that they do not produce anything: but *what* do they think?

Let us restate the problem: if the producers are thinking subjects, their thoughts exist necessarily in relation to their productive practices. Yet, if the act of thinking is considered as a privileged practice, we are dealing with something completely different: to conceive of thinking as a process situated *outside* practice means to assume that *production and non-production* continue to be *opposed* to one another within the relational framework of social structures. In the light of this structural opposition, it seems that the *life of non-producers* never ceases to be *dependent*: for them, there is an ineluctable imperative epitomised in a specific form of production of the means of subsistence – as for *every* human being. In addition, the distinctiveness of their own condition, as human beings, continues to be important to them. Their existence, however, has become somewhat paradoxical: *in order to exist, humans need to produce means of*

*subsistence; and, in so doing, they produce and reproduce the very conditions which maintain the contradiction between production and non-production.* To conceive of thought in materialist terms means to consider every reflective activity as being socially embedded. All thought, insofar as it faces up to its own situatedness in the conditions of social existence, has to be oriented towards this objective. This has the following consequence: we have to accept that *the content of all thought is nothing but the content of society*, that is, of a set of social structures, understood as a social totality whose constitutive contradiction is twofold: to be accepted and neglected as well as perceived and concealed by the carriers of its existence.

#### **(4) *The Possibility of a Marxist Sociology***

Now we are at the heart of the dilemma that concerns the question of the very possibility of a Marxist sociology, understood as a social theory which escapes the logic of dubious ideological methods. *Critique*, in strictly Marxian terms, is suspicious of the *sociological* project in that the former reminds us of the fact that the latter may prove incapable of overcoming its own *ideological* nature. Indeed, it may well be the case that a sociological view can *only* be ideological, entirely produced on the basis of non-producers' thought, oriented towards reproducing a form of structuration that reinforces, rather than undermines, the gap between production and non-production. I do not intend to go into the different ways in which Marxists have portrayed sociology as a bourgeois and conservative science.<sup>3</sup> Marxists certainly have succeeded in developing different forms of protest as well as different ways of rewriting the social sciences. (In France, for example, this applies to the work of Henri Lefebvre.<sup>4</sup>) The issue on which I want to focus here, however, is the *problem of ideology* as it appears in the *German Ideology* – especially with regard to the sections in which the development of intellectual labour is examined in terms of an integral process of the division of labour.

The act of *theorising* in particular and the act of *thinking* in general are part of a *contradictory* process: the conditions of existence which underlie all acts of theorising and thinking depend on a gap which has to be maintained *even if* it constitutes a source of contradiction. As critical subjects, we have to reflect on this gap in a radical – that is, distrustful – way. One can describe this gesture in the following terms: *to think in terms of contradiction means both to accept and to question the very possibility of contradiction.* The possibility of contradiction is a precondition for the possibility of thinking. Thinking is an activity that seeks to maintain itself within existence; *one must not think of thinking only in terms of its proper content.* Theoretical thinking is permeated by a native perversion: its existence depends on its capacity to *un-realise* its content and thereby perpetuate the contradiction that has brought it into existence in the first place. In order

to ensure that the possibility of theoretical thinking is not shattered by its own impossibility, one has to transform the reality of its very possibility, that is, one has to retranslate the reality of contradiction into the possibility of its own condition. *Concealing* the contradiction – in the sense of covering it with a mask that makes it invisible – is *the game of theory*, that is, the game of thinking treated and lived as a *detached form of existence*.

Under these conditions, critique can be contaminated with the perversion of theory. Critique finds its object in contradiction. Yet, in order to avoid contradiction, it has to be treated as real; and, in order to be treated as real, one has to be in a position to see it – that is, one has to be able to push social structures to the conditions of their own impossibility. We need to grasp the power of contradiction in order to comprehend its structuring effect, but without turning away from it. In order to achieve this, one has to fall back upon theory – and this is precisely where the difficulty lies. We need to make sure that theory allows us to see the social structures within which it emerges and by which it is produced, so that it cannot possibly ignore the extent of its own social conditioning. A genuine understanding of social structures, which takes into account the initial contradiction upon which modern society – structured in accordance with the division of labour – is based, contains an *awareness of the division between practice and theory*. This is where Bourdieu comes into play.

## II. Bourdieu

### ***(1) Bourdieu's Structuralism of Practice: Beyond Objectivism and Subjectivism***

In order to face up to the Marxian challenge, we need to think in terms of *structures*: the contradictions inherent in social activity are embedded in social structures. Critique has to start with a reflection upon *social divisions* and, more importantly, with a reflection upon the *distorting effects* of social divisions. In this sense, critique is concerned with, and seeks to uncover, the very conditions that make a theoretical approach to the social world possible in the first place. A critique that is concerned with the social conditions in which theory is produced is essential to the very project of social theory. For what lies at the heart of critique is the real – however contradictory – object that is always already part of social relations.

Bourdieu's project is marked by a *paradox* that can be described as follows: *the enemies of real thought on structures are the social thinkers who, by focusing on structures, rob society of its real processes of structuration*. Why do they do so? They do so because they think about structure *without* relating it to the most fundamental contradiction – that is, *without* relating it to the source of contradiction outside

which structuration cannot take place – and because they conceive of society as a functioning totality—either *objectively*, as a structural process regulated from outside, or *subjectively*, as a set of independently existing wills, each of which can follow its own interests. It does not really matter whether the emphasis is on *objective mechanisms* or on *intersubjective agreements*, for in both cases one fails to grasp the functioning of social reality. As a consequence of this failure, one is forced to reinforce the contradiction, reproduce it, and reproduce one's own existence by reproducing the contradiction. By contrast, to *confront the contradiction* means to go back to the very basis of this contradiction. It means to return to the place itself where the division between practical activity and theoretical activity originates; in short, it means to revisit it theoretically and thereby develop a critical stance through the very process of problematising the fundamental contradiction of society.

To be sure, this task reflects an internal struggle in the social sciences. Bourdieu's contribution consists in the fact that – in one of his masterpieces, namely in the *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977 [1972]), written in the 1960s – he put his finger on the nature of this struggle. Sociology, in the Bourdieusian sense, is to be conceived of as *a theory of social structures*; yet, as such, it is to be understood as a *critical sociology*, which, by definition, rejects reductionist forms of sociology (whether they emphasise the alleged power of *objective regulation* or the alleged power of *intersubjective agency*). Such a critical sociology, in the Bourdieusian sense, needs to face up to a *struggle* between two influential paradigms in the social sciences – that is, to a struggle between two antithetical approaches: *sociology and ethnology*. The big enemy of a true sociology of structures is ethnology, or at least the predominant form of ethnology of the 1960s, which was heavily influenced by the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss.

## ***(2) Bourdieu's Structuralism of Practice: The Struggle between Sociology and Ethnology***

A sociology that claims to be genuinely committed to the Marxist project can only be *anti-Lévi-Straussian*. Such an approach, however, has to be seriously devoted to the study of social structures. In fact, it can only succeed in sustaining itself on the level of immanent contradiction by confronting, and thereby undermining, the reproductive logic of social structures. That being said, we must not lose sight of one key challenge: *the challenge of moving towards a transformation of the contradiction*. In Marxian thought, *critique* is conceived of in terms of *transformation*, because it embodies the abolition of the division of labour, starting with the *abolition of the separation between manual and intellectual work*. Within the Marxian framework, critique is an integral part, and indeed a cornerstone, of a theory of revolution.

Let us turn our attention to the *opposition between sociology and ethnology*. Sociology, if taken seriously, compels us to oppose a certain *ethnological disposition*. This disposition manifests itself in a particular scientific way of approaching things; it is a *stigmatised disposition*. What does this mean? Going back to the original meaning of the ethnological disposition, one will notice that it lies at the heart of the existence of *the stranger*, understood as the stranger in relation to a given practice. Put differently, *the ethnologist* is a ‘type of person’: he or she represents the agent who is kept in reserve as a *non-producing agent*. The ethnologist is a stranger who is always already situated one step behind the initial contradiction and who, *within* the structuring process derived from the division of labour, stays, nevertheless, *outside* this very process. Once the division of labour is put in place, ethnologists try to get back on their feet, but without ever achieving this goal.

Bourdieu’s work is situated in the thematic horizon of the *German Ideology*, at least in the following sense: to assume that there is a *division of labour* means to suggest that *different individuals do different things*, and that, furthermore, the original way of generating *inequality* based on private property is the creation of a social *gap*. This gap is maintained through the reproduction of life conditions derived from a productive process in which there is a whole group of actors *excluded* from the very process of production. This gap, however, is for the agents themselves a new *existential condition*, namely a new condition shaped by the reproduction of their own lives.

The point is to make this widening gap visible the very moment its reproduction takes place. Every time its reproduction is under way it regenerates its own conditions of existence. How does this work? In relation to this question, Bourdieu seeks to bring together *two different tasks* that he considers to be complementary and mutually supportive: on the one hand, he proposes a theoretical framework for studying the logic of practice; and, on the other hand, he develops a critique of silent and hidden conditions, which escape the theoretical eye. In short, we are dealing with a commitment to both exploring the *production of practice* and questioning the *production of theory*.

The complementarity of these two tasks can be described as follows: *the only thing we know for sure about practice is that its very existence depends on practice and that one cannot, after undertaking a scholastic rupture, project an imagined logic of theory upon a lived logic of practice*. The construction of an autonomised theory is always conditioned by the condition of scholastic theorising itself. The only guarantee that one can find in a solid theoretical critique – understood as a critique of its own limits and of the power it can exercise over practice – is that it allows us to see the paradoxical practice that sustains it whilst trying to escape its own practical attachment to the process of production. It seems, therefore, convenient to have a specific practical logic in mind, which is the kind of logic

commonly used to raise theory out of its practical context. This, in many ways, is a *reflexive task*, which needs to be repeated over and over again, and this is where critique – in the Marxian sense, as adopted by Bourdieu – must start.

### ***(3) Bourdieu's Structuralism of Practice: From the Logic of Theory to the Logic of Practice***

Lévi-Straussian structuralism has been criticised on a number of counts. One may argue, for example, that it can be converted into an interpretive attitude, similar to those interpretations that Marx had already sought to overcome in his famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach. According to Bourdieu, Lévi-Straussian structuralism falls into the same trap as interpretive approaches, such as symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology. The scenario in question is actually rather straightforward and may be described as follows: when ethnologists arrive at a given place or their 'field', their first reaction is to demand three items, which may be given the following tentative titles: *a code*, *a grammar*, and *a map*.

- (i) *A code*: It is assumed that *rules* have a meaning *regardless* of their application by concrete subjects, that is, *independently* of the social situations in which subjects find themselves immersed. Against this view, Bourdieu proposes a theory which captures the *determinacy* of social actions by putting forward the idea of *generative schemes of actions* (the *habitus*), whose existence reflects the *regulative* nature of social action, rather than the normative dimension of rules. This theoretical programme, proposed by Bourdieu, is deeply suspicious of abstract legalism.
- (ii) *A grammar*: For Bourdieu, the adoption of a *set of discursive rules* represents an obstacle to a truly sociological point of view, because a sociorelational approach to reality does not permit us to reduce the production of rules to a mere form of discourse. According to Bourdieu, even the notion of *generative grammar* falls into the trap of discursive idealism. Of course, one can say that the notion of grammar gives the speaker a new place within linguistic analysis, a place defined in terms of the separation between *langue* and *parole*. Nevertheless, the conceptual pair *competence/performance* remains trapped in a horizon of abstraction, which removes the speaker from the *context* of enunciation and ignores the social *conditions* that allow linguistic utterances between socially situated and qualified actors to come into existence in the first place. More generally, the linguistic paradigm in the social sciences is caught up in an illusion, comparable to the vision of the arriving stranger, when seeking to comprehend how *one* speaks – that is, the way *everybody* speaks and understands.

The *hypostatisation of language* as the allegedly most *pure* source of meaning is an expression, perhaps the main expression, of the *detachment* which gives rise to the *vision of the stranger*. To be sure, this exogenous approach is typically the strategy of those who situate themselves *outside* the contradiction, *after* the rupture, and who seek to conceal their artificial detachment by suggesting that there is a common language, or at least a common use of language. In this regard, it does not really matter whether one claims to stand in the tradition of Saussure, Jakobson, or Chomsky. The main problem of which we need to be aware, however, is that by converting *language* into the *main paradigm* for understanding *processes of social structuration*, one fails to grasp the contradictory core of these processes. That being said, it is more fruitful to search for evidence in *sociolinguistics*, understood as a social characterisation of linguistic acts, rather than as a social application of linguistics.

- (iii) *The map*: The critical reflection on this element is, as far as I can see, central to the theoretical project associated with the work of Bourdieu. The idea of *mapping the space of the investigation* – of having a full grasp of the space where the investigation takes place – is based on the assumption that the *mapped space* of the investigation is isomorphic to the *lived space* of the actor. In fact, it is assumed that the ethnologist moves within this space in the same way as the actor. To ask for, or draw up, a map means to contribute to the *uncoupling of theory from practice*, but on a specific level, which is hardly visible and *appears* to be completely neutral: the uncoupling between producer and non-producer is here conceived of as the uncoupling between producer and non-producer of *movements*.

Practice is productive; in order to produce, it does not cease to engage in constant *movement*. *Movements are inscribed in a certain space, but a space which is not homogenous or empty*. On the contrary, it is a space whose existence depends on the very movements by which it is produced. It is not a self-contained space, but a space with content, which forms part of movement itself. Yet, *the ethnologist's map* seems to suggest precisely the contrary: it is *an empty and orientationless space*, void of those who move within it, who convert it into a lived space through their practices and whose movements are based on their *tasks* within this space.

I want to insist on the importance of this critique of the map, which, it seems to me, touches upon the epicentre of Bourdieu's thought, at least in relation to the initial stages of his theoretical project. *The map is the privileged space of the thinker*, something that does not shift, or that shifts only with the finger, ideally to project itself towards no matter what point to determine what could be its situation, *if there were any situation at all*. The map constitutes a

space where nobody is physically engaged, and where one can reconstruct in a backwards move what one has already constructed forwards, because the backwards and the forwards have no concrete meaning, and because the paths are still reversible. The ‘turning back’, the ‘change of course’, and the ‘being inclined’ do not at all imply the reconfiguration of space. The map, in this sense, is the most tangible instrument for those who do not know the field, because there is nothing to be known in it and because it does not require any major form of commitment; in short, because *one’s life is not at stake in it*. It is the instrument of the negation of the logic of practice, inseparable from the effectively undertaken movement. And one sees that ethnologists, the very moment they find themselves immersed in this kind of situation, convert themselves immediately into theoreticians: deceptively homogenous, genuinely indifferent towards the bodies by which they are surrounded, and compulsively obsessed with the search for totality in terms of the ‘big picture’.

By contrast, *the space of practice is a space of positions*, where every place is *socially signified* in terms of *social activities*, and where the trajectories do not possess the ideal reversibility for which the indifferent traveller seems to strive. It is a space permeated and reconfigured by the game of positions and by their temporal situatedness, recognised and played as the key action referred to as a singular position. This applies, of course, to both social and temporal space.

#### ***(4) Bourdieu’s Structuralism of Practice: From Cognitive Detachment to Bodily Engagement***

The suspicions one may have about the notions of *grammar* and *code* are fully confirmed at this juncture: Bourdieu’s critique, even if it refuses to acknowledge this, points clearly in the direction of a *phenomenological reading*, no matter how vehemently he insists upon the need to study the power of objective structures – a theme which is particularly important not only in Merleau-Ponty’s *The Structure of Behaviour* (1942), but also in the work of Goldstein (1934) and in Guillaume’s *The Psychology of the Form* (1937). When reflecting upon contemporary forms of social analysis, we have to explore the implications of the tendency to focus on the power of objective structures. According to Marx, the main source of social contradiction is to be found in the *uncoupling process between producer and non-producer*. According to Bourdieu, we need to examine social divisions in relation to *the body*, and we therefore need to provide an *analysis of the body*.

A *critical structuralism* – a structuralism that is critical of both structuralism and structural anthropology, as in the case of Bourdieu – can only be a *structuralism of practice*. Such a structuralism of practice locates the *emergence of*

*contradiction in bodily experiences* made by *socially situated subjects*, that is, by subjects who are situated in a space which is theirs and which they absorb subjectively by living and moving in it in different ways and by individuating themselves as situated bodies through these movements.

*The return to the place of contradiction is a return to the place of the body.* Of course, as Bourdieu knows only too well, there is a lot of room for phenomenological temptations, and he tries hard not to fall into the subjectivist trap. In essence, *phenomenological approaches* conceive of social relations as intersubjective relations between agents who occupy certain positions in the social space and who establish these relations by unfolding a ‘natural attitude’ derived from the transcendental experience of the world – that is, from an experience that is based on the *subjective* constitution of being in the world. This position, however, is problematic in that it fails to account for the following:

- (i) *Social positions are already given* (since, as Marx pointed out, they reflect the very structure of the division of labour), and actors are *constrained* by occupying these conditions. In other words, the social world has an objective structure, and this structure is not the result of a set of subjective acts.
- (ii) *The natural attitude is a social attitude*, even though it presents itself as a natural attitude. The subject’s adjustment to the world is a construction founded on the collective experience of people who *live* in society. The elimination of this construction presupposes the construction of the means mobilised for this very elimination. We typically encounter this kind of elimination in theories that ignore practice.

From then on, the challenge consists in developing a *theory of the body* capable of addressing the above issues. A sociological theory of the body attributes a *social dimension* to the body – that is, it inserts the body into a space of *social positions*. It is nevertheless a body in the sense that its *socialisation* is not a refusal of the ability to develop a sense of selfhood, but rather a relation to a bodily constituted self that can only be understood as *a socially composed self* – that is, as *a socially mediated self*.

To put it more simply, the socialisation of the body is not accomplished through the mere imposition of external norms (that is, through the repression of a pre-given physical nature in the sense of the repression of a natural body that is subjected to an objectively existing system of cultural norms). Rather, it is to be regarded – at least according to Bourdieu’s *Outline of a Theory of Practice* – as a *bodily dialectics*, that is, as a dialectics which proceeds in two directions: *exteriorisation and interiorisation*, representing two movements which must not be conceived of in terms of a linear succession, not even in terms of alternation, but in terms of an overlap between *opposite*, and yet *interdependent*, operations.

### **(5) Bourdieu's Structuralism of Practice: From Nature without Culture to Culture with Nature**

When examining the body – the body of anyone, regardless of their position in the contradictory structure of the social space – Bourdieu does not deny the existence of universal natural characteristics or of fundamental bodily experiences. He insists, however, that these experiences are universal in the sense that ‘there is no society that can do without them’ (Bourdieu, 1972: 289). It is in this remark that Bourdieu’s theory seems to be in line with the structuralist position. At the same time, one can say that it is in this position where Bourdieu remains close to Marx – that is, close to the idea that anthropological distinctiveness originates in the production of the means of subsistence, which equip human beings with the ability to be *creators of their own condition*, whilst remaining exposed to the constraining power of the conditions which they themselves created.

With regard to structuralism, one recognises the echo of what Lévi-Strauss describes, at the beginning of his *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1968 [1949]), under the title ‘Intervention’. At the level of nature, an empty space is naturally deepened – that which concerns the wedding, which constitutes a *social* vehicle for *biological* reproduction. Yet, whilst representing a source of indeterminacy amongst superior apes (because nature does not determine *with whom*), reproduction amongst humans constitutes a problem that has to be collectively – that is, socially – resolved. One will notice that, similar to Marx’s writings, we are essentially dealing with the problem of *means*.

The wedding is the means of reproduction; from a Lévi-Straussian perspective, humans produce this kind of means to ensure their survival as a species. In this sense, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* represents a genuinely Marxist oeuvre, as it remains loyal to Marx’s emphasis on anthropological distinctiveness when examining the cultural ‘Intervention’ upon seemingly natural processes. How do humans *produce*? This question can be answered only with reference to the concept of *means*. Culture needs to intervene, but it intervenes through a vacuum, this vacuum that nature has dealt with itself, without developing it and, hence, without providing this determination with means necessary for *social existence*, which, by definition, transcends the realm of a purely biological existence. There is an intervention because there is a problem, and *every anthropological problem is a problem of means*.

Bourdieu is firmly situated in this line of argument, emphasising that *society ‘takes side’*. The existence of nature poses a challenge to the existence of society, and it constitutes a very complicated challenge indeed. *Human beings are defined by their capacity to confront the challenge of natural indeterminacy by virtue of cultural determinacy*. This explains Marx’s emphasis on the means of subsistence, Lévi-Strauss’s interest in reproduction, and Bourdieu’s reflections

on the existence of the body. Social life, insofar as it is concerned with the fabrication of means, is essentially a *response*. That said, it becomes clear that the structural approach – which remains important in Bourdieu’s work – excludes an *external* relation between nature and culture, as it is characterised by the *internal* articulation between two levels, starting from the deepened vacuum of the first level. With this in mind, we can understand the extent to which this perspective underlies Bourdieu’s *theory of bodily socialisation*, as illustrated in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

When reflecting upon the existence of universal bodily determinations, and thus when examining the existence of a small number of fundamental sensations linked to central bodily functions, the problem of *positioning* emerges. What is *natural* is the space of variability accepted by a small number of sensations; what is *social* is the effectively developed variation. The space of variability is the space of the problem by whose internal nature the answer is determined. How does the problem manifest itself? Bourdieu’s response to this question is unambiguous: *the problem manifests itself in practice*, that is, *in bodily practice* – and hence *in the subject’s practical involvement in the world*, to which it has to adjust. In order for this to be possible, the subject has to *appropriate* not only *the world* by which it finds itself surrounded, but also *the body* in which it finds itself embedded. Practice, then, has to be reconnected with the original disposition of the *inserted and positioned body*: practice, in this sense, is the natural deepening of the problematic vacuum; it is the filling of, and social solution to, this vacuum. In other words, practice is the natural and unchangeable condition of its own problematic constitution. Given its worldly nature, practice is bound to be *social* and *changeable*, as well as inseparable from *bodily* positions developed in relation to a given world.

### ***(6) Bourdieu’s Structuralism of Practice: The Subject’s Bodily Existence between Throw and Fall***

What connects the invariance of fundamental sensations (their relative resemblance, the limited variability of what a body can and cannot do) to the variation of practices is the fact that *practice is an encounter between the body and the world* – an encounter which is contingent upon the body’s position in the world. We can say that this position is, on a primordial level, a *throw*, a *fall*, which is the very first symptom of its *problematic constitution*, of the deepening of the natural problem, which is socially perceived as a problem.

Given that it constitutes the very first symptom of its problematic constitution, we have to start with this *throw* taking into account its contingency. The ‘taking side’ is indicative of a necessity: ‘one has to go there like this and not otherwise’. This necessity acquires meaning on the basis of our existential

contingency: one is here and not there. Given its *bodily existence*, the subject is always a *being-thrown-into-existence*. The body has natural dispositions, but what we cannot find in the nature of the body is the solution to the problem of its fall, of its position. The *response*, the ‘taking side’, is the response which only *society* can give to a problem of the body, that is, to *the body experienced as a problem*. The force of the response lies in the fact that the response itself has a bodily nature, inscribed in the place of the *emptiness of the body* – that is, of the body that senses its emptiness – under the condition of indeterminacy that permeates the position of the body.

Once the emptiness is noticed, this emptiness on which the body turns its back, awaiting and understanding the response, it can be described as the condition of strangeness in the world. *The thrown body is strange, and it seeks to overcome its strangeness through practice*. Surely, this is where practice seeks to respond. It is the place of all primordial necessity (varying according to the places of the fall) based on the *strangeness that needs to be overcome*. In this sense, *practice is the proof of the fall* within the same movement where it tries not to see it as such, to belong to the world where it has taken place, to absorb the irrevocable strangeness of the thrown body.

Thus, we can say that practice is the reduction of the stranger. This can also be understood from an angle that is different from the one previously mentioned. The reduced stranger is not the *theoretical stranger* – who appears as a traitor of practice, guilty of the *disembodiment* of the habitus whilst undertaking an action, and who objectivates the rules, draws the maps, and codifies the languages. Rather, it is a *bodily stranger*, who has a body before having a body – if it is true that the only genuine body is a *simultaneously appropriated and misappropriated body* – within a habitualised and habituating relation to the world, driven by the eternal ‘dialectics of interiority and exteriority’ (Bourdieu, 1972: 256). A body that cannot be described as a proper body in this sense first emerges as a stranger to the world into which it has been thrown, and indeed as a stranger to the subject itself, before being formed and reformed through the dialectical interplay between disposition and situation. In short, the *human body* is a *contingent body* and, therefore, a body for which literally nothing is necessary.

Interestingly, Bourdieu talks about this figure only on very few occasions. It seems to serve the function of a *tacit premise* underlying his argument. Whenever he makes it explicit, though, it appears as a source of enlightenment, particularly in his *self-reflexive* writings, which culminate in his plea for a *socio-analysis*. It is open to debate whether or not he lives up to the high standards of a genuine socio-analysis. In any case, he seems to situate himself on a higher level, on the level of *practice as an adjusted response*, as a search for adjustment, triggered by the *encounter between the body and the world* in the moment of their

simultaneous emergence. It is worth emphasising that this process takes place between *two levels of strangeness*, that is, between two forms of being strange in the world: on the one hand, the *pre-social state*, which can never be experienced as such and which has the status of an obsessive fear on which we turn our back; on the other hand, the *ideological drift*, which allows us to escape the logic of practice through the logic of theoreticism.

The key question, then, is this: *how is the body extracted from the pre-body?* In other words, *how is the body removed from the situation of the throw?* This is the point where Bourdieu brings the aforementioned return of the place of the contradiction into play – the place where practice separates itself from this very contradiction. This place is regarded as a physical place: it is the place where the ‘taking side’ occurs.

By acknowledging that this place is physical we can identify a gap in the Lévi-Straussian framework, a gap which is not mentioned in Bourdieu’s critique of Lévi-Strauss, but which is nevertheless relevant to measuring both the *distance* and the *proximity* between these two thinkers. What, in Lévi-Strauss, takes place in the *wedding* – and only in the wedding – is tantamount to what, in Bourdieu, is located in the individual *body* as a thrown body impregnated with memory. (From a Lévi-Straussian perspective, the wedding is a socially recognised vehicle for the regulation of sexuality. This link between sexuality and reproduction has recently been re-examined in Luc Boltanski’s *La condition fœtale*, published in 2004.) Thus, Lévi-Strauss’s initial question concerns the *sexual function of the body*: how can the body be socially formed to ensure the biological mechanisms of breeding? This is the point of incursion of ‘Intervention’ (Lévi-Strauss 1968 [1949]: 37), and this is what justifies the pivotal role of the prohibition of incest. Bourdieu is concerned with the question of what the body does with itself (and, in this context, it is important to underline the subjectivist nature of the question). This question is relevant not only in relation to other bodies within a set of social relations, but also in relation to the world as a whole. The *social construction of the body* contributes to both the *reproduction of the species* as a collectively adjusted form of being and the *reproduction of the body itself* as an individually adjusted form of being.

We are therefore confronted with a *pre-body*, ‘a field universally imposed on social positions’ (Bourdieu, 1972: 289). In this regard, the analysis undertaken in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* is unambiguous: the point emphasised by Bourdieu is that, within this ‘position-taking’ process, the spatial distinctions are established in analogy with the human body. Hence, *the body is a point of reference for the structuration of space*. Put differently, there are ‘elementary structures underlying bodily experience’ (Bourdieu, 1972: 289). (This statement can be found in full in the *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, and this allusion is unequivocal.) These structures can be described in terms of their coincidence

with the principles of structuration of the objective space: inside-outside, up-down, front-back, right-left – these are the *polarities* that structure the space analogically to the experience of the body, within its proper structure. This *co-occurrence between two languages* – between the structural language of *the body* and the structural language of *the world* – can be explained in two ways:

- (i) One may assume that *everything* is just *projection*. According to this view, we need to focus on the idea of an *innate bodily competence*. This, Bourdieu asserts, would mean to suggest that there is a ‘science infused with hidden bodily reactions’ (Bourdieu, 1972: 290), which is a view that should be avoided.
- (ii) One may claim that the body cannot be said to be situated outside a *network of social relations*. If we recognise that the body is situated in the world, then the body’s existence can be proven. Hence, we are dealing with the existence of a *known body*. It is known, however, only because the *knowledge* of its existence and of the world in which it exists is *always already spatially situated*. It is a body capable of enriching itself through self-perception, which it would not be capable of without this *structuration of the world*. In fact, the structuration of the world is, for the body, a way of asserting its existence and *accomplishing its own structuration*.

The question that remains is why the second solution prevails over the first one. The main reason for this is that the *natural experience* of the body is *insignificant*, because the ‘small number of fundamental sensations’ (Bourdieu, 1972: 289) shared by *all* human beings is a *sparse* material unfit to provide the basis for a genuine experience. This means that the experience of the thrown body, the test of the strange body for every practice, cannot have the positive consistency of a natural bodily experience. *The body is proper only through appropriation, through appropriation in situated action*. Yet, how can we explain the coming into existence of the coincidence, the original scenario of simultaneous emergence? And how can we explain that the body obtains value through structuring themes?

The response to these questions given by Bourdieu is based on a deeply problematic idea: *the body, in its original form, needs to be able to anticipate itself*. According to this view, the world is not an opaque and strange world but a penetrable world, in the sense that it positions itself as a supportive zone for pre-perceptive anticipations (Goldstein’s influence, through Merleau-Ponty, is obvious here). Emotions may have the ability to escape this structure of anticipation. At this point, we need to emphasise the influence of Mauss’s essays, not only his essay on bodily techniques (1966 [1935]), but also his essay on the expression of emotions, laughter, and tears (1969 [1921]). In short, *the body is emotionally charged* – and so is our bodily relation to the world.

To perceive oneself as a self requires perceiving oneself through one's relation to the outside world – a world in which the perceiving body has anticipated itself, rather than projected itself, as if it had previously embodied the things which it had to absorb from the outside. In this context, 'anticipated' – or 'compelled' – means 'given in advance' or, to be exact, 'a sought-after-given-in-advance' aimed at reincorporating what still has to come into existence.

### ***(7) Bourdieu's Structuralism of Practice: The Subject's Home in Hysteresis***

When examined more closely, it becomes apparent that, in its literal sense, the expression '*dialectics of interiorisation-exteriorisation*' (Bourdieu, 1972: 256) is problematic. This is due to the fact that the described relationship is neither about interiorisation nor about exteriorisation – at least not if it is understood within a *sequence of operations*. There is no exteriorisation, because what the body exteriorises is not derived from an interior source in the sense of a place that is tantamount to a home. On the contrary, *if there is anything like a bodily home, it is the body's environment*. From this perspective, strangeness cannot be seen directly, but it is only as a *failure* in the process of integration into the home that the world allows for the *self-anticipation* of the body through practice. '*To be at home*' means '*to be in the world*', and it means '*to be in the world through anticipation*'. It is only the interiorised body through its adjustment to the world, it is never a structure that is strange to it (an objective rule), but it is what is already put in place, thereby anticipating itself. It is *a structure that already belongs to the actor*, although the former is not the same as the latter.

One will notice that the language of *anticipation* is far from neutral. It puts the emphasis on a certain operation of *time*, from which the body cannot escape. This is what Bourdieu seeks to grasp under a concept of which, unfortunately, he never made use in a more systematic and detailed way: *hysteresis*. This concept can be found particularly in his *Distinction* (1979) and in his *The Logic of Practice* (1980); in its orthodox form, however, the doctrine is relegated to a second level. If there is *anticipation*, this is because *the body is belated* and because *the structuration of the socialised body is a way of escaping its belatedness*, whatever happens. The *human body*, in the Bourdieusian sense, is a *social body*, a body through which society provides the answer to the temporal question of belatedness.

Metaphors permit us to find the answer to the relative problem of the situated being – perceived as a specifically bodily problem – in the *primary experience of the social world*, the situation into which one is thrown. The body presupposes the capacity to adjust: the capacity to adjust to something that is, in

fiction, given as something already realised – as something that experiences the world as its own world and, therefore, as its home. What makes this possible is *practice*, but on condition that it *converts the metaphor into metonymy*, thereby accomplishing incorporation. *Education*, which is based on the pedagogy of the body, is the *realisation of metonymy*, which gets under way with its original transformation into metaphor. What this process seems to guarantee is the possibility of not being belated, of giving it the means to fill the gap caused by its belatedness, as a sign of its insurmountable anxiety over the possibility of turning out to be the stranger that the subject has always already ceased to be.

*Society has to treat the body as a carrier of memory.* Memory is a reminder: a means of a particular sort, indeed – according to Bourdieu – the first means which consists in not having to think and rethink its adjustment, in the sense of experiencing practice, rather than replaying it as a form of belatedness that is still to be accomplished. What lies at the heart of practice is the power of *hysteresis*, which can only be sustained insofar as it is overcome. What is revealed in the pathological figure of the hysterical – suggesting that ‘a spoken expression was literally the bodily expression which it expresses’ (Bourdieu, 1972: 290) – is precisely the metaphorical failure: this is the one which falls again into the disastrous *hysteresis*, which already looks out for practice due to its capacity to assume and overcome it. Its antonym is the well-adjusted agent, who enjoys living within the limits of his or her *hysteresis*, who is not belated, or – to be exact – whose belatedness is correctly absorbed.

*Why is it belated? In essence, it is belated because the body is not of the world, because the dispositions and situations are not homologous.* There is a delay because there is a fall, because the birth into the social world happens too quickly, and because the birth process lacks the continuity that would allow for a linear and flawless insertion into the world. *Practice*, therefore, is the *perceived expedient to resolve* what – drawing on both psychoanalytical and biological terminology – may be called a condition of *prematurity*. This is why habituation is first and foremost determined as an available memory – that is, as a stock of already tested physical schematisations. We need to take into account, however, that it is not completely obscure: it belongs to the order of the implicit, a *know-how* on this side of a discursive knowledge, which could be enounced without known rules, applied after having been known. In the logic of practice, memory plays the same role with regard to its application, asserting and consolidating itself by treating novel situations on the basis of situations previously proved and already overcome through the adjustment of dispositions.

Nevertheless, one can see very clearly that the form of memory about which we have been talking here – the one concerning the reminder – conceals another form of memory, which is also quite worrying, and one

which is irreducible not only to all know-that but also to all know-how: *the memory of the fall*. The latter, as opposed to the former, is essentially opaque. The only element that makes it visible is *belatedness*, which activates the logic of practice in the temporary activity of research, that is, in its treatment of *hysteresis*. In this regard, the examination of belatedness has a symptomatic value: not as a sign of the fall, and hence of arbitrariness, but of what expresses it in order to conceal it.

### ***(8) Bourdieu's Structuralism of Practice: The Preponderance of Practice and the Need for Socio-Analysis***

It is a well-known fact that Bourdieu has always been in close contact with psychoanalysis, whilst at the same time keeping a critical distance from it. In close proximity to psychoanalysis, he elaborates and prescribes a technique called *socio-analysis* (see Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: especially chapter 1) – a major procedure of a sociological form of vigilance, to which I have already referred above and which compels us to remove, or at least become aware of, self-imposed barriers characteristic of theoreticist approaches. In opposition to the deviating and – to use Comte's words – digressing theoretician, we play the ideological role of the gravedigger of the structural contradiction. If, following Bourdieu, psychoanalysis has to be revised, this means that, within the framework of psychoanalysis, the *logic of thought* has to be reconnected with the *logic of practice*. What follows from this is that we need to establish a system of thought that arises from a *non-thetical consciousness*, rather than from an unconscious in the Freudian sense.

To put it bluntly: contrary to what has been said and written in the vulgate, *the habitus is not an unconscious disposition in the proper sense of the term*. Rather, it constitutes an *infra-conscience*, composed of both awareness [*connaissance*] and unawareness [*méconnaissance*]. Paradoxically, unawareness is the condition for a certain form of knowledge. The *know-how* is a kind of *knowledge that lacks knowledge* about what it actually does, detaching itself from the very process of doing and treating it as an object. At the same time, anticipation – in its practical fluidity – is a mechanism in which a certain form of consciousness is at work, but a form of consciousness that is not conscious of itself when undertaking actions. This ambiguous regime in which Merleau-Ponty's footprints prevail over those of Freud and Marx, and where the light and the dark sides support one another, authorises a new take on the mode of self-consciousness: it is possible to see its practice on condition that it is possible to see that 'seeing it' means 'ceasing to see it'. We are therefore dealing with an unhappy retake, under the irrepressible form of a 'bad' conscience, which cannot be resisted by the permanent problem of vigilance.

On the conceptual level, this is where it becomes clear that this type of *unconscious* does not have anything to do with the unconscious in the Freudian sense – an unconscious which would not be a non-thetical consciousness, as simply another type of consciousness, but *a mental regime different from consciousness itself, governed by an autonomous logic*. To be sure, this is not just a question of semantics. With the previous emphasis in mind, it is possible to understand what would be analogous to a *true unconscious* in the Bourdieusian sense, namely an unconscious that designates both the unconscious *in* his theory and the unconscious *of* his theory. We are dealing with *an unconscious involved in practice*, which does not necessarily live in practice, because belatedness is always already blamed and because practice out of vocation is to be concealed. If we have to give it a place, it is, rather, the one of *the arbitrary fall* in a certain point of the social space, of the body that is not involved with itself and with its world within its being-thrown-into-existence, and of the body before the proper body. This place cannot be caught up in itself; indeed, from another point of view, it must be possible to put your finger on it, point in its direction, and thereby take a critical position. It is its real force – more profound and more effective than the denunciation of the training that is at work in processes of habituation. It is the last resource of indignation, on this side of practice, and it is this resource that Bourdieu tacitly rediscovers when he uses critique against the other side, for instance, against the theorist who believes to stand above the logic of practice and who has left the home that practice represents.

It occurs to Bourdieu to define habitus as ‘making a virtue of necessity’ (1972: 260). In order for it to be a *virtue*, however, it first has to become a *necessity*. With the tools offered by Bourdieu concerning this process of ‘becoming necessity’, the view can only be thrown at a dark foundation, which can be converted into a clear motive of indignation: it is arbitrary, and it appears to be necessary – this is the scandal. Yet, before deciding whether or not we are dealing with a scandal, it remains to be seen if a description can be put in place about what exactly occurs on the level of *experience*.

Let us reconsider the initial scenario: *society*, insofar as it ‘takes side’, imposes a *determination on the body*, but at the same time it salvages it, precisely by making it proper, appropriated by itself and by the world. Coincidence takes place without having to presuppose the existence of a conductor, without requiring the existence of a big legislator who sets out the rules of adjustment. The body is not initially trained: it trains, or retrains, itself through the resolution of the distance between itself and the world. *Practice is a safeguard*, even if it converts the arbitrary into the necessary, and even if it conceals the vision of the arbitrary. This is where the dilemma lies. In this sense, one could also say that there is such a thing as *a virtue of practice*, which

is not so much a virtue made on the basis of necessity which it imposes, but rather a virtue inherent to the salvation which it provides for a body that has to bypass its condition as a thrown body, strange to the world in which – whatever happens – it survives, in an irrepressibly contingent manner.

Therefore, *it is necessary that the body lives its belatedness in a way that allows it not to be belated*, as a form of belatedness charged with dread and confronted by the adjusting efforts which the body never ceases to make. This is where the first visage of *hysteresis* can be found. And this is why the memory-laden experiences, in which the body is heavy, are haunted by another memory, which is still threatening: the memory of the *misadjusted body*. In this light, it is understandable that *every experience of maladjustment is damaging*, but maybe it is for a different reason than the one invoked by Bourdieu. If it is damaging, this is not because practice has failed, or because the situation turns out to be untouchable by the dispositions, but because the social unconscious is affected, because the other situation under every condition seizes the subject and paralyzes it in its movement. Thus, the subject would be stopped not by an obstacle which it encounters on its way, but by a type of memory that is different from the naturalised reminder: a memory that is different from the one of the memory-laden body – a body which is filled with accumulated practical knowledge.

Following this interpretation (which we do not find in Bourdieu's oeuvre), *the unconscious* is a matter not so much of practice as such, but rather of the *flaws and failures* of practice – and, more importantly, not so much because they are failures but because they make the *general economy of failures and successes* visible. This process functions not in terms of necessity but in terms of the *arbitrary nature of strangeness in the world*, and of a determination to be there *at all cost*, without any possible justification. As a consequence, however, the notion of the arbitrary ceases to have the same meaning; that is, it does not refer to the idea of indignation: not to be at home does not mean to fail to be at home; rather, it designates the idea of getting hold of oneself at one's side, in discrepant relation to oneself and to the world, on the level of the primary condition that there is both a self and a world, adjusted to the misadjusted, but nevertheless mutually related. This means that, in order to allow for the possibility of an analysis of this kind of relationship, one has to detach oneself.

It must be emphasised that, to a significant extent, these considerations make us *move away from Bourdieu's structuralism of practice* – that is, from the form of structuralism which Bourdieu seeks to make work by drawing upon the structural approach in the sense of what he refers to as the 'elementary structures of bodily experience' (1972: 289). These considerations, then, induce us to turn away from Bourdieusian structuralism, because, in a way, they oblige us to pose the following question: *to what extent are structures really*

*part of practice*? Should we not rather seek to develop a conceptual framework that allows us to understand how the *logic of practice* – through processes of habituation and habitation – supports or expresses an aspect of socialisation which is different from the one that passes through the adjustment of the body itself? On this level, for sure, the *function of the arbitrary* should be envisaged – in itself and not in its recovery – as a *function of structuration*. After all, authentic structuralism, whether it is linguistic or anthropological, does not assert anything else. It is most essentially defined by an *ambitious coarticulation of the arbitrary and the necessary*, which is not tantamount to imposing the existence of the latter with the aim of concealing the existence of the former. It is nonetheless true that, for this reason, it is diverted from the matrix of the body and the practices generated by it.

### III. From Marx to Bourdieu

#### (1) *The Enlightening Function of Hysteresis*

I think that, in the light of the above reflections, it is pretty obvious that I consider the concept of *hysteresis* to play a pivotal role in allowing us to shed light on some of the main limitations of the Bourdieusian approach. *Hysteresis* – or, if you prefer, *belatedness* – is symptomatic of the *inertia* of the habitus: the proper weight of the body that has to develop the necessary resources to move within a space where it has to find an ‘objective sense’, allowing it to act upon the outside world – a world in which it has its place and where it is not a stranger. In this sense, *hysteresis* is a feature not of the pre-body but of *the already appropriated body*, engaged in a world where it is *already* disposed of structures that have *already* been tested. Structural dispositions guarantee, retrospectively, the renewal of this incorporation. If the *belatedness* of our subjectivity never disappears and if *hysteresis* is a constitutive component of our habitus, this is so because, as Bourdieu remarks, social life always proceeds through the non-collection of *two distinct levels*: the structural level of incorporated *dispositions* and the structural level of *situations*. Put differently, *hysteresis* is an irreducible component of a *bodily interiorised history*. The habitus, once properly incorporated, is out of touch with short-term history, structuring the situations with which subjects are confronted in the course of their experience.

Here, we are not concerned with the *belatedness* caused by the *fall*; rather, our task consists in showing that *delay represents the temporal mode of the present itself* – that is, of the present in and through which the subject, by virtue of permanent adjustment, establishes a relation to the world. The *social world* defines situations, but it constitutes a world which is structured in its own

manner, and which is involved in a process of *transformation*. It is this process which historical materialism, after all, has sought to grasp by developing – with the help of concepts such as mode of production – a science of history and of structural transformation. This history, if it does not have any other base than the one *created* by actors themselves by virtue of their *practices*, evolves in an objective manner that determines what humans do and what they *can* do. Hence, the discrepancy between effective practices and materialist history lies in the *inertia inherent in habituation*. Given that it is structurally determined by the incorporation of schemes of action, practice can never act and react in new situations that contribute to its reproduction. It is disposed, because it is, in fact, *pre-disposed*, under a fundamentally reproductive authority. It is based on the reproduction of the world, which – in accordance with its previously tested schemes – it recognises, questions, and desires. This is how the bodily subject is socially *maintained*. It is, in addition, the reason for its *inevitable delay* with regard to what is *still to occur*, illustrating that the two structural levels – the level of *dispositions* and the level of *situations* – are *not the same*. In brief, it is the task of *dispositions* to respond to *situations* – that is, it is the task of *interior structures* to respond to *exterior occurrences*.

## **(2) *The Social Function of the Habitus***

Following Bourdieu's description, the development of the habitus is socially mediated: it is accentuated by *apparatuses of inculcation*, which succeed and reinforce one another in accordance with the principle that a '*structuration of higher level determines that of a lower level*' (1972: 284): from the family to the school, from the school to the profession and to culture. This is how class-based forms of habitus are constructed in terms of social constellations that are homologically related to each other. Solidarity emerges within every class, a solidarity that needs to be conceived of in terms of habituation-habitation processes. If it is true, however, that the higher level determines the lower level, then everything is at stake at the lower level: from there, it becomes obvious that *socio-analysis*, as a *reconstructive* effort, will have a target which remains the same and which will always bring us back to the threshold of the thrown body, to the 'here' rather than the 'there'.

Nonetheless, the proper history of the individual is not the history that takes place. *The habituated body is embodied history*, but precisely for this reason, it is also a *weighty history* – a history reproduced through the body under the form of its social history, which brings it back to its past socialisation: a history that is out of step with situations historically determined by the transformations of the mode of production and the social relations derived from it. Stressing this phase difference, Bourdieu also reveals the limits of the crypto-phenomenological

perspective, which he actually shares and which is based on a theory of the body. History makes progress outside the body and trains the bodies through its own development. From this perspective, one can only remain Marxist if one seeks to locate history outside the body, create a profound gap between the two levels, and return to the concepts of mode of production and class relations when examining the practical adjustment of the body.

Put differently, the discrepancy that defines the concept of *hysteresis* on this level only illustrates the difficulties arising from the attempt to collapse practice and production into each other by virtue of an unorthodox interpretation of Marx. From a Marxist standpoint, *practice is a productive activity*. What becomes evident here is that, if we want to understand the extent to which practices are socially determined, the *history of the producer* must not be confused with the *history of production*. The history of the producer is, in this case, the history combined with the past, based on the mode of reproduction of practically incorporated schemes. It is not identical to the history of production, which intercepts with reproduction, testing it in new situations, imposing itself by reviving it, and finding positions in the world which are not delivered by past experiences of already undertaken adjustments. In this sense, *all anticipations are inevitably foiled by history, at least by the agents that have found a home in their own practices*, especially by those whose structuring practices do not possess the sufficient fluidity and lability to situate and *inscribe themselves* in a pertinent manner in the – historically structured – new world.

### ***(3) The Problem of Alienation and the Ethnological Fallacy***

At this point, Bourdieu's sociology, conceived of as a form of structuralism of practice, acquires its political meaning. Insisting on the *hysteresis* of the habitus, the problem of bodily expropriation – to which all social subjects are constantly exposed – becomes important. Here we are confronted with the experience of *becoming strange*, becoming strange to both oneself and one's environment. In short, we are confronted with the problem of *alienation*.

This alienation, as we have seen, is founded on a discrepancy between two levels: the level of the habituated body and the level where habituation needs to be produced. This being said, it becomes obvious that the *ethnological fallacy* is not only an *epistemological fallacy*, but also a *political fallacy*: a *blindness* that leads to the *alienation* of the social subject – of the social fact called *hysteresis*. The proper body, understood as a body that is socially tested in a world which itself brings the body into being, converts the world into its own. (At the same time, the proper world – understood as a world that is socially tested in various bodies which themselves bring the world into being – converts the body into its own.) The *proper body* is always, to some extent,

an *improper body* – or at least risks being improper – in relation to forms of expropriation producing class domination.

From this perspective, there is no doubt that the ethnologist plays the worst possible game: to put it bluntly, *the ethnological approach reduces the subject to its physical dimension*, treating it from the point of view of the interpreter who acts as a *disengaged interpreter* and, as such, treats the subject as an object. As a consequence, it is not only the ethnologist who is a stranger, but it is also the ethnologist's object which is treated as, and therefore becomes, strange – strange both to the ethnologist and to the ethnologist's environment. Ethnologists project themselves upon the actor. To the extent that they conceive of *themselves* as actors, this projection appears natural to them. Literally speaking, their strangeness does not cost them anything. The cost for the actor, by contrast, turns out to be rather heavy. Acting the way they normally do in their world, ethnologists show not only that they are not willing to pay the actor, but also that they are prepared to do anything in order not to pay the actor. They need to mobilise considerable symbolic and, strictly speaking, incomprehensible resources in order to conceal their strangeness and thereby realise their essential goal – namely, *to be within and to stay there*.

#### ***(4) From Ethnological Distance to Sociological Proximity***

Within the framework of Bourdieu's structuralism of practice, *the sociologist has to prevail over the ethnologist*. Unlike the latter, the former does not come from far away, but emerges from proximity, like a person who finds herself at home. In the heart of our societies, the ethnologist uncovers strategies of adjustment and maladjustment, turning the construction of the self into a form of destruction – that is, the disappropriation determined by *hysteresis*, the constitutive delay of the habitus. Its object resolves through alienation. In order for the uncovering process to be possible, however, it is crucial that both the proper and the improper can be pulled together. It is therefore necessary that *hysteresis* can be described as a *set of structures* that functions, both despite and through its *disequilibrium*. In short, it is essential to describe the social embeddedness of the body and of the world, allowing for an accurate level of description and thus for an insightful representation of the home.

This home will then be the object of a certain attachment, but of an attachment devoid of ambiguities. If the social construction of the body is based on the ability to overcome the problem of disappropriation, this is because, as we have seen above, the arbitrary remains attached to its beginning. In this sense, *home is a space of incompressible violence*. For Bourdieu, it nevertheless gives rise to an indisputable fascination. For we are certainly dealing with a *home*, in the strong sense of the word, as something that effectively absorbs the

*strangeness of the pre-body*, resisting the *alienating processes of disappropriation* caused by a social world that *excludes* subjects from participating in the construction of a proper structural order. In this world, which is based on the *capitalist* mode of production, the discrepancy between the two aforementioned levels is unbearable for the oppressed class. Given its pervasive power, capitalism makes salvation less and less achievable.

This, I think, is where the greatest difficulty concerning Bourdieu's structuralism of practice lies (and concerning the very idea that there is such a thing as a structuralism of practice). The above reflections confirm the view that it makes sense to distinguish between *two forms of society*: on the one hand, *societies of the proper*, of producers, of practical subjects adjusted to the world which belongs to them; and, on the other hand, *societies in which the proper is not achieved in practice itself* by the same producers. To be clear, a distinction is to be drawn between archaic and modern – and, hence, between pre-capitalist and capitalist – societies; and we have to nourish our fascination about the former in order to maintain a critical stance on the latter. Bourdieu's structuralism of practice, then, requires *two types of society*: those in which belonging – the not-being-strange – is experienced; and those in which belonging is no longer experienced – and in which it is no longer worthy of being practically experienced – by the producers. Of course, producers are subjects *involved in life*, that is, they are not freed from life and its necessities as in the case of the people of the *scholé* – these *strangers of practice* who, from now on, tend to be the only ones not to be strange anymore to a world in which practice essentially means alienation.

#### **IV. Concluding Remarks**

This strong constraint, which leads Bourdieu to reconsider a grand historical division, has two major consequences that allow us to make sense of the sociological project in relation to other disciplines, such as history and ethnology:

(a) History, as a history of production, can be regarded as a history of practical expropriation, of its denial and its inferiorisation, and hence of a situation which essentially involves the suspension of one's capacity to exercise one's own adjustments necessary for being integrated into a social world considered to be one's home. The particular character of archaic societies, as studied by Bourdieu, hinges on the discrepancy between *two structural levels*: the level of *dispositions* and the level of *situations*. To put this more clearly: it is because history does not alter its self-initiated adjustments that it continues to have a cyclic regularity in archaic societies. From this, however, we must not conclude that nature fixes and determines temporality. As emphasised by

Marx, history is the product of socially appropriated and configured processes, and thus of an external world in which people establish *social relations*. This reflection is expressed in the famous aphorism that appears in the *Grundrisse*: ‘the earth is the great laboratory, the arsenal which provides both the means and the materials of labour, and also the location, the basis of the community’ (Marx, 1969 [1857–1858]: 437). What we need to add to this insight is the fact that laboratory and arsenal are what they are due to their *inscription in bodies* capable of acting and moving in the world. Social relations are produced and reproduced by *bodies* which are adjusted to the particular place they occupy in the social space – namely, to the position which is theirs and which they aim to maintain.

We are confronted with an *opposition between societies*: on the one hand, *societies which have a history* – that is, societies in which the history of embodiment and the history of production go hand in hand; and, on the other hand, *societies in which history distends all habitation of the world through productive bodies*, because the body is transformed according to a non-reproductive temporality, which is inappropriate for the memorisation of the habituated body. History, located within this horizon of *separation*, becomes *alienation* for the people of practice, whose life conditions are determined by the necessity of production, and specifically by the reproduction of themselves, tied to the act of production. History can conceal its class-divided nature and, therefore, the relations of domination that result from the expropriation of the producers, understood as the expropriation of practice, which is the territory on which the socialisation of the body takes place.

(b) What is also at stake here is *the relation between sociology and ethnology*. Sociology, stretched as far as in Bourdieu’s case, cannot conceal its dependence on the analysis of archaic societies. What kind of ethnology are we talking about? Without any doubt, it is not the kind of ethnology criticised above. If the aim consists in shedding light on the logic of practice, one cannot avoid making reference to the concept of pre-capitalist society. This concept is necessary because *living in practical terms* continues to have meaning in this crucial sense of *the belonging of the body to a world in which it is sustained and maintained*. In other words, it is necessary that there be non-strangers, and the theoretically decisive idea can be conceptually grasped and empirically proven by ethnology, rather than sociology. Of course, it contributes to its existence because sociology is successful insofar as it offers good terms for good questions – this it can do only by rejecting the ideology of ethnology in its dominant version (that is, according to Bourdieu, in its Lévi-Straussian version). Thus, another conception of the indigenous – a conception which differs from the cartographer’s perspective – becomes acceptable: it is not about the projection of the strangeness of the observer, but about *taking the subject of practice for what*

*it is*, that is, about considering it as a thinking and acting state of practice, produced inside societies in which *hysteresis* is packed, where the question of the delay finds answers in the world and in the temporality of the world.

To be sure, this world, approached by the new ethnologist and haunted by the problem of the structures of practice, is not the *good* world. That is, it is not a world that is intrinsically good. Rather, it is a world in which *the cultural arbitrary* plays a pivotal role. To the extent that this framework works, it is all the better for the subjects not to see it. *It is a world in which, in practice, nobody can be a stranger to the world* – and this is precisely where, according to Bourdieu, its *value* lies. This means that, as is made explicit in certain pages of *Outline of a Theory of Practice*,<sup>5</sup> it is better to live in a world in which practice is concerned with its own disappropriation – with the deconstruction of the body and its capacities to belong to something and to belong to itself. At least this applies to those who do not hide away in the sphere of non-production – that is, in an existence based on the suspension of need to adjust to the world within and through the act of production.

Does this archaic world exist? I really do not know the answer to this question, and I think neither did Bourdieu. What this shows, however, is that one has to understand it from the beginning of its disintegration, expressed in the opposition to the *abstract and disempowering structures of capitalism*. De facto, what applies to this world also applies to the pre-body. One can point in its direction, but one cannot touch it or comprehend it in its proper positivity. We know it in its postcolonial state, just as we know peasant societies in the context of the rise of rural exodus and the urbanisation of the countryside.

It is worth emphasising the heuristic significance of colonisation for Bourdieu's structuralism of practice. It is on the basis of an exogenously triggered maladjustment, an external aggression, and an imposed disembodiment that practical adjustment manifests itself in its resistance to arbitrary power, embodied in the strange perspective of both the ethnologist and the coloniser. Following Bourdieu, it would be fair to say that there is a somewhat *natural complicity between the theoretical disposition of a strange interpretation and the practical disposition of real exploitation* – both having as a vehicle the *disentanglement* of the practical relation to the world, with its adjustment-caused effects, and hence the removal of the home. Practice, with the complicity of the ethnological interpreter, loses its status of habitation-habitation, for becoming the sign of new strangers, in relation to both themselves and their world.

In relation to the ethnology of the Kabyle people, Bourdieu does not cease to denounce this complicity, notably by stigmatising the studies carried out at the beginning of the nineteenth century by civil administrators and the military (see Hanoteau and Letourneux (1872–1873), upon which Durkheim drew in his theory of segmentation). It is remarkable that, in this field, the studies

undertaken by contemporary ethnologists, whilst providing painstakingly detailed accounts of the most destructive aspects of the colonial period, have gone back to the initial works, across ethnological studies of the sixties – obsessed with anti-colonialist critique to such an extent that they turned their backs on certain essential dimensions of facts (see Mahé, 2001).

More importantly, however, and this is why Bourdieu's principal epistemological enemy is the ethnological attitude in the Lévi-Straussian sense, one has to remember the inverted story which one finds in the opening pages of *Tristes tropiques* (Lévi-Strauss, 1955: 42–44), ten years before the publication of *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. It seems that, in this oeuvre, Lévi-Strauss starts from an analogous assumption: the tropics are sad, because the object of the ethnologist is involved in a process of death, which turns out to be irresistible. Furthermore, this process has begun by the same power that underlies the ethnological perspective: by the civilisation that has actually colonised other civilisations. Nonetheless, in this book, Lévi-Strauss draws a completely different conclusion from his observation when implying that a way out of this dilemma is to be found in theory – that is, in theoretical forms of interpretation detached from practice.

It is *not* the case that the death of the subject can be prevented, but it *is* the case that *social science* – elevated to a reflection upon structures that depend on the human spirit, rather than on the body – has the resources to take an *alternative perspective on temporality*, and thereby develop a *politics and an ethics*. Undoubtedly, this perspective is opposed to Bourdieu's view, because it presupposes and exploits the resources of the strangeness in practice, not only in relation to the indigenous, but also – and this is a point that Bourdieu does not take into account – in relation to the ethnologist's own world. Social science, as it is conceived here, is not primarily concerned with studying the condition of belonging, the identification of and with the group, or the integration into a realm that it shapes from the inside in the sense of a home. Such a conception of social science prevents it from getting caught up in an illusion and allows it to move uphill by mobilising the power of its critique.

## Notes

- 1 Original Title: 'De Marx à Bourdieu: Les limites du structuralisme de la pratique'. A draft version of this piece was presented in the seminar series of the Groupe de Sociologie Politique et Morale (GSPM) at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris, France, on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007. The original (French) version of this paper will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Raisons pratiques*.
- 2 I would like to thank Bryan S. Turner for his detailed comments on this translation. I am also grateful to the author, Bruno Karsenti, for making some useful suggestions.

- 3 An example of the denunciation of sociology as a ‘conservative science’ can be found in Rancière (1995).
- 4 See, for instance, Lefebvre (1958).
- 5 See Bourdieu (1972: 357–360). This point is particularly relevant to the rural ethos of an ‘enchanted’ relation to the nature of soil – an idiosyncratic relation that cannot be grasped by the capitalist form of productive labour.

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