

# Metanoia and Bourdieu

(Draft: for Consultation)

Michael Grenfell

Many concepts and notions have been used in the course of this book – *habitus*, *field*, *capital*, etc. However, we have seen that Bourdieu's two overarching concerns are the cause and effect of *symbolic power* and the nature of the *State* (in that cause and effect). The preceding chapters have tracked the exploration and expansion of these themes from Bourdieu's biographical background and education. We saw the dominant philosophical trends of the day and the social cultural events from which they arose. Early experiences in Algeria and the Béarn had a formative influence on Bourdieu, which led to a kind of epiphanic moment of seeing, implicating both epistemology and ontology for him at both a professional and personal level. These initial studies then fed into his primary research areas - education, museums, photography - which helped the emergence of a more formal theory of practice. A wide range of social institutions were then taken in the 1970s and 80 before and after his election to the *Collège de France* and the publication of the 'great' anthropologies of France in the latter decade. 'Field theory' furnished him with perspectives to undertake further studies in art, philosophy, politics, economics, etc. All this work was again underpinned by a consideration of the State – just what it was under the Fifth Republic and how it operated. Such questions were central to explaining evident 'social suffering' in all its manifest forms in contemporary French society, and the exacerbating effects of Neoliberal politics.

In the last decade of his life, Bourdieu undertook his own 'acts of resistance' to the 'myths' of our time and engaged in a programme of activism. In order to understand the scope and depth of possible resistance, this current chapter returns to philosophical issues with respect to *symbolic power* and the role of the State within it. It therefore takes 'resistance' more in terms of 'knowing' and 'being' than 'doing', with the view that by developing the former, the latter becomes more effective. More precisely, in terms of what Bourdieu called *metanoia*: what is it to see like this? To do it? To be it? And, what are its consequences? That being said, there is a return to issues of political activism towards the end of the chapter.

## *Metanoia*

*Metanoia* is an apposite word. It is a transliteration of the Greek meaning 'change of heart or mind', or 'repudiation of pasting think and practice'. Bourdieu employs the word in a text where he speaks of the 'dangers of thinking the social

world' because of the way the 'preconstructed' is everywhere – in things and minds (1992: 211); and what sociology – or at least *his* sociology - can offer by way of opposition to these orthodox ways of thinking and acting, including the academic. He is calling for a 'new gaze' or 'eye', a 'mental revolution' and 'rupture' with what is self-evidently given in first sight; this recalling the 'epistemological breaks' referred to in chapter 2. But, there is a theological aspect to *metanoia* as well, which should not go unnoticed. These revolutions and ruptures need also to be considered as a 'conversion', in as much as they imply a change of one's entire vision of life and the social world. In this sense, the *metanoia* he writes of can also be a costly – even dangerous - undertaking. The spiritual allusion is intended: and we think of Bourdieu's view of himself as something of an *oblâte* and art galleries as akin to churches. Furthermore, there is a religious sense in the way that what sits behind the meaning of words is not just 'meaning' *per se* – their 'real meaning in an Austinian world of 'illocutionary' force – but 'belief' (1994d: 130). The questions then are: what is that belief?; where does it come from?; and what purpose does it have? Bourdieu's *metanoia* even suggests a period of penitence is needed, or suffering, on the part of one who undertakes this journey. Neither does he mean just the 'lay people': and he attacks fellow sociologists who think they are 'smarter than everyone else', who enjoy the 'thrill of being smart, and demystifying and demystified'. In fact, he stresses the imperative to break not just with 'common sense' but 'common scholarly sense' as well as building studies, which must include both 'primary naiveté and the objective truth that this naiveté conceals'. In this way, there is also hence a need to break from apparent 'instruments of rupture' themselves, which risk negating the very experience against which they were constructed in the first place; otherwise, such so-called 'objective science' risks being only another form of naiveté.

### *The Scholarly View*

But, naiveté does not mean simple. At one point, Bourdieu singles out Marxist theory with its 'intellectualist illusions' that constructs social class as *real* class (1991d: 229). It does this by 'substantialising' class as an objective construct – which itself goes hand in hand with intellectualism - and thus overlooks the symbolic struggles that take place in different *fields* where there is conflict over representations of the social world, and how those representations are imposed. Ironically, Bourdieu notes, Marxist theory – one of the great attainments of modern thought – hence has become a 'powerful obstacle to the progress of the adequate theory of the social world' (ibid.: 251). The error, he argues, is in not returning to the understanding what has been excluded in the formulation of that understanding. A good example, is the Marxist theory of 'work'. Enormous scientific effort was needed to break from work as a pre-given – as vocation in this case – and to understand it as part of a capitalist productive system of 'surplus value'. Yet, for Bourdieu, such an insight leaves out the very thing against which it fought in a primary instance: in this case, 'classification' – thinking – itself. In other words, *misrecognition* and how it comes about, raising again the issue of language, and the source of thinking (belief) which underpins it (2015: 102). How is it overlooked? Bourdieu states that it is perhaps because

the same man cannot 'do two things' – integrate into his theory of the social world with what he had to do to conquer that theory' (ibid.).

It is within this spirit that I want to respectfully work through again the relationship between the individual, the world and what they can say about it as 'the limits of thinking'; which again imply the issue of the nature of the relationship *between* the subject and the object – epistemology and ontology.

At one point, Bourdieu writes that it is the task of sociology to describe things that are 'invisible' (2015: 214) in the same way as Newtonian or Einsteinian physics: gravity, for example: Social forces, which are only knowable by the effects they create. What is the nature of these forces? In a word, they are the *moral* aspects of being and doing? How does that come about?

### *The Primary Cognitive Act, Society and the State*

If we return to the picture of a baby newly born as a kind of *tabula rasa* whatever happens after the point of birth is a relationship – and structural because of that. There is something of the psychological in this primary experience, and Bourdieu acknowledges the cognitive aspects in it. Cognitive theory, of course, implicates forms of knowledge: 'conscious' and 'unconscious', 'cognitive' and 'metacognitive', and 'declarative and procedural'. In the latter, we learn 'things' and 'how to do things'. These processes themselves connect with what the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896 – 1934) would call developing 'control' over 'self', 'others' and 'objects' as a form of 'psychic equilibrium' between self-ness and other-ness. For Bourdieu, there is a foundational aspect in the individual moving from 'narcissistic organization' to 'another' in search of 'recognition' and 'approval' (2000a: 166). Such clearly requires control on several levels: physical, emotional and mental; taking on board such impulses as shame, timidity, guilt, etc. as well as conceptual thinking – sex, age, space, time, competence. Ultimately, such classifications are sanctioned by the State – even in the unorthodox; in fact, ultimately, Bourdieu argues that in order to understand the State, it is necessary also to study cognitive structures and the links between the two (2014b: 164). As structures form, they are the basis of an *illusio*, which is incarnate in mind *and* body as automatic dispositions of thought and practice (2000a: 167); the irony being that as the human child seeks to develop a control over the self and the world, it employs mental, physical and emotional instruments, which end up controlling them. Which is why Bourdieu uses terms employed from Durkheim to describe the normative (*nomos*) aspect of this relationship - 'logical conformism', 'moral conformism'. Such is hence a repudiation of the phenomenological view of the individual as 'universal subject' (1994d: 130) as a foundational grounding since it is everywhere social. It is not just the social construction of social individuals that is at stake, either, but the conditions of the construction of the conditions of construction of the principles of social reality (1998d: 53), and the place the State holds in such a process.

In this way, what he calls *Phylogenesis* (Collective History) and *Ontogenesis* (Individual History) are brought together (1998d: 55). The fact that individual cognition is ultimately both a mental and an *embodied* state (*hexis*) also has implications for Marxist theory when it deals with issues of 'ideology' and 'consciousness'. For Bourdieu, notions of 'false consciousness' reside as much in bodies as in mind; consequently, the need to change both in order to break away from orthodox thinking and acting. It is not possible to change individuals' thinking as a form of 'awakening of consciousness', bodily dispositions also have to accompany such 'revolutions in thinking' to be effective (2000a: 177). Hence, personal representations/ classifications need ultimately to be understood as residing in profound 'orders of belief' set in deep levels of bodily dispositions – that is, *habitus* (1994a: 190) – even if their provenance is State bound. Again, it is worth emphasizing that the same systems of knowing and doing exist as much in the empirical as scientific individual. So, how might it be possible to change it? To answer that question, we need to return to the foundations of modern philosophy.

#### *Kant, Aesthetics and Knowing*

For the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-76), an immediate precursor to Kant, we cannot apprehend the external world directly through our sense perceptions, but only our beliefs about that world. These 'perceptions of the mind' – impressions and ideas – were only the products of our own minds, not the things themselves.

In the eighteenth century, a spirit of mentalism was evidently in the air. For Kant too, the 'inquiring mind' was the means to progress beyond man's hitherto immaturity of thought and action, albeit bounded by experience. Like many philosophers, before and since, Kant wanted to provide a foundation for 'objective knowledge'; in other words, that which we can know to be universally true irrespective of individual subjective interpretation; a kind of *sensus communis*. But, there was a paradox in how he formulated his views. In the middle ages and earlier, man was indeed the centre of the universe and everything was understood to revolve around him and the Earth. The Copernican revolution had, however, displaced man's pivotal position and established that it in fact was man who revolved around the sun. What Kant did, as Hume before him, is to argue that we can only know what human minds can know. This view, however limiting, must therefore be considered 'objective knowledge'. Although our knowledge of the world is profoundly and humanly subjective as based on our immediate experiences, it is collective in the sense that we all share the same faculties of the mind.

The ideas of our mind were hence the only basis of knowledge. Even scientific discoveries and certainties were essentially ideas. Such idealism formed a link

with Plato's 'ideal forms', which exist in a realm beyond materiality. For Kant, this ideal world was based on a distinction between unknowable things (the *noumena*), as 'things-in-themselves', and the knowable world of things (the *phenomena*), as 'things-as-they-appear' to our senses. He then provided a complete philosophical (ideal) taxonomy of how man apprehends them. In Kantian *metaphysics* – literally, 'beyond the physical' – there are faculties of the mind (the soul) which do not so much represent objects of perceptions but animate them through the innate conditions of the human psyche. Such 'faculties' are *knowledge, desire, feeling*; and man's cognitive faculties - *imagination, understanding* and *reason*. In this case, cognition becomes an active process beyond the dichotomies of subject and object. The process involves *imagination* – simply representing an object that is not itself present; and *understanding* – classifying and ordering data presented to it by the imagination. *Reason* is then the information from imagination is organised and made sense of. This process occurs through the three *a priori* Ideas of the Soul, the Cosmos and God. The Ideas are 'unconditioned'; that is, they are unrepresentable both in and to themselves. However, they are actualised in the realisation of imagination and understanding. The Ideas of reason consequently exist in and through understanding and imagination.

It is possible to see how this philosophical approach acted as a foundation for twentieth century phenomenology, which was a strong influence on Bourdieu (see chapter 2). Phenomenology defined itself as the return to 'things in themselves' and as a product of the cognitive process of the human mind. In effect, what Kant did was define what could be categorised as 'objective' in relation to the *a priori* faculties and Ideas of the mind. It is in this way that Kant can be seen to be the founding father of all subsequent humanist metaphysics. And, it is an approach to which Bourdieu took exception, but in a way that integrated many aspects of it.

The first part of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/ 1961) has the title 'The Transcendental Aesthetic'. For Kant, aesthetics is not the preserve of art but actually relates to the Greek work meaning 'sensation' (the opposite being 'anaesthetic' – without sensation); that is sense information gained through the faculties. By 'transcendental', he means 'a priori', or needed for that experience is to be sensed and registered. It is 'sensation' which provides the data for the faculty of imagination. For Kant, it is the *form*, which this data takes that is most important. What is less important is what the data actually is at this state, or what it represents. What is necessary to experience objects as such is hence *a priori* knowledge: space and time, for example, shapes *form*. In keeping with the above understanding of phenomena as bound by the limits of human thinking, the 'a priori' element in this argument points to what lies *beyond* sensation in making sense of it; and thus gives rise to how experience is experienced rather than being an element of existence *per se*. For example, space and time are *a priori* conditions of existence in order to be acknowledged *as* existing.

Kant further contrasted our faculties of imagination and understanding. Understanding includes the power to form concepts: and, it is through these concepts that understanding 'knows'. Kant gives ten concepts: Substance, Quantity, Quality, Relation, Place, Time, Position, Possession, Action, Passivity. Here, Kant investigates the process and constituents of how judgments of knowledge are therefore made as knowable elements of cognition. However, in *The Critique of Judgement* (1790/ 1987), he examines the power of judgement itself.

Kant's philosophy is an attempt to move away from earlier relativist views of knowledge about the external world, as dependent on sense perceptions and/or beliefs. His aim was to found an 'objective knowledge' out of metaphysics that could give scientific status to what otherwise might be considered individual subjective interpretation (Bourdieu's empirical knowledge). As noted, for Kant, the 'knowable' could only be grasped through the *faculties of the mind*, which made it essentially empiricist (practical by any other word for Bourdieu). These faculties also included desire and feeling, but it is the cognitive which is particularly important since it includes *imagination, understanding* and *reason*. So, *Imagination* represents a sense object to the mind and *Understanding* classifies and orders the data. *Reason* is then the attempt to understand it in terms of classifications of thought; hence, reason exists in and through understanding itself. Although data are 'sensed' by the *imagination*, therefore, a *priori knowledge* is needed to understand them as logically Reason-able.

In the case of artistic aesthetics, the distinction between *sensation* and the *beautiful* is particularly useful, as the faculty of feeling replaces structure derived from the above concepts. The beautiful – a sub-set of sense data – is again presented to understanding (in time and space) by imagination, but is not converted via conceptual categorisations because non-cognitive feeling accompanies intuition: in other words, non-cognitive feelings replace concepts. Since there is no conceptual categorisation to provide form, what is presented to the mind is *the power to form concepts itself*. A consciousness without anything to be conscious of - it is 'disinterested' – that is contemplative rather than cognitive (conceptual/ theoretical). In Kant's philosophy of art, this is the *transcendental aesthetics* I wrote of in chapter 5 – *the disinterested pure gaze* – that lies beyond sensation. Of course, for Bourdieu, there can be no *universal* pure aesthetics as such, but only what is socially constitutive: most prevalently in the modern world, the reflection of a certain – bourgeois – relationship to it (see 1984a): superior, detached, masterful. Ultimately empty! A kind of 'absence' that reflects its own position in the social world (neither one thing or another) – a kind of *nothingness* – as in the case of Flaubert.

There is a similar temptation to transcendence in so-called scientific, 'objective' knowledge'. Here, the ambition for 'objective knowledge' in science might be seen as another form 'disinterestedness' detachment: what Bourdieu would call the aspiration of '*knowledge without a knowing subject*' – a Popperian World 3 (1984: 228). In this case, it is less that data are presented by imagination to understanding without concepts, but that pre-existing – *a priori* – theoretical concepts (paradigms, etc.) provide the power to form. But, here, such theories or scientific world views, come with a particular social (professional) provenance, and thus relation to the world, with its accompanying *interest*; in Popper's case, positivist. In effect, it is the scholarly effect of the aesthetic side of the bourgeois power to transcend – but, this time through objective ('scientific') knowledge – by asserting not so much *the truth* but a certain kind *truth* which necessarily carries with it its own undisclosed *illusio* and thus legitimacy and consecration, 'imposed' and 'censured' in the name of objective (note, not practical) reason. The aspiration towards *knowledge without a knowing subject* then is in effect nothing other than the same transcendental sense of the bourgeois (intellectual) intellingentia, and its relative structural position within the *field* of power, as sanctioned by the State. The outcome is an un-reflexive *interest* in asserting this knowing, and misrecognising its inherent relative relationship to the world.

#### *Words and/ in 'Science'*

The problem with the Kantian philosophy is that it completely leaves out the social, and it is here that Bourdieu seeks to reinsert it: all the terms of the Kantian framework need all to be seen as social in provenance. In particular, his ten concepts need to be subordinated to Bourdieu's foundational instruments of analysis articulated in his theory of practice': *habitus, field, capital*, etc.

This discussion leads us back to a consideration of how words work in and about research. At different points in the book, I have referred to their *polysemic* character, and the way their meaning is 'transformed and transubstantiated' within *fields*, and its incarnate *illusio*. What can be 'said' – named – in research is at issue here: theory after is necessarily an extraction (its original meaning was, after all, *making public/ disclosing*) and words that articulate it are by their very nature substantialist – unless we 'read' them in a different way, that is.

At one point, Bourdieu draws attention to this way that language shapes experience in terms of the phenomenology of the affective life:

There is a wisdom that is recorded over millennia, of symptoms which are translated into language (stomach knots, makes me feel sick) .....or is it that language has produced the symptoms?'. It was interesting because (in my work in Algeria) there was no language of emotions to do a comparative sociology of affective lives, which would employ language as a means of structuring perceptions and also bodily experiences.

(Bourdieu: 2008b: 352)

Here, language actually structures perception. It is hence understandable that he expresses 'unease' – and note the emotional *and* physical connotations of this word – on his part in writing about something which he first 'mastered' in practice – in the body (1977a: 223). Words always risk giving a false understanding without understanding the conditions of the production of that understanding, and thus its limits. This play-off between language (conceptual terms) and experience (practice) – in research itself – goes to the heart of our epistemological concerns since it is tantamount to saying our thoughts not only shape what we see but in fact almost produce (and indeed limit) what *we can see and think*. In this way, Bourdieu's epistemological breaks with empirical, phenomenological and objectivist paradigms as related in chapter - is accompanied by an insistence to 'break with theory' itself. Only such a final break allows for the appropriate *constructing of generative principles* of research practice *in their moment* of its accomplishment; a *science of practices* predicated on *creating the conditions of possibility* of its realisation. Here, Bourdieu argues for a *theory of theory* as an essential element of the *practical rationality*, or *reflexive objectivity*, to which he aspires (see Bourdieu, 1998d ch. 6, 2000a, 2000c, 2004).

To contrast this view on the issue of the relation between language and knowledge, Habermas sees it as one of convergence towards communication:

...individuals, when they act communicatively, go through the natural (empirical) language, make use of interpretations that are culturally transmitted and make reference to something in the objective world, in the social world, which they share and make, and each one makes reference to something in its own subjective world simultaneously.

(Habermas, 1987a: 499-500)

For Habermas, inherent trans-historical rationality is hence embedded in the very stuff of language: it is essentially human, communicative and modernist. However, for Bourdieu, such a communicative convergence can never arise from ordinary, empirical language; and there is a danger in Habermas of a

transcendentalist illusion in embedding scientific rationalism in the structures of language and consciousness themselves; since conflating them dehistoricises the production of language and the *interests* it carries. Bourdieu argues alternatively that his own concepts – *habitus, field, capital*, etc. – are generated out of empirical *practical exegesis* (not theory) – as ‘logically necessitated’ by the practical (phenomenal) data themselves.

These concepts – as instruments of analysis – make themselves co-terminus with each other; to re-emphasise, as predicated on the *nature* of the relationship *between* the subject and the object. In other words, as practically instantiated rather than theoretically derived; what Bourdieu called ‘tearing’ the truth out of what is presented as common knowledge in the mundane and the particular. This gives the concepts an existential authenticity as offering a ‘double historicity’ of mental structures instantiated in social practice – again, as Phylogenesis (now as previous *field* structures) and Ontogenesis (schemes of perception); all homologous as structuring *and* structured structures. This is why these concepts need to be experienced as living, relational – not substantive – entities. To see the world *through* – rather than *with* – them is the core of Bourdieu’s *metanoia* since the *nature* I wrote of in the previous sentence is both the silent, invisible *ethos* that constructs reality and the our interpretation of that reality, and a foundational constituent of the capitalized world view that we grow up with; as immanent, including pretension/ project, temporality itself, object values and others, actions as categorical imperatives, and self-worth.

The implications of this understanding are of critical importance – both for the empirical individual and the social scientist, since they both highlight the significance of knowing the conditions which define the ‘limits of thought’. As we have seen, ‘misrecognition’ is everywhere; especially in the misrecognition of misrecognition. At one point, Bourdieu reflects on Pascal’s ‘reason of effects’: that man is foolish for the estimation he gives to things, which are not essential (2000a: 179). Therefore, we can his opinions as ‘foolish’. But, that itself is a scholastic indulgence since, as Durkheim points out, such opinions are ‘useful’ – so, a ‘well-founded delirium’. Hence, we have destroyed the opinion, which destroyed the opinion on the opinions. But, what was destroyed in the original analysis has then to be (re-)included: ‘that the people are foolish, though their opinions are sound, because they do not perceive the truth where it is, and, as they place it where it is not, their opinions are always very false and very unsound’ (Pascal quoted by Bourdieu, *ibid.*).

The social construction of temporality is another case where it is ‘misrecognised’ as such (2000a: 206); for example, in the various forms of time within cultural *fields* (see 1996b: 154-161).

It follows that because social scientists are as prone to *misrecognition* as anyone else, there is the constant need for the type of reflexivity, which runs through the chapters in this book; against a form of 'scholastic fallacy' towards presumed 'objectivism; - which also contains its own *illusio*. Hence, contra the *form* of 'participant observation', so popular in ethnographic texts, which Bourdieu calls a 'contradiction in terms', and which amounts to little more than an acknowledgement of a position which is already underpinned by *misrecognition*, and thus *symbolic violence*, Bourdieu calls for 'participant *objectivation*' (2000c) – or, 'the objectification of the objectifying subject' (1992: 175). At one point, he lists common forms of bias: firstly, the presuppositions linked with a particular position in the *social space* – (including cognitive structures - *habitus*); secondly, the orthodoxy of the *field* (academic discipline and the language/ paradigmatic relations associated with it); thirdly, a whole scholarly view of the world - *skholè* which lacks empirical imperatives (2000a: 10). Evidently, there are things the would-be researcher can do to objectify these features in their work: for example, the relationship of the researcher to the *field of power* (connection/ connecting); their relationship to the *doxa* in the *field* held in institutions (connection to the *doxa* of the discipline – aims, position in the *field*; and their *habitus* and that of other people in the site context (personal relationships/ networks, positions and proximity). As Bourdieu notes, 'to objectify objectification means, above all, objectifying the field of production of the objectified representations of the social world...in particular the legislative taxonomies...the field of ideological production' (1991d: 243). The sociologist's 'privilege... is not to remain suspended above those who he classifies, but that of knowing he is also classified and knows roughly where he stands in the classifications' (1993o: 44). This means 'dispossesses the knowing subject of the privilege it normally grants itself', and 'turning the instruments of knowledge that they produce against themselves'. But, such must go beyond simple self awareness, which is after all only memory.

Clearly, such a procedure is more than simply incorporating terms such as *habitus*, *field*, *capital* within one's vocabulary as agency and context, or as simple analytic metaphors, since these terms imply a deeper epistemology that implicates the researcher's own ontology. Any intellectual only grasp of these terms only risks substantializing them and not incorporating the 'practice' – scholastic *ethos* - that was necessary to produce them in the first place. Following the logic of Bourdieu on ideology – that it is never sufficient to simply change ideas since dispositions are part of an embodied *hexis* – such concepts need to be grasped within the body as much as within the mind. Only this deeper incorporation allows for a reconstitution of the originating *ethos* – the silent, moral power of conformism which shaped our relationship to the world. To this extent, a scholastic recreation of the same within a particular academic *field* discipline is no better – Bourdieu is calling for a 'going beyond' the logical suppositions of scholastic thinking to the *metanoia* to which this chapter is dedicated. 'Radical doubt' must also be part of the process (2000a: 30ff) as a way of both radically objectifying the science *field* of which we are a part and seeing what we have to say about an object of research as the being 'the best we can do'

at a particular time; as something which is available for further objectification – a kind of Rortyeen ‘final vocabulary’ (see Rorty, 1980). Science framed by ‘radical doubt’ needs to be understood as neither timid nor contingent but ‘work in progress’ in the way that Bourdieu was constantly reshaping his analyses. It is this way that an original – empirical – *habitus* (cognitive structures, *illusio*, relations, view) can be changed to a *praxeological* one, which thus sees and relates to the world differently (NB: *The term praxeological first came to light in the late Nineteenth century and was increasingly adopted from the 1940s by phenomenologists within a Kantian tradition. I use it here specifically to reference Bourdieu theory of practice.*). In this sense, these concepts become not only epistemological matrices but act as a kind of new mordant between the subject and the object, so the nature of their relationship changes. This means that his conceptual terms have a special status in instantiating his *metanoia*.

One conclusion from this point of view is that because this theory is a theory of practice, theory itself is a practice. It follows that ‘understanding’ is similarly a practice: an understanding that is grasped in *the act* of understanding. Anything else is a subject that makes of itself an object; that is simply reproduces its own relationship to the object by other means and words; whilst within a Bourdieusian paradigm that relationship is constituted within a praxeological science, which traces the formative aspect of the social world all the way back to its original *ethos* that produced it and radically shapes it. The temptation to conclude that such a position appears very personal, if not idiosyncratic, is mitigated by Bourdieu’s insistence that the whole is founded within a ‘scientific collectivity’. Indeed, Bourdieu insists that ‘the subject is a collective subject...and has more chances of being autonomous the more it is collective’ (2019: 34).

#### *Another ‘View’*

The whole relationship between the researcher and the object of research is therefore one of reflexivity set within Bourdieu’s theory of practice with this epistemological alchemy between the subject and object. Knowledge about anything enters into a kind of reflexive of ‘objectification’ and ‘objectivation’, each cycle adding to our understanding of the object in question; in the way, he did in Algeria, the Béarn and other topics of research. The more the researcher you does it, the more they see. At every moment, the knowledge that the scientific subject can acquire of their object of research and *the way* of knowing reality, which is a part of this object enters into his knowledge of the object and therefore improves his way of knowing that object. In this way, a knowing subject will embody a particular scholar as a kind if incarnation (note again the religious allusion) of the scientific *field*; again, implying both in mind and body. Such an individual ‘transcends’ the empirical ego. The one who then speaks is not a particular *habitus*, with their position in the social space and a certain trajectory, but rather the scientific *field* itself with what it has struggled to attain in its history: and bringing history into science is not, for Bourdieu, of relativizing the latter but the means of creating conditions for critical knowledge

whereupon the limits of thinking are set (1993o: 45). Knowing this can moderate what Bourdieu calls 'mistakes connected the perversions of egocentrism' whilst also advancing the understanding of the knowing subject (ibid.: 296). Knowing practical knowledge allows one to better understand the knowing subject as someone 'torn out' of what they are (empirically): a social agent who ordinarily lives through their own practical knowledge and who finds themselves, according to the logic of the division of labour, set in a *social space* which tends to function as a transcendent collective subject to the *habitus* and individual interests – in other words the State.

This position described is not so much that the collectivity all sees the same thing but all sees with the same means. That means is predicated on a reflexive stance both with regard to the object of perception and the nature of that regard. To emphasise: the principal way forward for Bourdieu is: Reflexivity and objectification. But, that process is at one and the same time difficult, dangerous and transgressive. Bourdieu writes of his own sense of 'betrayal' to write about his home village culture as an outsider; to take ten years to see the world through the eyes of an Algerian peasant; to objectify the very systems – education – which 'liberated' him from his humble beginnings.

The original formative *habitus* can also be seen as *conatus*; a Spinozian concept which he defines as, 'that combination of dispositions and interests associated with a particular class of social position which inclines agents to strive to reproduce at a constant or an increasing rate the properties constituting their social identity without ever needing to do this deliberately or consciously' (1988a: 176). In Kantian terms it would be a shared combination of categories formed by a particular moral *ethos*; a kind of spatialised medium of practice leading to particular patterns of activity within social space as objectifiable subjects play off against each other within set boundaries. It is a propensity to act as a shared *habitus* in ways which are recognizable as such and so relate to the primary cognitive acts of formation describe above: convergence towards acceptance and reassurance create conditions which are shared (*elective affinities*) in instantiating practice and the place of thinking within it. At one point, he quotes the example of a father-son relationship (1999a: 508) to illustrate: the latter is caught in a position where he either satisfies his father's expectations of inheritance and lineage or does what he sense is right for him – what we saw as a 'double bind'. If he leaves, he 'kills' his father; if he stays and outdoes him, he also 'kills' his father. In either case, an entire 'being in the world' is implied. *Conatus* thus can take different forms: resistance in the Béarnais farmers as they fight against divisive factors from outside; the confusion of the Algerian peasants over how to act when confronted by the colonial way of seeing the world; or indeed, the fatalism bred into a who generation of students and workers in the face of neoliberal state which devalues what they have to offer. The scientific vision that Bourdieu is encouraging thus entails changing this socially based *conatus* for a scientific one. Yet, what Bourdieu is bringing to light

here is that the 'conversion' he writes of entails more a rupture from traditional paradigms of intellectual thinking (which, as we have seen, is already a lot): an entire psychology including emotions is also involved. Bourdieu is looking for a shared scientific *conatus* based around his epistemology; that is, from students into praxeological agents by what he calls 'transforming a confused sense of arbitrary necessity into a sense of necessity' (2015: 252).

For Bourdieu, aesthetic perception, in the scientific sense described above, is necessarily confused when it is apprehended without an epistemologically-based concept in mind; its organizational logic (*logos*) is invisible. The 'scientific gaze' therefore needs a special way of 'seeing' – what he calls (after Baumgarten) a *gnoseologia inferior*. Such a way is again close to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, which attempted (albeit in an asocial way) to break with the intellectualist tradition which saw human perception as a somewhat degraded form of scientific knowledge, rather than seeing the latter as constructed according to similar exegetic processes: what Bourdieu terms, 'a science of characteristic transhistoric principles as a type of practical knowledge different from theoretical knowledge' (ibid.: 285ff) *per se*. This, for him, is the sociological aesthetic and edict.

The fact that such a position is both an epistemology *and* an ontology means that the way this philosophy can enter into the world, and in the mind and bodies of individuals, can affect both the scientific and empirical *habitus*; and indeed, that the former can change the latter (2019) in some ways. At one point (1992a: 212), Bourdieu writes of the way his sociology can hence be 'an instrument of generosity and liberation'; an escape from the 'resentment' that the dominated can feel towards the dominant – the worst form of human misery – which can so easily be flipped into a fascination with the dominant or the fatalism of a kind of *devoir-être*. He sees this as a symbolic inversion of a sociologically mutilated being: one thinks of the witnesses to Neoliberalism in *La misère du monde*. Reflexivity is therefore able to show up one's motives - irony, sarcasm, anger, etc. – and hence again the opportunity to break with them. In this way, if all the strands running through the social world can be 'objectified' – its representations, categories, objects, classification – it is more than what Bourdieu calls a denouncing of 'egoistic narcissism', it is also an awareness of the determinations and the constructive nature of life itself; one therefore ends up 'rather than abandoned to the forces of the social world, something like a subject' (1990b: 21) within it.

It may be useful here to return to issues with respect to Heidegger and Sartre. Bourdieu was on occasion most critical of those he was perhaps closest to in many ways. Without undermining obvious critiques and differences, there is something of Heidegger and *dasein* in the sort of sociological 'transcendence'

that Bourdieu encourages – this *metanoia* – as they both envisage a kind atemporal view of the world – *homo sociologicus* armed with his praxeological epistemology. The sort of understanding that Bourdieu describes is after all a practical one: an understanding apprehended in the act of understanding. Similarly, the ‘liberation’ that Bourdieu writes of – both professionally and empirically – is connected with Sartrean ‘freedom’ in substantive intent if not philosophical procedure. If Bourdieu is denouncing Sartre’s ‘phenomenological consciousness’, he also distances himself from Merleau-Ponty’s ‘universal subject; and both similarly relate to the nature of the relationship between the subject and the object, and ultimately the moral force – *ethos* – that Bourdieu also works with as base medium to his theory of practice. And, in this, there is perhaps even something beyond the kind of ‘praxeological consciousness’ that seems to be a necessary part of his method as embodied in the concepts described above.

### *The Subject and the Object*

I have drawn attention to the nature of the relationship between the subject and object in Bourdieu’s work. It is important to emphasise that this issue is also central to Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*, is a crucial part of Bourdieu epistemology. For example:

This subject-object dialogue, this drawing together, by the subject, of the meaning diffused through the object, and, by the object, of the subject’s intentions – a process which is physiognomic perception – arranges round the subject a world which speaks to him of himself, and gives his own thoughts their place in the world.

(1963: 132)

In this way, for Merleau-Ponty, the world as ‘constituting sense’ is somehow immanent within the social world but equally and speaks to us *of ourselves*. This is a clearly a very subtle point: Merleau-Ponty does not intend that the world is sentient, as human. It is subject consciousness that ‘sees’ the world; but the world still ‘calls’ on the subject to know what it already knows, to be conscious of what it is already conscious of. And, here we can see the significance of understanding how embodied dispositions shape what can be ‘seen’; and therefore what ‘calls’ are ‘heard’. Subject-object in fact exist as a single ‘flesh’ for Merleau-Ponty: they are intimately connected, so that one only leaves off where another begins and vice versa. This is not to say that the visible blends into us, or we to it; rather, ‘the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 139). The flesh then ‘appears’ as an element – like water, air, fire and earth – rather than an actual thing: spiritual/ material, mind/ matter, idea of thing. If these are the essential elements of phenomenological ‘universal subject’, Bourdieu follows in a

similar manner; what is essential for his is the embodiment of the moral force of the world. Bourdieu's *hexis* is therefore not simply based in mental activity, or indeed internalized entities from the social world. It is the moral conditioning force itself, which provide the conditions which define the nature of the constituting structural relationship. Such a process being considered, of course, 'social' in terms of what is and is not valued and in whose *interests* according to the residing symbolic power. The kind of *amour propre* that is constituted in the primary cognitive act does after all needs to be seen as the instantiation of *symbolic capital* (2000f: 66).

Bourdieu is hence able to agree with Pascal that 'I understand the world and it understands me' (ibid.: 408); but that understanding and consequences are contingent on the degree to which the empirical and/ or scientific *habitus* is in play. Within an operative framework of 'participant objectivation' it is possible to see the world and me as expressions of *habitus, field, capital*. This all suggests that indeed the scientific *habitus* can somehow save the empirical one from empirical *illusio*. But, there is another step beyond this, which, pertains to the nature of consciousness itself.

#### *Time and the Conscious Act*

Behind the kind of relations that are formed within the primary act, the conditions of the production of a certain moral conformism to the way social reality is constructed, is based on a *capital* epistemology - and thus developing ontology - since it is essentially part of a socio-capitalistic society. Here, objects, self, others are objectified in terms of *capitalized* interests; their value in time and space for future profit. As such, even the very acts of resistance to it are also shaped by it - as kind of the same thing in reverse. I have argued that the use of *habitus/ field* theory suggests a different moral conformity - scientific *ethos*: one that is practical, praxeological and essentially liberating. In this way, the epistemological and ontological nature of his conceptual of Bourdieu's terms allows not only for a subject that does not make of itself an (empirical) object, but does not make of itself a overtly scientific one either by substantializing the object of research in terms of pre-constructed conceptual metaphors; but sees the practical reason - *ethos* - ultimately consciousness - behind these terms. In reality, I have argued that such understanding can only be understood *ex tempore* in practice - that is, in the act of understanding - ecstatic - outside of time. Here, the past and the future are literally *being* in the present, which is, really, the only place they can 'exist'. Such permits a consciousness or reflexive refraction through Bourdieusian theory of practice and its concepts. At this point, the empirical *habitus* is scientific and the scientific *habitus* is empirical. The Kantian transcendental sense beyond the power to form concepts then becomes less the bourgeois sense of nothingness I wrote of earlier - the pure objective or aesthetic gaze - but *the logical essence of practice itself*, which is nothing other than the past (a sociological history) instantiating itself in the present (a historical sociology) - a kind of sociological *karma*. And, of course, this

power *to be* present – this process - is ‘grasped’ at the point *of* and *in* becoming rather than in the thing itself formed.

In other words, Bourdieu’s conceptual terms - *habitus, field, etc.* – carry the burden of permitting *in potentia* this view. However, the true *metanoia* lies behind them in the actual point of instantiation where consciousness – now praxeological – apprehends the actualization of the social world and the constitution of its interpretation – *in flagrante!* The nature of this view allows for and makes possible a different relationship and thus (conscious) view of the world. Instead of a subject objectifying an object *as an object*, the subject sees itself literally in it: but not as a subjective mirror of individual empirical identity but at an epistemological moment grounded in the same generative principles as their scientific practice. It is, as it were. an ontology viewing and ontology – or being regarding being: And, in mind and body – not just as an intellectual product, but an entire *hexis*.

In a way, this ‘coming into being’ of time and the subject and object of it at a point of knowing/ seeing is the same instantiation that he castigates both Sartre and Heidegger for when they collapse the *en-soi* (*in itself* - subject) with the *pour-soi* (*for itself* - object) (1996b: 212f). For Bourdieu, this constitutes the fabrication of a dangerous transcendent universalism; itself no more than a reassertion of the bourgeois intellectual’s relationship to the world of transcendence between themselves and ‘the people’. He writes that such allows them to find a ‘point of honour’ between a sense of social exclusion and intellectual self plenitude. To counter this tendency, Bourdieu is looking to get behind both and reconstruct a different praxeological *ethos* that is grounded in the practically mundane: a good example where a surface structure may look the same, but the invisible moral force constituting it is very different.

One of the important methodological consequences of this change of subject-object relationship, as Bourdieu notes in *The Weight of the World* (1999a: 609), is that it is not only about seeing oneself (praxeologically) and recognising oneself *in* and *for itself*, but also acknowledging that faced with the same social conditions, one would likely *be* and *do* the same: it is about *being* ‘able to take up all possible points of view’ in doing that. This is not *to be* every man/woman, and for everyone to be the same, but *to see* the structural relations and principles as immanent, manifesting themselves in *this way at this particular time and place and individual*. Hence, one acknowledges and sees oneself in others and others in oneself as the outcome of particular formative conditions; not as a separate object-other. Bourdieu calls this knowledge a ‘spiritual exercise’ (ibid.: 612) and a sort of ‘intellectual love’ (ibid. possibly borrowed from Spinoza), requiring a high level of attention; - a ‘non-violent’ method since it offers no imposition of

meaning, no *symbolic violence*. There is here no authority, nor the faculty to 'think things independently'.

In some ways, such an analysis clearly goes beyond what Bourdieu explicitly presented himself, but is clearly implied by him – everything is leading to these points. However, I offer completion of the circle in the spirit of 'one man cannot do two things'. Ironically, many do not necessarily see the reflexivity in Bourdieu's work across his career. They do not see the empirical studies carried out in the Béarn, or Algeria and indeed in Education, as necessarily Bourdieu reflecting on both his environment, and indeed the way to operationalize and understand that reflexivity. Even *Homo Academicus* is read as Bourdieu reflecting on his own professional *field in retrospect*. Yet, reflexivity was clearly an inherent part of Bourdieu's initial research endeavours in the way he brought his own *habitus* – both professional and personal – to the objects of his studies. The original French version of *Outline* had a chapter on 'the observer observed' (*Esquisse*, 1972: 225-234) and, from the *leçons* given in Paris from the mid-1980s, we see an explicit awareness of the need for a 'sociology of sociology' as a way of breaking out of the box in which contemporary sociologists have shut themselves' (Bourdieu, 2016: 1116). By the last decade of his career, of course, reflexivity was central to Bourdieu's concerns, finally extending the reflexive element of his work as an attempt *to objectify the social forces that acted upon him* (Bourdieu, 2007/2004; see also Eakin, 2001). At base of such reflexivity is the epistemological epiphany described above. In sum, the outcome of this vision can itself be expressed in terms of changing the nature of the relationship between the subject and conditions by changing the conditions of its production.

It is clear from this discussion that the sort of *metanoia* that Bourdieu has in mind is not easy to achieve; and in this there is perhaps a sense of stages along the way in a process. Yet, he also argued that his method was of use to both a general and academic public (for example, Bourdieu, 2000h). In fact, he explicitly refers to some of the interviewees in *La misère du monde* and the way that their involvement helped them: it could not save them from the social forces that acted upon them but it could provide explanation and understanding over what produced their lot in life and why they suffered so. However, for the would-be researcher in the social sciences there was a more acute requirement for a reflexive stance. Concepts such as *habitus*, *field* and *capital* could operate as both a means of analysis and be turned back on the researcher in order 'to dispossess' themselves of the privilege they grant themselves in analyzing the social world from a particular *doxa* – both professional and personal – with its inherent *illusio*. For Bourdieu, nothing could be worse than sociology and sociologists – of all people! – not embracing this dimension of their work. Here, he argues strongly that 'the truth is that truth is at stake' (1994a: 185) but that pursuit of it might give rise to an 'apparent crudeness which can accompany the most rigorous analyses' (1991d: 34). The goal here is to tell the truth, not impress

with false methodologies: briefly, 'one must choose to pay a higher price for truth while accepting a lower level of distinction' (ibid.).

We have seen how part of that 'truth' is repressed, firstly in the course of social discourse, and secondly in what 'science' can often make of it. For Bourdieu, the application of *habitus, field, capital* is an initial means to restore understanding of practical reason to analyses. However, there is another form of understanding that looks directly at the moral force – *ethos* – that connects the knowing subject and their object of analyse; a kind of praxeological consciousness. By connecting with such, both what is initially repressed and the process by which its repression is discovered, and thus recovered, becomes part of this new truth. All that being acknowledged, it is clear that this new level of understanding is demanding and highly sophisticated; indeed, it took Bourdieu a lifetime to articulate. In this way, one has to accept that there is a difference in terms of what is possible for one and another within *social space*. Here, one gets the sense of Bourdieu looking to escape from the logic of his own philosophy.

#### *Towards a Corporatism of the Universal – Resistance?*

We have seen how Bourdieu's whole approach to understanding the social world is predicated on *symbolic power – symbolic violence* – and how it is ultimately an epiphenomenon of the formation of the modern State with its core of legitimation. Yet, Bourdieu also saw that a new and aggressive change had taken place from the last quarter of the twentieth century that was connected to the very nature of *capital* itself (see Grenfell 2014b). Part reactionary and part post-modern, this new *ethos* – defining the nature of the relationship between the subject and the object – was dissolving what had been achieved by the State for the benefit of humanity as a whole. The resistance he is mounting therefore does come essentially from an individual 'conversion' of social gaze. Yet, at the same time, he implores the necessity for social action; and we see him supporting cross-European trade union movements and an 'Internationale' of writers (1994e); at the time, including Jacques Derrida, Edouard Glissant, Susan Sontag, Salman Rushdie and Toni Morrison. The work of the latter, in the way she incorporates both white and black characters in her fiction, offers an example of a way to get away from stereotypical characterization where, even in critical approvals, white writers refer to blacks in stereotypical terms: sensuality, sexuality and exoticness. Such is the dynamic of *misrecognition*, which applies it in its very denial (1998e). Bourdieu also quotes the work of the German artist Hans Haake for the way it is accompanied by 'a critical analysis of the art world and the very conditions of artistic production' (1995: 1). The latter point is emphasized in his talk with art students where he encourages them to think in his terms in order to understand the way art features in the world and can form the basis for an alternative radical aesthetics (2016).

Understanding the need for collective action (against Neoliberalism and the 'myths' of our time), Bourdieu also saw the power of institutional action as a form of resistance. Having given a thorough 'scientific' critique of the 'art field', he yields up to what he calls a 'normative' position with respect to the same. Here, he castigates individual writers – especially 'journalist philosophers' - who do little more than comment on another 'on the parts they can grasp' (1996b: 339). Whilst acknowledging the power that intellectual can wield – in France at least – as well as avoiding false dichotomies and being able to apply to 'ourselves' forms of thought 'we use' on others, he thus calls for a 'corporatism of the universal', accepting that whilst universalism can have pernicious effects, intellectuals indeed have an 'interest' in the universal, which can have positive results if 'organised responsibly'. Intellectual work is particular because it is at this level – of words – that the play is played out; and we have seen how this is especially so within a Neoliberal discourse where words like 'flexibility', 'new economy', and 'globalisation' have to be interrogated in terms of Bourdieusian epistemology. At one point, Bourdieu refers to the new alternative as a '*realpolitik* of reason' (1998c: 139).

In this way, culture for Bourdieu still can be an instrument for freedom and the basis of political action. But, the key at every level is still within a collectivity – a scientific (knowledge) community, which is sufficiently autonomous to operate its own means of validation. Consequently, there is indeed a struggle for the monopoly over a vision of the social world (1994a: 180). The Neoliberal *doxa* has imposed a form of thinking that is predicated on a *capitalized* relation to that world. Sociology – even while it struggles with its own versions – has the capability to offer a different social reality. But, to emphasise again, this is not just a 'war of words' but a process that involves a distinct *ethos* that lies beyond both and goes to the heart of the nature (conditions of production) of the subject-object relationship. In a way, Bourdieu is ready to accept Kantian aesthetics as a phenomenology in the search for truth and universal truths. But, the conditions for the foundation of such truths can never be the sole prerogative of intellectuals and artists. He holds up the 'comprehension...indifference of certain social agents' as proof of a 'universal incapacity' to grasp the beautiful because they are deprived of 'adequate categories' of aesthetic perception and appreciation to do so (1998f: 135). One might make the same argument about intellectual knowledge, or at least that which does not embrace to kind of praxeological issues, which Bourdieu raises. The most important aspects of the social world are transparent to us: 'the social world operates in a way that makes itself seem 'obvious' (2015a: 216), he writes. Intellectual *fields* constitute and appear in much the same way – unless they can operationalize a reflexive stance towards their own objective and mental structures (ibid.). This, because 'the world is within me but I am not within the world'.

As Bourdieu's life came to an end the world that surrounded him was already moving into crisis: and, besides the ravages of Neoliberalism he saw the

resurgence of civil war in Algeria and former Yugoslavia: but missed the intensification of poverty and state austerity; the resurgences of nationalism and ethnicity; the radicalism of religious and political extremists; the explosion of the internet and social media; and the populist and reactionary responses to all of these. Yet, his conviction lay in identifying and understanding the belief that lay behind words and its constituting power. 'Only by working to universalize the conditions of access to universality' (1998f: 137) would these polarities be avoided. This is an ethical project!

In effect, what such a position finally means for knowledge *fields* – this corporatism of the universal – is first to understand its own inner impulses – *libido sciendi* – as the *illusio* it embodies (see 2001: 56). Such a 'politics of morality' involves recognising their posturing as well as acknowledgement of the differences between their own theories and what exists in reality. If such results in 'uncovering secrets', 'disenchantment', and 'demystification', the effects are far from disenchanting; rather it represents a kind of 'civil virtue' (of equality, fraternity, sincerity and disinterestedness) as it reveals 'concealed truths' (1998g: 145). However, the conditions for the founding of such a new *libido virtualis* will not be constituted unless the logic of practice of respective fields 'guarantees' to its participants a share in the profits of this praxeological universalism. Social activism must be part of this process.

### ***Final remarks...***

In this book, I have traced the professional and life biography of a small boy who was born in the heart of the French peasantry in South-Wets France. We have seen the formative experiences of this life; especially, in how his own academic trajectory took him from being a boarder in a local secondary school to the highest echelons of the French intellectual world. His own background village and the experience of military service in Algeria caused something of a volte-face from philosophy to sociology via anthropological studies. What resulted was a highly philosophized sociology where issues of epistemology and ontology became paramount. Concepts that formed in early studies, along with other work in education and French culture, furnished him with an ever-growing set of tools of analysis. Principally placed within these was the notion of *field* which, along with other concepts such as *habitus* and *capital*, allowed him to formulate a unique methodology under the rubric of '*field theory*'. Further, empirical studies in a range of French institutional sites followed: Fashion, Religion, Law, Sport, etc. After nomination to the *Collège de France*, voluminous publications appeared, extending his work on Algeria, French Education and Taste. Increasingly, the element of reflexivity became a central preoccupation as Bourdieu explored the limits of academic thinking and 'the truth' in representing social phenomena. As the contemporary political scene intensified in the light of the application of Neoliberal policies to the French economy, Bourdieu then undertook a higher level of political activism, both as a public intellectual and in his academic publications. Nevertheless, in print and in public lectures he

continued to address topics within the *field* of cultural reproduction – Manet, Flaubert, etc. – as well as extended analyses of the French State and economy. In the complexity of his published work, it is possible to identify many strands: methodological, philosophical, historical, political. And, yet, most come down to the simple issue of the nature of the relationship *between* the subject and object, and hence the social forces acting on individuals. I have argued that his entire work follows from what it is to know and see in a new way, and thus become someone with a ‘new’ gaze on the world – both personally and collectively, and the consequences this may have for both. As he argued, we are born determined and have a small chance of escaping from our social fate. Finally, his theory of practice suggests a means to do that. Encapsulated in one word, that means is, in fact: *metanoia*.

© Michael Grenfell 2020 (Pomera Press)