

We recall the peasant and the military officer we referred to in the preface and in the introduction. Looking at them standing face-to-face, we conceive of them as two entities, each of them a body, a substance, an entity of its own. We take this as our natural impression, an image of reality as it is.

Yet, is it really the objective reality as it is? Definitely not. We perceive the situation according to what we already know beforehand. Who knows what a young tourist, looking for adventure and some dope, perceives of that situation? When I saw the peasant and the officer, I already knew much about the counterinsurgency war. That is, I had knowledge of the objective relations both people were caught within. This knowledge shaped what I saw there, whether I was aware of it or not.

And what is it that each person in the conversation sees? Is it the objective reality of a smiling individual, face-to-face? Is this what counts in such a situation? Of course not. What counts for both persons are the multiple social relations in which each of them is interwoven. The officer is responsible to higher-ranking officers, has to react to guerrilla attacks (real and imagined), thinks of his family at home, and so forth. The same is true for the peasant, a small corn farmer who cannot bring in his crop because the military prohibits access to his land. His children go hungry, his wife is desperate, his pregnant sister-in-law was massacred and his brother is an alcoholic who damages the whole life of the extended family. More than that, both the officer and the peasant depend, more or less, on anonymous decisions from the central government and, in the end, on the ups and downs of the international market. Society is not composed of individual substances; society is relational.

*For the military officer and the peasant, this means that they are what they are because of their socialization in different worlds that fiercely contradict each other. The military traditionally derives its *raison d'être* from repressing indigenous peasants, and the peasants have experienced this repression for generations. Both actors are in very different and antagonistic positions in society, and both of them know that*

and act accordingly. Both are defined by these positions and by their corresponding knowledge, that is, their cognitive dispositions.

Social positions and embodied dispositions (cognitive, affective, and bodily) of actors relate through an intricate, constant interplay. Bourdieu offers theoretical concepts that help to reduce the complexity of such relations between objective structures and incorporated habitus. For religious praxis, the interpretation of the social world and its embodiment in religious attitudes, convictions, and practices is extremely important. The embodiment corresponds to particular semantics. This semantics needs to be understood within the framework of its social genesis and use. While Bourdieu works intensively with meaning in its social dimension (*sens pratique*), he does not offer specifically praxeological tools for the analysis of semantics. Nevertheless his concepts of habitus, practical logic, symbolic systems, and language mark out a route towards a praxeological (not semiological!) approach to meaning (*sense*, *Sinn*) and signification (*signification*, *Bedeutung*), as well as to a fuller understanding of practical sense. However, Bourdieu's concepts are not self-explanatory. They are best understood by first considering their larger philosophical and hermeneutical background. Therefore, we will pay special attention to those influences on Bourdieu that are of particular importance for our special interest in a qualitative method: scientific objectivation, relationism, language, and questions regarding the analytical approach.

In the present part on Bourdieu's epistemological premises, we will highlight his relationist approach to social sciences. A general introduction to his fieldwork in philosophy sketches various influences on Bourdieu's work. Then we narrow the focus to praxeological relationism. First, we briefly examine Ernst Cassirer and Claude Levi-Strauss in order to highlight particularities of their epistemological approach to the social sciences. In order to better understand the particularities of the relationist approach, we begin this section with a look at Cassirer's critique of "substantialism". Especially from Cassirer, Bourdieu derives two insights that shall structure our further considerations. First, social actors (and sociologists) can perceive the social world only by means of schemes of perception. Second, for the perception of the social world and for the social processes—for praxis—the *relations* between operating units are more important than the (supposedly inherent) properties of these units. In consequence, we will examine what Bourdieu's relational approach means for his models of fields, and of the social space, as well as for his concepts of disposition, taste, and style. Furthermore, the notion of perceptual schemes will receive a closer look and be considered in the context of scientific observation. Finally, we dedicate a digression to substantialist thinking with regard to social praxis and social theories.

1.1 Fieldwork in philosophy

“Fieldwork in Philosophy” entitles a printed version of a conversation Bourdieu had in 1986 with Axel Honneth, Hermann Kocyba, and Bernd Schwibs about the programmatic traits of his work (Bourdieu 1990a, G: Bourdieu 1992a; and in: Robbins 2000a, 3ff.). It catches one’s eye that none of the concepts in the title are originally sociological. *Fieldwork* alludes to Bourdieu’s formation and practice as an anthropologist, developing basic theoretical concepts like *habitus*, (*symbolic capital*), and *strategies* in the context of his field-studies in Algeria (e.g., Bourdieu 1977a; 1977b, G: 2009; 1990b, G: 2008). *Philosophy* alludes to his education, professional practice, and erudition in this discipline. Sociology comes third, so to say.⁷⁷

In Bourdieu’s works, and far beyond specialized texts, as for example the book on Heidegger or *Pascalian Meditations* (Bourdieu 1991a, G: 1975a; 2000a, G: 2001a), the readers will constantly find programmatic references to philosophical authors and debates, as well as careful reflections on the epistemic premises of social sciences. Cultural anthropology and the experience of fieldwork in an alien culture pervade Bourdieu’s sociology as a constant hermeneutical consciousness of the gap between the actors studied and the researcher, as well as a consciousness of the social construction of any knowledge and even of the anthropologist’s reflexivity itself.⁷⁸ Philosophy permeates Bourdieu’s sociology as a constant hermeneutical awareness of the epistemological premises of scientific terminology as well as of everyday language.

1.1.1 The scientific view

Bourdieu approaches the relation between everyday practices to be analyzed and the observing scientist not in terms of subjectivist hermeneutics (e.g., Gadamer) or anthropological approaches (e.g., action anthropology) but rather by a sociological theory of science.

77 For an overview of scientific influences on Bourdieu in general see Fröhlich and Rehbein 2009. On Bourdieu’s philosophical background see Zenklusen 2010; Robbins 2000a; 2000b. Hepp 2000, from an explicitly German perspective with a special focus on Bourdieu’s methodology and on socio-semiotics.

78 For the traditional field of anthropology in foreign cultures see e.g. Bourdieu 1977b, F: 1972, G: 2009; 1977a; for France see Bourdieu et al. 1999, F: 1993, G: 1998; for epistemology in general see Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1991a, G: 1991b.

French epistemology

In order to do so, he draws upon French scientific epistemology, namely *Bachelard and Canguilhem*, but also on Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and others.⁷⁹ First, Bourdieu is interested in breaking with “spontaneous sociology” that takes commonsense perception of the social world as a sufficient sociological explanation. Instead, he postulates that an object of scientific research has to be constructed theoretically and methodologically. According to Bourdieu, the epistemological tradition of Bachelard and Canguilhem establishes as the “fundamental scientific act [...] the construction of the object; you don’t move to the real without a hypothesis, without instruments of construction” (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1991a, 248, G: 1991b, 271). This approach is consciously different from subjectivist and phenomenological approaches to social reality that tend to settle for accounts from actors as a sufficient social reality.⁸⁰

Such a construction of the scientific object by means of hypotheses, models, and the like, fulfills a fourfold role. It overrides preconceptions of everyday or commonsense knowledge. It renders visible the perceptual schemes and criteria of the scientific view. It thus builds the basis for a self-reflexive examination of scientists and their preconditions. Finally, the *self-reflexive* construction of models helps to avoid the scholastic fallacy of identifying the model of reality with reality itself⁸¹ and thus of superimposing the logic of social science on social praxis—as Bourdieu criticizes for instance in Levi-Strauss (Bourdieu 1990b, 30ff., G: 2008, 57ff.). In consequence, constructing praxeological models of observation for Bourdieu means navigating safely between the Scylla of subjectivist naïveté and the Charybdis of objectivist alienation. This is due to the fact that a praxeological model loses sight of neither the actors nor the social structures within which the actors perceive, judge, act, and thus create the “objectivity of the subjective” (Bourdieu 1990b, 135ff., G: 2008, 246ff.). Therefore, according to Bourdieu, sociologists

have to carry out a second and more difficult break away from objectivism, by re-introducing, in a second stage, what had to be excluded in order to construct social reality. Sociology has to include a sociology of the *perception* of the social world, that is, a sociology of the construction of the *world-views* which themselves contribute to the construction of this world. But, given the fact that we have constructed social

79 Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1991a, G: 1991b; especially Bachelard 1984; 1968; Canguilhem 2008.

80 Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1991a, 248, G: 1991b, 271. See thorough critiques of subjectivism in: Bourdieu 1977b, G: 2009; 1990b, G: 2008.

81 Bourdieu 2000a, G: 2001a; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 36ff., 217ff., G: 1996, 62ff., 251ff.

space, we know that these points of view, as the word itself suggests, are views taken from a certain point, that is, from a given position within social space. (Bourdieu 1990c, 130, G: 1992b, 143, italics added)⁸²

In consequence, the sociology of social *praxis* cannot settle for the construction of the objective conditions of praxis. It is not enough to reconstruct objective and universal structures of meaning. For this reason, Bourdieu fiercely criticizes Levi-Strauss' concept of structures (Bourdieu 1990b, 36ff., G: 2008, 68ff.).

With regard to our initial example, we might say that the officer and the peasant do not merely represent positions in social space and in fields. While they indeed objectively represent positions, they also perceive⁸³ these positions. Finally, they act according to the relation between position and perception. Thus, praxeology also has to account for the subjective conditions of praxis (the embodied cognitive, affective, and bodily dispositions of the actors). The social world is not just an assembly of relations between objects and objective processes. It is also an assembly of relations between perceptions of these objects and processes. And both the networks of objects and the networks of perceptions interrelate closely with each other.⁸⁴

In a certain sense, Bourdieu's epistemological move, away from phenomenology to objectivistic methods, is dialectic insofar as it comes back to phenomenological interests, but in a completely new way. Leaving behind the subjectivistic traits of his early phenomenological masters (Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Schütz), Bourdieu comes back to a description of the "natural attitude" (Schütz and Luckmann 1973, 3) of actors as an important element of social reality. Nevertheless, he transforms Schütz's concept. He understands it as a "dialectic of objectification and embodiment" (Bourdieu 1977b, 87ff., G: 2009, 164ff., not identical) between habitus and structures.⁸⁵ Within the praxeological framework, this means that embodied

82 See similar, but pointing to a conservative political misunderstanding of the epistemological "break with preconceptions and presuppositions" (Bourdieu 1999a, 36, G: 1998a, 94).

83 "Perception" in praxeological tone is not reduced to "*conscious* awareness." The concept also includes the implicit, spontaneous awareness operated by the dispositions of the habitus.

84 Bourdieu 2010, 468ff., G: 1982a, 727ff. These somewhat complex relations will be the condition for our dispositional model of the habitus (vol. 2) and the methodological model of the praxeological square (vol. 3).

85 He may also postulate a "science of the dialectical relations between the objective structures (...) and the structured dispositions" (Bourdieu 1977b, 3, similar in G: 2009, 147) or a "science of the dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality, or, more simply, of incorporation and objectification" (Bourdieu 1977b, 72).

objective structures act as schemes of perception. Thus, they actively structure the perception of the world and guide action upon the objective structures of the perceived world. In consequence, the phenomenological interest in subjective world-views is not simply lost in objectivistic translation, but is sublated in praxeology.

German Neo-Kantianism

A second important influence (Bourdieu 1998b, 3ff., G: 2007, 15ff.), with more or less the same tendency, is *Ernst Cassirer's* neo-Kantian epistemology, based upon a thorough critique of substantialism and a sound theory of relation. In a nutshell, Cassirer challenges the substantialist idea that reality is composed of a hierarchy of substances (things, objects) especially in its late nineteenth-century positivistic interpretation: that is, that these substances (social agents, goods, etc.) can be perceived by the observer as they really and objectively are. In the vein of Kantian epistemology, Cassirer counters this worldview with an analysis of how scientific knowledge is generated in mathematics and natural sciences: namely, by means of applying existing schemes of perception to the observation of reality as well as through the successive combination and transformation of these schemes. Knowledge is not generated by mirroring reality or by the...

breaking-up of a sensuous thing into the group of its sensuous properties; but new and specific categories of judgment must be introduced, in order to carry out this analysis. In this judgment, the concrete impression first changes into the physically determinate object. (Cassirer 1953, 149)⁸⁶

Scientific cognition operates by preconstructed categories and by establishing relations. Only these render the object meaningful. This principle does not only govern in science, but also in cognition in general. Not even a simple thing can be understood in terms of an exact correspondence like a mirror image between thing and perception. Human perception *does not mirror* things, actions, persons, experiences, and so forth, in the brain according to what these objects of perception really are. Instead, the process of perception *represents* the objects *as signs* to observers according to how their schemes of perception render the objects. Therefore, in Cassirer, representation does not mean a mirror image of a thing in mind. It rather means to put the single object, as perceived by the senses, into a meaningful series of cognitively stored signs—that is, “schemes of perception.” “No matter how

86 And further: “The sensuous quality of a thing becomes a physical object, when it is transformed into a serial determination. The ‘thing’ now changes from a sum of properties into a mathematical system of values, which are established with reference to some scale of comparison”.

complete our knowledge may be in itself, it never offers us the objects themselves, but only signs of them and their reciprocal relations” (Cassirer 1953, 303).

In Bourdieu’s sociology, a very similar structure can be found. Schemes of perception are the condition for both scientific and everyday knowledge. Scientific knowledge has to construct its object by relational models created with reference to the interest of scientists.⁸⁷ And embodied schemes of perception structure also the supposedly natural cognition of the everyday social actor observed by the social scientist. This results in a twofold relevance of perceptual schemes: in the ordinary actor’s praxis itself, as well as in the scientific praxis of observing this actor and his use of his perceptual schemes. We will come to this when we discuss the dispositions of habitus (vol. 2) and the processes of modeling (vol. 3).

1.1.2 Relations in society and language

Bourdieu himself sees his emphasis on relation as the basic logical and ontological category for the social sciences in the framework of a new paradigm for modern sciences initiated not least by Cassirer. “The relational (rather than more narrowly ‘structuralist’) mode of thinking is, as Cassirer (1923) demonstrated in *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*, the hallmark of modern science.”⁸⁸

What does this epistemological decision, pro relation and contra substance, imply? In simple terms (later on we discuss details), in social science this decision allows the understanding of social actors according to the social relations they are in, while a substantialist approach only serves to describe inherent properties. Substantialist scholars create an abstract concept of an actor and isolate the actor from other actors and conditions. While Max Weber is not a staunch substantialist, nevertheless his typological method works in a similar way with properties. For instance, Weber defines the typical priest according to certain properties, mainly his “regular exercise of the cult” with certain norms, rules, places, and associa-

87 Therefore a self-critical “Realpolitik of reason” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 174ff., G: 1996, 212) is indispensable.

88 Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 96f., G: 1996, 126. Cassirer’s relationism can be regarded as “naturally fitting” Bachelard’s critical view of the concept of substance and his theory of science (Bachelard 1968; Bourdieu 1998b, VII, G: 2007, 7). While Saussure and Levi-Strauss also develop their theories on relationist grounds, Bourdieu assesses them as too “narrowly structuralist.” For the impact of Cassirer on Bourdieu see Nairz-Wirth 2009; Bickel 2003. According to our view, this author underestimates the influence of Cassirer’s *Substance and Function* on Bourdieu.

tions.⁸⁹ On the one hand, the typological method implies a forceful abstraction, isolating just one main property. On the other hand, it implies an ever-increasing number of additional properties in order to define a “priest” in changing cultures and situations, as Bourdieu criticizes.

Instead, a relationist way of defining the concept of priest describes the objective relations a certain group of social actors in a religious field is located in with regard to other groups—that is, the prophets, the sorcerers, and the laity. In other words, while a substantialist approach would describe, for instance, a social class as an ensemble of actors with certain properties in themselves (poverty, prosperity, etc.), a relational approach describes a social class, within a model, as defined by the relations that exist between the position at stake and other positions (such as over, under, ascending, etc., in the model of social space). The properties still are taken into account, but now in relation to the properties of other positions. Only these relations render the properties their social value—that is, their social reality as a property of someone. The priest is a priest not simply because of his participation in a regulated cultic enterprise, but because of the distinction of his praxis from the praxis of a sorcerer or a prophet. In a nutshell, the relational approach, as distinct from a substantialist one, opens the gates for a modern sociology not only for Bourdieu but also for Structural Functionalism, Systems Theory, Pragmatism, and others.

As to explain the difference between substantialism and relationism with regard to empirical research, the discussion about typologies of Pentecostalism may serve as an example. This discussion is particularly interesting since Pentecostal praxis has been rapidly changing throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. From a substantialist point of view, Pentecostals have the property of strongly believing in the Holy Spirit. Then, to Neo-Pentecostals (a visibly different form of religious praxis) are attached additional attributes, such as prosperity preaching or casting out demons during church services. Thus, up to a certain point, concepts are created that can be helpful for communication. However, due to class differences⁹⁰ or to historical processes,⁹¹ one can observe Pentecostal praxis largely without any reference to the Holy Spirit. If the definitions of *Pentecostal*, *Neopentecostal* and the like, are taken as mirror images of reality (that is, in a naively realist way) then it will be difficult, if not impossible, to address the differences and changes implied by social class and historical transformation. Most probably, new types of

89 Bourdieu 1987, 119f., G: 2011a, 7f.. See Weber 1978, 439ff.

90 See Köhrsen 2013 with an excellent study on the changes of Pentecostal praxis in search of appropriateness among the middle class in Buenos Aires; also Schäfer 1990; 1992.

91 See Schäfer 2009 with regard to historical change in Latin American Pentecostalism.

Pentecostalism will simply be added to the typologies, each type with the pretention to mirror a part of reality. The increasing number of types will trigger the plural *Pentecostals* as an attempt to solve the problem of the observed diversity. If each type of Pentecostalism is conceived as a real entity in itself, the plural simply serves to multiply substances. It rather veils the real scientific problem. If the types of Pentecostalism are understood as nothing more than names for particular states of religious praxis (that is, in a nominalist way) at least the realist mistake of substantialism is avoided; the plural simply signals a dazzled perception of a highly complex condition. Nominalists at least know that the types are ideal; in other words, that they are simply scientific means of addressing the empirical manifold. Nevertheless, the definitions stick to properties inherent to the different types. New phenomena, therefore, require new types. A relationist approach, in contrast, also realizes particular kinds of religious behavior and convictions. Based on empirical data, it can indeed state certain continuities and particularities. However, it does not take just one element (for instance, centeredness in the Holy Spirit) as a necessary condition of belonging to a type. From a relationist point of view, one rather reconstructs all the observed elements within many different relations. For instance, a given religious praxis appears to be composed of manifold internal relations, as objectively related to many other observed practices, and to be related to the position of the practitioners at stake within the social structure. Hence, it may result that a given group never refers to the Holy Spirit in its religious praxis but, because of other reasons (historical trajectory, partaking in associations, etc.), it ascribes itself to Pentecostalism and is seen by other groups as Pentecostal. The relationist approach of *HabitusAnalysis* therefore does not form types in the realist or nominalist sense, but habitus formations. These formations are generated out of a large number of observed elements, more precisely, out of homologous dispositions of different actors. The habitus formations render structures of religious praxis. In other words, they render aggregated and differentiated styles of religious praxis under various possible aspects: the different generative structures of the habitus with the structures' particular central focus (Holy Spirit, rapture of the Church, Christ, wonders, etc.); the agglomeration of different habitus formations in the religious field; or the formations' position in the overall social structure. Habitus formations represent temporary shapes of praxis in a given society or field. They may be taken as real types as long as one keeps in mind that the formations (understood as real types) are reconstructed according to certain scientific schemes of perception, certain social structures, and certain historical circumstances. In other words, substantialist typologies may foster quick communication at the cost of scientific precision, which means a loss of empirical reality. In contrast, a relationist approach will rearrange the positions of a given field continuously according to the dynamics

of praxis and thus always remit the scientific discourse to the social conditions at stake, which means slower communication but a gain in empirical reality.

Bourdieu anchors his sociological relationism in Cassirer and in Marx. With regard to Cassirer, he maintains a critical distance to the philosopher's idealism (for example, when he criticizes the lack of social anchorage of Cassirer's "symbolic forms").⁹² However, Cassirer's groundbreaking critique of substantialism and his introduction of a relationist approach into philosophy (Cassirer 1953) are important sources of theoretical inspiration for the basic architecture of Bourdieu's sociology.

Society

The philosophical relationism combines well with Bourdieu's adoption and enhancement of the relational concept of *society* in Marx.

I could twist Hegel's famous formula and say that *the real is the relational*: what exists in the social world are relations—not interactions between agents or intersubjective ties between individuals, but objective relations which exist 'independently of individual consciousness and will,' as Marx said. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 97, G: 1996, 126)

Bourdieu appreciates Marx as a relational thinker of the social world. A slave, so says Marx in his well-known critique of Proudhon, is a slave because of the social relations he lives in, since "society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand." (Marx 1973, 265) For this reason, a gross collective concept of population as a totality does not suffice for political economy until it is understood as a structured unit, "not as the chaotic conception of a whole, but as a rich totality of many determinations and relations." (Marx 1973, 100) In the vein of a relational concept of society, structured by domination, Bourdieu fosters relational models for the theoretical construction of the objective social conditions—such as, fields and their internal dynamics as well as the structure of the social space as a composition of mutually external positions.⁹³ This means that classes are constructed as classes on paper according to the defined interests of the observers.

92 For instance Bourdieu 2000a, 16, G: 2001a, 27; 1998b, 57, G: 2007, 121 with respect to religion; similar in 1990b, 94, G: 2008, 172.

93 Bourdieu does not only build upon Marx. The relational concept of field also owes much to Kurt Lewin (a student of Cassirer) and Norbert Elias (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 97, G: 1996, 126).

HabitusAnalysis 1

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