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# Scientific Habitus

## Pierre Bourdieu and the Collective Intellectual

*Remi Lenoir*

‘The world in which one thinks is not the world in which one lives.’  
Gaston Bachelard, quoted in Pierre Bourdieu *Méditations pascaliennes*  
(Bourdieu, 1997: 65, 2000: 51)

**I**T IS STRIKING to note that the very people who have been so eager to pay tribute to Pierre Bourdieu for the importance of his work and his immense personal qualities often fail to recognize, or disregard, one of his most important contributions to sociology – the category of the ‘collective intellectual’, which he endeavoured to establish as a principle of scientific method (Bourdieu, 2001: 210, 2004: 108). As Bourdieu noted in his last work, devoted to the sociology of science and more particularly to the sociology of sociology itself, the creation of the Centre de Sociologie Européenne represented,

a collective, cumulative scientific project, which would integrate the theoretical and technical advances of the discipline, in a logic akin to that of the natural sciences, and be based on a common set of explicit philosophical choices, in particular as regards the anthropological presuppositions implied in all ‘human sciences’.

In both his analyses (for example, of the notion of the ‘field’) and in his practice (the work of the Centre de Sociologie Européenne under his direction) Bourdieu challenged the idea, widely held in France, of intellectual work as solitary, original and inspired. His commitment to collective research never faltered, and he supported it through the training of researchers, through the priority he gave to mutual monitoring of work and

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to discussion, and through the creation of a community of intellectuals. This community comprised not only sociologists but also experts in related disciplines, provided that these disciplines imposed the same requirements of rationality and reflexivity, vigilance and awareness he demanded of the members of his (continually renewed) research team over nearly 40 years. Many of the tributes paid to him have also remarked on his role as a research entrepreneur (management of the Centre, editing journals and collections, directing collective projects); few have made reference to his way of practising, and of communicating, what he called the ‘craft’ of sociology (Bourdieu et al., 1968, 1991).

### **Scientific Habitus and Theoretical Position**

The terms ‘collective’ and ‘intellectual’ are notions that the scholastic tradition, particularly in France, has placed in opposition, like those of ‘theory’ and ‘empirical research’. These oppositions are regarded as sacrosanct within, and are reinforced by, the division of academic labour and in scholastic hierarchies (examples include the opposition, strongly entrenched in France, between philosophy and sociology, sociology and history, or sociology and economics). It is no accident that in his writing, his teaching and his interviews, Pierre Bourdieu constantly returned to these sterile oppositions that always stand in the way of a true scientific appreciation of social phenomena, and are among the most difficult obstacles to surmount. He would no more think of isolating his work from that of his collaborators, of whatever status, or even that of the social agents whose behaviour he observed, than he could disentangle what part of his research was the product of theoretical reflection, and what part the result of empirical enquiry (he often reiterated that there was no theoretical reflection that was not rooted in practice).

A keen sports player in his youth (especially of rugby), Bourdieu frequently compared the work of the ‘collective intellectual’ to that of a sports team. In particular, he uses sport as a metaphor to illustrate both his conception of social action and his theory of the sociological approach. According to Bourdieu, the ‘collective intellectual’ resembles the sports team in terms of the spirit that drives it (in this case the ‘scientific spirit’, in the sense that Bachelard used the term), the collectivist attitudes implied by its activity, and the form of apprenticeship involved – constant, intensive and regular training. The combination of these elements gives rise to gestures and syntheses which are constantly, incessantly repeated to the point where they become a *habitus* (what Bourdieu called the *scientific habitus*); it also creates the mutually supportive force, mobilized in its practical, articulate and coherent mode, which Bourdieu believed a research centre – a specific form taken by the collective intellectual in the scientific sphere – should constitute. His prime concern, a principle evident from the start both in his experience of teaching and in the first research projects he led in Algeria, was in fact to establish and institutionalize a collective sociological practice based on a *habitus* shared by all those involved in the activities he instigated.

For the practice of theory is also, according to Bourdieu, a *habitus* – that is, a set of attitudes which structure the perception and practice of research: this logic of the practice of scientific labour is related to the way in which the problems are set out, explanations developed and tools forged and used. In this sense, ‘theory as *habitus*’, to use Rogers Brubaker’s expression (Brubaker, 1993), stands in opposition to theory defined as a system of logical entities and their mutual articulations.

This way of thinking about the theoretical work of research, with its idea of communicating a *modus operandi* rather than an *opus operatum*, ran completely counter to the university teaching and research of the time. From his work on Algeria (1958) onwards, at the same time as feeling his way towards a new theoretical model and the methodological processes which would correspond to it, Bourdieu was inventing, or rather reinventing, not only a new way of doing sociology but also a new method of training researchers in the discipline. This method called for attitudes rarely brought together in aspiring intellectuals in France – less ‘philosophical’ and ‘literary’, more anthropological and more reflexive (see Bourdieu, 2003: 42). First, a sort of generalized receptiveness: a sense of collective labour, willingness to be involved in all elements of research work, mutual revision of texts, collective signatures etc. – in short, a comprehensively collectivist approach completely opposite to the scholastic individualism notable particularly among the French – and specifically, Parisian – intellectuals of the 1950s and 1960s. The second prerequisite, very much related to the first, was the absence of specialization in a preconstituted sector of social activity and in the manipulation of a technique of data processing or collection – even if the technique was observation, which Bourdieu nevertheless saw epistemologically as the primary method in relation to which all the others were to be judged, particularly in terms of their degree of objectivation.

Bourdieu’s ways of conceiving of and practising sociology owe much to his first investigations in Algeria and Béarn, for these brought him face to face with the practical experience of epistemology: comparing ethnological observations, necessarily made with the remote, distant gaze of the outsider, and what he had felt and perceived of a society he knew from inside, the society where he originated (he was born into a rural Béarnais family and did not leave his native region until he was a young man). It was not by chance that this comparison arose, since he had always been interested in the differences between scientific knowledge and what he was later to call ‘practical sense’. But he made the comparison in this dual mode, scientific and practical, as both outsider and insider. Thus he grasped the almost unique opportunity he had been offered to objectivate the act of objectivation and the objectivating subject – in other words the effects that the condition of observer exerted on the description of the objects and behaviours observed. ‘What does it mean to observe?’ was a question Bourdieu never stopped asking.

Bourdieu defines this condition of observing in social terms, as the condition of an actor external to the world s/he is observing, a world in which

the vital interests of the observer – at least in the immediate moment – are not vested. It is to this condition of externality that the theoretical position is assimilated. The theoretical position, according to Bourdieu, necessarily implies an external, disinterested, non-practical viewpoint. His *Le sens pratique* (*The logic of practice*) (Bourdieu, 1980, 1990) focuses on the social philosophy inherent in the theoretical position, and on the gulf that separates the practical and theoretical modes of knowing. According to Bourdieu, the relation to the world presupposed by these modes of knowing is fundamentally different: he often maintained that the observer – in this case the ethnologist – had no relationship with those s/he studied, with their practices and their representations, except that of studying them. The native, on the other hand, has a practical mastery of his/her familiar universe, an ‘unconscious awareness’, as Bourdieu put it, inscribed in habits and directly adapted to the requirements of each situation, which does not need to be objectivated in a systematic representation.

Thus, for Bourdieu the theoretical vision is above all a vision with no practical engagement except between theoreticians – another, complementary problem that he also continued to investigate (Bourdieu, 1984, 1988 and 2001, 2004). This particularly acute awareness of the gulf separating the theoretical aims of theoretical knowledge and the practical, directly interested aims of practical understanding of the interaction of social actors, which was largely a product of Bourdieu’s own history, is at the base of his practice as a sociologist and as head of a research team. For this reason he paid a great deal of attention to the social, academic and intellectual qualities of his researchers, and he recommended objects of study to them with the aim of reducing this ontologically unbreachable gap, a gap he tried to turn to his advantage, transforming it into an epistemological tool – we might even say a socio-epistemological strategy.

This was no doubt why, as co-author of *The Craft of Sociology* (Bourdieu et al., 1968, 1991), Bourdieu was to formalize this epistemological experience in the form of a precept against scholastic epistemicism: the point was to avoid proposing the theory that must be constructed in order to make sense of the practice of actors as the origin of that practice – to avoid, in other words, the scholastic relationship to the world. But this is not only an epistemological principle. If practical sense is the true origin of strategies, this is true of both social actors and sociologists. And all of his work in directing studies and research was to focus on converting these theoretical precepts into practical attitudes, at the very least by giving researchers (notably those at his Centre) what he called the sense of the game, the practical mastery of research (and the operations it requires). This mastery is only really acquired through experience – experience which is itself already informed by the theoretical, social and political stakes sociological research engenders, an issue to which Bourdieu devoted some of his writing and teaching (Bourdieu, 1997: 61–100, 2000: 49–84).

### **Intellectual Labour and Collective Belief**

As director of the Centre de Sociologie Européenne, Bourdieu offered a highly lucid and realistic example of this practical sense of the dynamics of what he was later to call ‘the collective intellectual’ – a term he coined to designate a form of intellectual militancy, and not to be confused with a collective of intellectuals with a particular political agenda, of which there have been so many in France (see Mauger, 1995: 674–96). A few months before his death, Yvette Delsaut recorded a conversation with Bourdieu in which he talked about his way of working with the team he had ‘cobbled together’, as he put it, during the 1960s. In this dialogue Delsaut offers her own account and asks Bourdieu to elucidate the qualities and practices of the members of this remarkable research unit, who made their laboratory the site of a social experiment unprecedented in France, and probably in the world (Delsaut and Rivière, 2002). Key to these were the qualities and practices of Bourdieu himself, so much was he at the heart of this collective.

As we have noted, Bourdieu used the metaphor of the sports coach, but he also employed other analogies, such as the theatre director or orchestra conductor, to make clear that while he occupied a specific position, he was participating alongside partners, and often together with them, in the match they were playing. For it was usually he who had the first idea, initiated and gave, as he puts it in this interview, ‘all the main stimulus at all levels of the research’ (Delsaut and Rivière, 2002: 210; all quotations from this interview have been translated by the translator of this article). He was the strategist and coach, as well as the captain on the field. The model of intellectual labour Bourdieu embodied, particularly with his collaborators, could not have been separated from all the research operations he performed with them, or what we might call the unity of scientific labour in which they were performed. In actual fact this unity of labour could only be instituted through pre-established assignments or duties, as his methodological writings indicate; no doubt this stemmed from concerns of efficiency and Bourdieu’s pressing sense of urgency, of time that he felt was always passing too quickly. All intellectual operations, and particularly all forms of learning or knowledge, were immediately retranslated into working tools, research project, experience on the ground and of the ground.

Of course the sense of urgency and the concern for efficiency are not the only reasons for this way of working. The unity of research duties had its deeper roots in the scientific habitus that Bourdieu was theorizing at the same time, making reference to the terms of contemporary debates on methods of managing scientific research structures, which he was constantly challenging. In his view scientific procedures, and organizational and staffing decisions, were nothing to do with the deliberations and transactions involved in the so-called ‘democratic’ running of a laboratory – a method of management that Bourdieu saw as simply the form taken by bureaucracy in scientific life, and the consequences of which, he maintained, were inefficiency and the dominance of temporal power over scientific imperatives.

In short, the ‘democratic’ method represented the denial of what is essential to the autonomy of sociological research work and of the need for that well-thought-out, even methodical, anarchy required by collective research.

Thus, the distribution of tasks was decided anew for each study, and as a number of studies would probably be under way at any given time, each member of the Centre had his or her share, and all collaborated closely or more remotely, with little distinction between their roles, in the multiple activities conducted there. This gave rise to the hypothesis Bourdieu states almost casually in this interview, in relation to the working of his laboratory: ‘It’s partly because the division of labour is not clear that there is a very strict hierarchy of tasks’ (Delsaut and Rivière, 2002: 210). He refers here not only to the hierarchy of merit, but also to the hierarchy of efficiency. These principles became all the more essential because they fitted into a sort of ‘war economy’, on the model of a revolution, however symbolic – war against the ‘external enemies’, which justified universal mobilization. Absolute priority was given to research, over and above everything else, in the name of this collective adventure which was perceived and represented as ‘extraordinary’, ‘unprecedented’, an adventure that everyone had the chance to live and from which everyone received dividends (at least that of having participated). The exchanges essential to any scientific research enterprise – and Bourdieu was, in this respect, a true entrepreneur – were governed by a very sociological type of management of personal and interpersonal relations, based not only on this sort of rational alchemy but also, and essentially, on the influence Bourdieu exerted, and had always exerted, on his direct collaborators (at least as long as they remained members of the Centre). The generosity, receptiveness and attention with which he treated each individual no doubt heightened this influence, reinforcing both the validity and legitimacy of his authority and the symbolic foundations of the collective belief and adherence to the collective he embodied in such an exemplary manner, and which was recognized objectively and subjectively by the members of the Centre.

But their loyalty was not inspired simply by personal charisma and all that that implies in the French intellectual sphere (academic degrees, rhetorical virtuosity, encyclopaedic knowledge, atypical social trajectory). It was also grounded in the active struggle, particularly against the academism of the division of scientific labour as it was becoming established in France at that time – a struggle which in Bourdieu’s case took the form of both a discourse of combat and a discourse of sociological method – and in the constant, detailed attention he paid to the lives of members of his laboratory and to life within the laboratory – attention which admittedly tended to create or even to foster tension, conflict, rivalries and rebellions.

Although in Bourdieu’s view the problem of theory is no different in the social sciences than in the natural sciences, the conditions which must be met in order for a practice to be scientific are not only epistemological. What a strictly epistemological reflection tends to ignore is that the central division structuring the world of sociological production – that which,

broadly speaking, opposes generalized theory with no empirical referent to empiricism blind to itself – reflects oppositions between groups who occupy different positions in the intellectual field (specifically, in the sociological field). These oppositions are seen as theoretical choices when in fact they are often simply the translation, according to the laws of the sociological sphere, of interests related to the kind of scientific capital held by the opposing sides and the position they occupy in the scientific community.

### **Applied Rationalism**

Using the model developed by Bachelard in *Le rationalisme appliqué* (Bachelard, 1949), Bourdieu showed that these oppositions masked a complicity which reinforces the supporters of the two positions. Among other things, these positions have in common that they reduce the question of impartiality to the sociologist's publicly visible commitment, particularly in the political arena. In the academic interchange, the theoreticians can only counter the facts ascertained by empirical enquiries with the disdain of those who privilege the life of the mind, while the empiricists reject as ideological any scientific construction that fails to reproduce the datum as it is given, i.e. the established order. Thus the two sides agree at least on the essential point: the social order is established in itself and for itself – in other words, as it is. In Bourdieu's view, the ideal of ethical neutrality is in fact a sort of sociodicy of the ideological orthodoxy of a particular body of specialists, whose position in the sociological field leads them to elevate their professional ideology to the status of a universal theory of scientificity. Those who, in the name of the ethical ideal of ethical neutrality, refrain from posing challenging questions to society are betraying science, according to Bourdieu. This is no doubt because they have a great deal to lose by disobeying the rules and, more generally, all the presuppositions that make up the axiomatic knowledge of the discipline, particularly the epistemic doxa, and that govern relations between the members of the sociological community.

For the quality of sociological research and, indeed, its very existence depend on material resources. Given that the simple fact of scientific disclosure (which does not represent the full extent of sociological research, but which is inherent in its nature) inevitably exerts a political effect, any research worthy of the name contains within itself a threat to the social order. For this very reason, such research is itself always under threat. To hold that the sociologist can choose his/her relation to society is necessarily to blind oneself to the fact that social science cannot allow itself the illusion of neutrality, unless it is to ignore the services both its omissions and its revelations render to those served and to those subjugated by the social order. Thus, unlike the philosopher or the writer, the sociologist can only exercise his/her craft if s/he has at his/her disposal fairly substantial material resources; furthermore, the form taken by intellectual conflicts in society derives from the fact that what is at stake is often the elimination, as scientific producers, of those involved. Bourdieu had this acute awareness of conflict, this sense of the conflict inherent in the outcomes of



scientific activity, and particularly of sociological activity. In consequence, the existence of his research centre was – and remains – doubly threatened, since Bourdieu was not one for the compromise of agreeing to differ. This was because he knew (being well placed to know) that what was at stake in intellectual battles was scientific production itself, its continued existence or its disappearance.

In the interview with Delsaut, Bourdieu emphasizes the ‘kind of “merging”’, both intellectual and affective, which linked all the members of the group’, the ‘closeness’ derived from ‘mutual sensitivity to the distinctive characteristics of the other’, as Delsaut puts it (Delsaut and Rivière, 2002: 186). What was this unique form of integration based on, and how was it maintained? During the initial period of accumulation of scientific capital (1965–80), the group emerged through an emphasis on everything that could be construed as a difference, distinguishing them from rival research centres: the slang of the *École Normale*, linguistic mannerisms (even its own accent, that of Bourdieu’s native south-west France), a rhetoric (for example, introductions that reviewed previous theories, setting them against one another and casting them as so many complementary errors), jokes, self-deprecatory humour, puns, a great deal of irony – in short, a whole range of tools that contributed to the integration of the group and that transmuted the hard work which Bourdieu demanded of his colleagues into pleasure and complicity. From Delsaut’s description of this process a portrait of Bourdieu himself emerges; as she notes, he proposed an ‘intellectual model’ and alongside it, a way of being which was at once reserved, even austere or puritanical (‘respectable’, as she puts it) – in other words, intellectually and socially well-behaved – and at the same time ‘unaffected’ with one’s collaborators. And this was a model and behaviour into which the members of the centre projected themselves, with which they identified and in which they recognized one another.

This form of sociability, with its rules and codes, related very directly to the work of scientific integration. The latter was a collective product grounded in a system of exchange in which the principles of equivalence were not explicitly stated. They existed, as it were, at the practical level, and only became apparent through the behaviour of members of the Centre. They can only be explained after the fact, as in this dialogue with Delsaut (which was preceded by many others and by many other forms of exchange and activity) which focuses on the conditions of work of the members of the Centre pertaining at that point – a period when the Centre could be seen as approaching Goffman’s ‘total institution’, so much did the members throw themselves body and soul into the work, offering up their person, their energy and their time.

As we have noted, Bourdieu spoke of his intellectual enterprise as an adventure, emphasizing its anti-academic and anti-conformist nature, its innovative character within the university and above all in the intellectual sphere. The selection of staff was part of this risky undertaking, favouring and valuing as it did the engagement of those who had not

studied at the *École Normale*, or who had been only obliquely associated with it – almost all of them scholars ‘miraculously saved’ from the scholastic system, like Bourdieu himself. As might be expected of any such procedure, these qualities guaranteed, at least for a time, docility, modesty of ambition and goodwill on the part of the staff recruited; they also ensured receptiveness, dedication, even devotion to the collective work and to its director. There is no doubt that Bourdieu could not have inspired such loyalty in middle-class *École Normale* graduates, for example, who would look for swift intellectual recognition and would want a quick return on their investments.

### **Scholastic Habitus and Scientific Habitus**

In the conversation between Bourdieu and Delsaut, the exchange between the director and his collaborators is presented through the model of the tradesmen’s guild: the relationship is that of apprentice to journeyman (the members of the Centre de Sociologie Européenne were young at that time, and there were no great differences in age), as implied by a method of training diametrically opposed to schooling in its most academic form (for Bourdieu, the one was always defined and determined in relationship to the other). What was transmitted was a ‘craft’, a *modus operandi*, almost impossible to transfer in any way other than on the job. This is why, for example, publication of *The Craft of Sociology* (originally planned as the first volume of three) was halted and the book never reissued, despite and because of its success: as soon as it appeared people began to use it as a manual, in a way that was entirely contrary to Bourdieu’s conception of sociological work and training, which he was applying in his research centre at the same time, and which prioritized *scientific habitus*.

*Scientific habitus* is, in essence, the object of a constant, continuous, deliberate labour of inculcation, the bulk of which came through the practice of research itself, even though this research was conducted in a semi-improvised, almost always unfinished state, seizing any opportunity, however unlooked for. Bourdieu’s way of speaking was distinctive – animated, vehement, rhythmical, the sentences sometimes interminable (in both senses of the word), with long parentheses and brilliant digressions, everything strung together in an almost monothetic flow of words, for this was, in effect, his scientific habitus in verbal (or even gestural) form. Everything proceeded as if he anticipated objections at the moment he uttered the words, and as if at the same time as challenging these objections he was sketching in the field of positions and the attitudes of his opponents, constructing the object as he spoke. This way of exposing his thought process in reports on research was inseparable from his prioritization of the *opus operandi*, which takes into account the active dimension of symbolic production, focusing on its origin as much as its structure, and thus reveals, exactly as they are, the space of positions, the specific interests of the producers, and the strategies they use in their objective interrelations and their individual interactions. His way of speaking merged with his way of

thinking, thought as speech, receptiveness in the form of exposure, to use an expression of Heidegger's that Bourdieu adopted as his own.

This way of transmitting sociology as a craft had several advantages. The first was that it avoided the hierarchical division of labour between theoreticians and practitioners. The 'workshop' format enabled more experienced colleagues to show the way, to correct and to express, through situation and action, general precepts as they applied to specific cases. These precepts were not directly enunciated for their own sake, but rather were expressed through comments, as if they were understood. Nevertheless, their application was precisely stated and explained, to the extent that they became 'topoi', to use the expression employed in the research centre. Hence the attention to the concrete detail of research procedures, for this constant vigilance, this rigour in every situation, reflected Bourdieu's concern to break with the intellectual world's dominant theoretician and heroic image of research. The key was to use all techniques, if necessary to invent new ones, and more generally to mobilize everything that might be relevant and could be used given the specific conditions of possibility of data collection.

The workshop system also made it possible to see the *scientific habitus* in practical operation, through practical choices which at the outset were often confused and groping, as when a sampling process was being created, or a questionnaire or code drawn up. It presupposed the particular structure of transfer which comes through working together, and in physical proximity, since this type of teaching requires direct and lasting contact between the person 'passing on' the knowledge and the person learning. Bourdieu had this ability to enable younger people to benefit from the experience and knowledge he had accumulated, and to offer them the opportunity to test out their analyses, as he did his own, in a sort of mutual socialization. Thus, he often gave his manuscripts to his collaborators to read, whatever their status, and their comments were always discussed attentively, and sometimes even incorporated in the final text. He himself examined their work in detail, and these mutual exchanges gave a homogeneity and consistency to the writing emanating from the Centre. This system of undertaking research with a more experienced companion was a way of both 'converting abstract problems into scientific operations', to use Bourdieu's own expression, and breaking with the image of sociological process which dominated in the 1960s and 70s, and the division of scientific labour associated with it.

Finally, this way of working required both great humility on the part of each individual, and great mutual confidence, the two going hand in hand, which is not to say being taken for granted. The point was to work openly, allowing the way research work really progressed to be visible – the hesitations, repetitions, dead ends, approaches abandoned and corrections which had been required to arrive at the presentation of the final result. For it is precisely in the final result that all these detours which go to make up the finished product are usually erased, creating a product that

appears self-determined, the ideal of perfection according to the academic tradition. This process did give rise to confusion, which sometimes even went as far as being destabilizing. In these situations, where certainties began to wobble, Bourdieu was often called on not to reassure colleagues but to revive their shaken faith and loyalties, uttering the most polemical and provocative statements in order to break open the reified doxic forms, especially the habitual ways of thinking about the social world which even the ‘*topoi*’ could become. His interventions ranged from dazzling analysis – often tinged with humour and irony – of the sociological literature, whether in France or elsewhere, to the invention of new objects or at least new, often simple, concrete and amusing ways of studying objects (journalistic puffs, imaginary dialogues, riddles, etc.), to semi-improvised expositions of the research prospects of each individual and how they connected together into a whole which gave them a more global reach and a new significance.

### **Unity of Sociological Labour and Charismatic Management Methods**

The distribution of the tasks which fell to each individual was also part of this work of mobilization, and was performed according to what Bourdieu, in the interview with Delsaut, called ‘the equitable allocation of the contributions and portions which each is entitled to take on’ (Delsaut and Rivière, 2002: 212). Bourdieu made this evaluation on the basis of his vision of the present and future scientific production of the Centre de Sociologie Européenne, and with the aim of balancing the involvement, the contributions and the rewards to members. In order to achieve this balance, he drew on sociology and socio-analysis, applying them to rational management of the inevitable tensions which arose from the kind of ‘libido which is invested in research, the whole idea of self and self-image, very powerful things, in any case’ (Delsaut and Rivière, 2002: 214), taking into account the abilities and individual characteristics of adaptation and integration of the different members of the Centre – qualities related to their origins, their social trajectories, their gender and their very diverse paths through education. He worked to encourage connections, to calm reactions, to ease tensions and even to set abilities in competition with one another. Bourdieu made great use of this physics of the emotions, as we might term it, because this was the way a collective of this kind became integrated, or better, welded together. While he did much to ensure that intellectual production was regarded as ordinary labour and not fetishized, he also used all the assets of his charisma to animate, inspire and orchestrate the working collective which, in his person, he summed up, embodied or – perhaps – played at embodying. And this was done not only through his undoubted physical charisma. Above all he was able to enthuse and persuade through the extent of his knowledge, the rigour and liveliness of his mind, his inventiveness in the face of every difficulty, his encyclopaedic learning, the unlikely and unexpected theoretical links he made, and finally through his

famous humour, which cleansed and reinvigorated, comforted and stimulated.

At once player, manager and coach, as we have noted, Bourdieu occupied all the posts required by the sociologist's craft with unequalled efficiency and ingenuity, which nevertheless in no way excluded sensitivity and generosity. Above all he was able to get his different team members to play to the best of their abilities, encouraging them in the ways best suited to them and at the most appropriate opportunities, which he grasped immediately, revealing to the 'players' what they were capable of and extending them beyond. So well was he able to do this that often the team members would internalize the procedure and ideas that Bourdieu had suggested to them so completely that they forgot they had come from him, or at least from exchanges and discussions with him. This was one of the manifestations – one he sometimes found difficult to accept – of the effectiveness of his way of transferring know-how and ideas, but he was consoled by the knowledge that his work of inculcation was not in vain, even if the beneficiary was unaware of it. As he often said, a teacher, if he does his work well, contributes to his own disappearance, at least as teacher.

Here we have to acknowledge the tension, or even contradiction, that Bourdieu constantly sought to overcome in both his practice and his theory as a leader of research projects and a teacher, and which remains inscribed in the notion of *scientific habitus*. As we have noted, theory for him was a social practice like any other, a *modus operandi* which operated at the practical level, in conformity with scientific standards although it did not originate from these standards. While the ideal model for training researchers was that of the workshop and the guild, he was not always able to achieve this, particularly in the public teaching that his post required him to undertake (seminars at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*, lectures and above all his open lectures at the *Collège de France*). When the nature of the audience made it almost impossible to transfer the practical mastery of the schemata of perception and thought which in his view constituted scientific knowledge, he sought out alternatives. In these cases, his aim was always to communicate the schemata implemented in his research, but via a verbal teaching which aimed to make the principles of his procedure and of the studies he led, and which he re-conducted out loud on these occasions, simple, clear and communicable. He demonstrated by explanation and by example, barely looking at his notes, allowing his thought process (rather than the product of it – the 'lesson' of which it was the source) to be seen and heard in action.

Thus, the concepts of habitus, field and capital were only defined within the theoretical system which gave them meaning in relation to a clearly circumscribed object of enquiry, never in isolation; this process was deliberately opposed to the reifying tendencies of the scholastic method and to theoretical 'fetishization', the form taken by this intellectual procedure in the academic sphere. To offer just one example of this form of shorthand, I quote this extract from a lecture on 'the operation of the intellectual field'

given at the doctoral school of the Université des Sciences Humaines in Strasbourg:

The notion of the field is not a concept destined for analytical contemplation. Like most of the concepts used by sociologists, it is a tool for the construction of objects which is made to study social reality, and not to be examined in itself. I will try to conduct before you an exercise in the construction of objects, in order to give you an idea of how the concept of the field can be put to use, rather than offering an analytical exposition of the concept, its origins, its differences from other concepts, etc. (Bourdieu, 1999: 5)

For a while Bourdieu adopted Noam Chomsky's expression 'generative grammar' to define *habitus*. He abandoned this reference as soon as it came to be understood as a sort of 'self-generating programme', contrary to both the sense Chomsky gave it and the way in which Bourdieu himself conceived of the concept of *habitus*. In order to clarify one aspect of what Bourdieu offered to his collaborators and more generally to his audiences and his readers, perhaps we may nevertheless retain the vulgarized sense of Chomsky's concept. In domains with which Bourdieu was not familiar – for example the law, in his writings on the legal field (Bourdieu, 1986, 2002) – at the same time as he gathered together and articulated scraps of analysis based on material which was fragmentary and heterogeneous in terms of his aim, he showed through this very method what was required to take the argument, and the observation linked to it, further. He marked the boundaries of empirical validity of his statements, and expressed the core of his thought in the form of hypotheses, thus exposing himself to, and even inciting, criticism. This was another alternative way of transferring the craft of sociology, by communicating, if not all the operations involved, at least the programme, the work and the tasks involved in exercising the craft.

But it is clear that Bourdieu's practice of research was not located in the brilliant *tours-de-force* of verbal and intellectual virtuosity which led those who heard him, under the influence of his charm, to believe that what he said was immediately intelligible – for the mastery of schemata of perception, thought and action is only acquired through practice, almost subconsciously and not always with strict thematic distinctions, through exercise and repetition, through practice and by trial and error, through doubt and reflection.

The collective form implied in scientific work presupposes a common belief in the 'liberating virtues of scientific reasoning', which Bourdieu was able to communicate in a thousand ways, ranging from practical advice to the most solemn, masterly lectures, and including discreet and friendly encouragement, whether direct or indirect. His generosity was nevertheless matched by the demands he made, and he was therefore implacable (albeit understanding), unsparing with all those who, as he saw it, betrayed 'his desire to promote a politics of scientific reasoning' and moved away from empirical, interdisciplinary research, from 'the intellectual labour required

of the modern scientific enterprise'. These quotations come from a tribute to Maurice Halbwachs – a rhetorical genre which Bourdieu rarely engaged in, since he loathed formal, contrived flattery. Of Halbwachs, his admired predecessor at the Collège de France, murdered at Buchenwald in 1945, he wrote: 'It is my conviction that the scientific undertaking interrupted by the death of a scholar such as Halbwachs awaits its continuation through us' (Bourdieu, 1987). Bourdieu's writing – and its implementation – is without doubt the greatest example of this, a sort of homage that scientific reasoning pays to itself from generation to generation, and that the members of the Centre de Sociologie Européenne will continue to pursue.

### **The Work Continues**

Since Bourdieu's death, the Centre de Sociologie Européenne has undergone fundamental restructuring, but is effectively continuing the research work initiated by its founder. With about 20 researchers, including 12 at the CNRS, about 20 members in universities and around 60 doctoral students, the Centre whose research orientations and methods were prescribed by Bourdieu from the mid-1960s until his death continues his intellectual undertaking within the same institutional framework – CNRS and EHESS – and in the same spirit of reflexive sociology.

At the same time as undertaking radical reorientation of the issues and objects of its research – reorientations dictated by the very dynamic of research work and of social evolution – the Centre will continue its inseparable scientific and pedagogic activities, maintaining the principles that inspired Bourdieu to create it, on the basis of a fundamental agreement on working methods and thus on a particular way of doing sociology. The members of the Centre are all committed to collective labour: research is often led by two or more researchers and also benefits from reflection in the context of seminars or workshops. This prioritization of collective work in effect makes possible not only mutual monitoring and increased epistemological vigilance, but also an accumulation of theoretical learning and knowledge. Intellectual integration of the group is another aspect of the work, and key to it is the constant desire to go beyond the opposition between pure theory and empirical methodology, allowing more general problems to be posed in relation to specific objects which can thus be subjected to rigorous analysis. This integration also derives from the concern to subject all scientific tools (problematics, concepts, procedures) to a systematic critique based on knowledge of their history. And finally, it rests on a permanent recourse to the comparative method, aiming to reveal research objects as a series of individual configurations of relations, varying according to country and era.

From its original focus on the mechanisms that contribute to the process of social reproduction and on the specific workings of different social spaces, research at the Centre has continued to raise new questions relating to the conjunctions between these relatively autonomous spaces and their influence on the transformation of social and mental structures. One

of the aims of the first studies was to identify all the theoretical and methodological consequences of the very general process of differentiation that characterizes modern societies – the constitution of social spheres each with its own logic of operation, its specific types of capital, its form of competition, its own definition of excellence and so on. The logic of the research and the collective working method led to a gradual reorientation of the work, as it came to focus less on the study of fields considered in themselves and for themselves (a focus which was nevertheless essential during the first period), and more on the analysis of the relationships that tend to become established between these fields. The work currently being undertaken by the CSE focuses on eight major themes, grouped around three main axes of research.

### **1 Processes of Internationalization and Reconstitution of National Spaces**

From the outset, as its name indicates, the Centre de Sociologie Européenne placed itself in an international framework. A whole range of research projects, from the study of museums in Europe in the 1960s to investigations of higher education systems and *élites* in the 1980s and 1990s, and including analyses of the construction of national identities, testifies to the persistence of comparative concerns and investigation of the effects of the internationalization of societies, particularly in terms of the reconstitution of national spaces.

While talk of the process referred to as ‘globalization’ of economies and societies has become commonplace, there remains a need to attempt to examine the nature of this phenomenon, to take the measure and understand the logic of the processes under way. One series of studies currently in progress continues research into the transformation of the dominant classes, and focuses on analysing the way in which transnational spaces are constituted, particularly through the phenomena of the import and export of symbols, in which some segments of the dominant classes and some ‘professions’ are the actors. Among these spaces, particular attention is concentrated on the sphere of public expert opinion, the legal world, and the field of economists and economic policies.

A second strand of research continues directly on from studies of training institutions and the fields of cultural production, being devoted to the internationalization of teaching systems and cultural spaces. Here too, emphasis is placed on the phenomena of import and export of culture, translations and retranslations, and the effects of these processes on national spaces. Finally, research into the construction of national identities which had been under way for some years is acquiring renewed significance in the context of ‘neoliberal globalization’ and major historic turning points, particularly since 1989. Whether in the countries of the former Soviet Union, Africa or Latin America, the reconstitution of national *élites* and systems for training senior executives is inseparable from the dynamics of internationalization.



Other CSE studies relate to the collapse of the social foundations of what, for a long time, constituted state power – the public power essentially controlled by the great institutions of the state. The effects of state evolution are being observed particularly through changes in methods of managing poverty and the ways of thinking associated with them. In France the working of the state generally is being called into question by those at the top, and this destabilization is the subject of intense media attention: the state is seen as unable to modernize, incapable of providing security, irresponsible and inefficient. Rather than indicating a crisis, this critique is symptomatic of the collapse of the social foundations not of the state itself, but of its absolutist form, the all-encompassing state, the form which the state authorities managed to impose by virtue of imposing themselves through this form, through the public power associated with it – the state as universal provider, which prevailed in France up to the 1960s. This collapse is manifested at three levels: the national state is no longer in command of the most important economic decisions, which previously justified its control of part of the means of production; it is also increasingly losing its authority at local level, in all domains, particularly in terms of community facilities, cultural provision, and so on. Finally, the state no longer controls the diffusion and interpretation of its own decisions, a loss of control which has come variously through unauthorised statements by its own senior representatives, decisions of the European Court of Justice (or even its own courts), and above all through the media, which force the state to explain decisions that went unquestioned and were rarely publicly debated when other conditions pertained in the field of power. State thinking was based on this all-encompassing form of power. The republic's governance was constructed through a state with multiple functions – administrator, distributor, constructor, engineer, entrepreneur – of which the typical form was established after the Second World War. The state combined all the functions which make a national community into a collective body: the omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient state. The senior civil service was identified with this kind of state, adhering entirely to this political order, which it effectively controlled.

## **2 Changes in the Labour and Lifestyle of the Working Classes**

A number of projects are focused on the effects of changes in the economic field on particular groups, professions and practices. Some are related to economic sociology, an area which is currently expanding rapidly. The issue is not to conform to a method, but rather to reinforce, through systematic studies, an orientation which has always been present, and more or less visible, in the CSE's work, by demonstrating that sociology is capable of accounting for a set of facts and processes which (because they are usually presented for observation as autonomous) appear to result primarily from economic and technological factors: this is particularly the case with professions related to information technology and new methods of

production, communication and control. Studying the social effects of new technologies, to which all sorts of powers (and even virtues) have been ascribed, is a way of understanding, through a particular case study, that neither groups nor practices are defined simply by objective determining factors that can be separated from the entirety of social relations. The common aim of these studies is to analyse a whole set of transformations which, while linked in one way or another to those affecting the economy, call into question the relations between social groups and the operation of and relations between fields.

The notable feature of the studies of social groups is that they focus on groups fairly directly affected by the structural transformations wrought by the decline of many sectors of industrial employment, and by changes in the relationship of particular categories to the educational system, with which they hitherto had little to do. However great the constraints inherent in the labour market, they only operate through mediations which depend partly on their being retranslated in relation to the interests, categories of thought, forms of expression and mobilization of the groups under consideration. The studies planned reject the view that either the market situation or the labour situation is autonomous.

The multiple transformations which have affected the living conditions of the working classes – higher school leaving age, increased unemployment, loss of job security, etc. – have profoundly altered their forms of political, trade union and community mobilization. They have also given rise to new representations ('unemployability', 'sensitive districts', 'street violence' etc.), and to new mechanisms and practices of framing them. The studies under way examine the changes in the 'condition' of the working classes, from those who drop out of the education system to those who take the professional *baccalauréat*, the crisis in traditional forms of mobilization of the working classes and the emergence of alternative forms, the evolution of the division of labour in framing and the appearance of 'new crafts' resulting from the establishment of new mechanisms, the relationships between the different categories of framing agents (campaigners, volunteers, social workers, agents of the state and local communities) and the groups to be 'framed' (target groups among which 'suburban youth', 'the unemployable' and perpetrators of 'street violence' are currently the primary focus).

### **3 Production and Circulation of Symbolic Goods and Scientific Constructions of the Social World**

Continuing from previous research on this theme at the CSE, studies of cultural production and practices examine the relatively autonomous functioning of cultural worlds, their methods of recruitment, their relations with other fields and the strategies of differentiation used by consumers of symbolic goods. The central focus, which in recent years has been on the study of relations between the fields of cultural production (particularly the literary field) and other fields (such as the political field), has evolved towards the question of the 'borders' of these poorly codified spheres, the

conditions of access or ‘right of entry’ into these worlds. The social determinants of ‘vocation’ and the strategies used by social agents to enter these spaces or to appropriate their products are also being looked at. Lastly, the ‘border’ between the dominant ‘legitimate’ culture and dominated cultures is being re-examined through research on the production and consumption of less ‘legitimate’ cultural goods such as rock music and television. Eschewing a history of ideas focused on theories and great works, the studies undertaken here aim to contribute to a social history of the human and social sciences, with the double objective of throwing light on the operation of the scientific field and encouraging reflexivity in the activity of research (hence the particular focus on the history of sociology). By historicizing the ‘academic subconsciences’ created by disciplinary boundaries, domains of specialization and research methods, by examining the modes of institutionalization of these forms of classification and techniques, by studying the actors and institutions of the scientific world, as well as the (permeable) borders between this world and the field of ideological production, we create resources enabling us to understand the epistemological limits of the scientific construction of the world, and perhaps thus to overcome them.

*Translated by Rachel Gomme*

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