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philosophy

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As exigências normativas do ethos democrático brasileiro:

O habitus em Bourdieu, teoria crítica e filosofia social

Nythamar de Oliveira*

Abstract: This paper argues for an interdisciplinary interlocution between social theory and social philosophy in order to recast the problem of normativity in social practices, especially within Brazil's democratic ethos. By resorting to insights from critical theory and social epistemology, the essay proposes to reexamine Bourdieu's conception of *habitus* so as to contribute to a moderate social constructionism that cannot be reduced to a postmodernist discourse or to a variant of relativism.

Keywords: critical theory; democratic ethos; *habitus*; normativity; social philosophy

Resumo: O artigo defende uma interlocução interdisciplinar entre teoria social e filosofia social, com o fito de reformular o problema da normatividade nas práticas sociais, especialmente no contexto de um ethos democrático brasileiro. Recorrendo a aportes de teoria crítica e de epistemologia social, o texto propõe-se a reexaminar a concepção de habitus de Bourdieu, de forma a contribuir para um construcionismo social mitigado que não pode ser reduzido a um discurso pós-moderno ou a uma versão de relativismo.

Palavras-chave: *ethos* democrático; filosofia social; *habitus*; normatividade; teoria crítica

1. One of the best approaches to make sense of ongoing social, political problems in Brazil is by means of an interdisciplinary research program that takes into account both the complex historical and cultural makeup of the Brazilian people, including its modern quest for a national identity, and the

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social analyses that seek to unveil their rationale combined with economic and political variables. In this essay, I shall try to offer some insights into the Brazilian reception of a critical social theory, as I reconsider contributions both from sociological and normative standpoints in interdisciplinary researches that seek precisely to avoid the theoretical imposition of particular categories upon different social contexts, so as to attend to the critical insertion of such analyses to be carried out, as it were, as an "immanent critique" of such complex processes and phenomena. The so-called liberation theology and related grassroots movements that flourished in Brazil in the 1960s and 70s, leading up to the consolidation of a social-democratic political culture with the election of two presidents from the Workers' Party, Lula da Silva (2003-2010) and Dilma Rousseff (2011-present), were in many ways indebted to the emancipatory, neo-Marxist research program of critical theory (*Kritische Theorie*), just as they recast some of the complex insights into Brazilian identity as originally offered by the social, historical analyses of national thinkers such as Gilberto Freyre, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Florestan Fernandes, Celso Furtado, Raymundo Faoro and Fernando Henrique Cardoso, together with the seminal contributions by left-wing intellectuals such as Helio Jaguaribe, Alvaro Pinto and Nelson Werneck Sodré. In effect, Brazilian liberation philosophy interestingly recasts Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud's hermeneutics of suspicion in rather agonistic, structural or functionalist terms that reappropriate (especially in authors such as Rubem Alves, Augusto Boal, Paulo Freire and Leonardo Boff) the mixed blessings of critical theory in the utopian, negative dialectics of its first-generation exponents (Benjamin, Adorno, Horkheimer, Bloch, Marcuse), without attending to the normative, sociological claims that would characterize the pragmatist turn of the second and third generations of the Frankfurt School (Habermas, Honneth). My working hypothesis here is that the sociological and normative deficits that one still finds in various proposals of critical theory can be filled in by a phenomenology of liberation that takes both critical theory and cultural studies into account, particularly the questions of gender, ethnicity, and race, beyond the capitalist-socialist divide. What I have dubbed the phenomenological deficit of critical theory allows indeed for the recasting of a phenomenology of liberation, precisely at the level of a weak social constructionism that mitigates and mediates some of the too-strong, objectivist claims of Marxism in liberation philosophy and some of the too-weak, subjectivist "representations" of postcolonial and cultural studies. In this sense, the fate of critical theory and of social philosophy in Latin America hinges upon the very consolidation of social democracy, itself bound to the ups and downs of globalized capitalism in developing societies.

It is my contention here that, from a critical-theoretical standpoint, Brazilian social democracy may successfully take into account both the conservative criticisms of egalitarianism, populism, and paternalism (as found in political thinkers such as Denis Rosenfield) and the radical critique from the far-left (in Marxist philosophers like João Quartim de Moraes).

In order to account for the normative dimension of a Brazilian democratic ethos we must tackle some of the very problems lying at the so-called "transition to democracy" shift from a 21-year military dictatorship to a full constitutional democracy in Brazil with the draft of the 1988 Constitution, so as to address the programmatic question: "Why, after all, should we stand up for democracy?"As I argued in a previous essay, the ongoing democratization process began with the transfer of power to a civilian president in 1985 and was both tried and radicalized with the impeachment of President-elect Collor in 1992, but is still under way, given all the social, economic inequalities and stances of corruption, impunity, and patrimonialism that continue to haunt this nation (De Oliveira, 2004, p. 40). The social, political history of modern Brazil certainly helps us understand how we became this unequal, hybrid society characterized, in Weberian terms, both by modern features of rationalization, secularization, capitalism, and liberalism, and by premodern structures of feudalism, patrimonialism, and clientelism. Some might suggest that this is the very reason why Brazil remains a natural candidate for the postmodern condition, insofar as modernity and its emancipatory ideals of autonomy, liberal, representative democracy, and social egalitarianism never came into full expression in most Latin American societies. In effect, the challenge of rethinking the meaning of our modern ethos is even more accentuated in our self-understanding of Brazilian social life. In this article, I should like to partially revisit this problem in social theory by recourse to a social philosophical articulation of critical theory that takes self-understanding, socialization and reflexivity seriously, without the facile, uncritical importation of European categories or reinventing the wheel in another Latin-American, delirious patchwork.

2. In a recent research, I sought to reexamine Habermas's conception of lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) in tandem with Rawls's procedural device of reflective equilibrium so as to recast Honneth's theory of recognition in terms of a reflexive, democratic ethos (De Oliveira, 2009). Honneth's conception of reflexive democracy first appeared as an alternative to substantive models of liberation and participation (such as Arendt's republican conception of democracy) and to procedural models of deliberative democracy, because of

their restrictive views of the public, political arenas (Rawls and Habermas). The idea of a "reflexive democracy" is also found in Olson and related to Giddens's conception of "reflexive modernity" (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994; Olson, 2006). More recently, Honneth spoke of reflexive freedom as a more defensible conception than the classical liberal view of negative freedom of contractualism and as the intermediate stage leading towards a social conception of freedom, which turns out to be an important element in his reactualization of Hegel's philosophy of right, as an alternative to both republican and procedural trends in Habermas's model of democracy (Honneth, 2011, p. 44-117).

In order to come up with a self-understanding of whatever could be reasonably proposed as a Latin American or a specifically Brazilian take on critical social theory, one must of course be aware of many risks and limitations in trying to embark on this kind of interdisciplinary, crosscultural research program, but I am convinced that this remains a certain, fruitful pathway to pursue. Let me just add that any interdisciplinary research in theories of social justice and democracy must avoid the two extremes of becoming too trivial and predictable either by focusing only on concrete, empirical finds in field research (e.g., data, statistics, and figures) relating to Brazilian social reality or by becoming so conceptually abstract to the point of losing contact with social reality. So-called "Latin Americanists" or "Brazilianists" are understandably more prone to fall into the first kind of reductionism, while social and political philosophers tend to take for granted their supposedly "universal" categories and conceptual schemes. One of the guiding questions for an interdisciplinary research program in democracy within the framework of Latin American and Brazilian studies could be thus recast: "Is there any such thing as a Latin American or Brazilian social philosophy?" Whenever one is faced with the challenge of doing Latin American or Brazilian social philosophy today, one must inevitably address the Heideggerian question whether philosophy isn't after all a European undertaking and all theoretical approaches to our social reality would somehow be Eurocentric. As it has become a commonplace nowadays, while so-called continental philosophers tend to value historical, structural features in their approach, analytic philosophers would simply deal with concepts in their logical, semantic coherence and clarity, without paying too much attention to their historical, cultural genesis. And yet, the challenge of making sense of a Latin American philosophy has been actually pursued by both continental and analytical thinkers, not without reservations, concessions, and suspicions (Nuccetelli, Schutte and Bueno, 2010). Social philosophy could be very helpful in articulating this immanent critique with the very

social theory that tries to account for the complexity of social phenomena and analyses that bring together European and non-Western elements.

All in all, if one regards philosophy as a worldview, lifestyle or mindset – contra Heidegger –, it is certainly the case that all Latin American indigenous peoples and non-Western traditions overall have their own respective sets of beliefs about the cosmos, life, and death. And yet anthropological, historical, and empirical descriptions of particular cultures, social worlds, common practices, myths and beliefs do not seem to count as philosophical accounts of "philosophy", which seem to presuppose critical inquiry, reflexivity, and impartiality, even if not necessarily understood in analytic, systematic or even universalist terms. So it seems perfectly reasonable to recast a Latin American or Brazilian social philosophy properly understood through the ongoing interactive, dialogical encounter between European and non-Western traditions, that is, insofar as it succeeds in rescuing the characteristically Latin American/Brazilian features of the highly complex, subtle combinations of Latin American indigenous thought and Afro-Latin American traditions with European nomadic thinking, reflecting the ongoing flux of Asiatic migrations, African and Semitic diasporas which ultimately make Latin American Philosophy quite unique (Medina, 1992). There remains the normative challenge of subscribing to cultural relativism without embracing ethical relativism.

3. As noted above, it seems indeed plausible to reconstruct a social phenomenology of the Brazilian ethos by resorting to Habermas's tripartite, intersubjective aspects of the lifeworld oriented toward socially, linguistically shared understanding of everyday practices, understood in hermeneutic, reflexive terms, so as to deal with the moral, legal, and political contexts of signification, the problem of a normative conception of the person, and the challenge of a reasonable pluralism (Habermas, 1984; 1989), A grammar of fairness must thus go beyond the procedural, fair distribution of material goods, and must be correlated to the fundamental principle of recognition (doing justice to the other in her otherness) and its implicit moral grammar of social conflicts, as Honneth has argued, in order to avoid equating cultural relativism with moral relativism and the postmodernist dissolution of the aesthetic and normative substance of the social lifeworld. I have thus assumed that the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) stands overall for the horizon of socially, culturally sedimented linguistic meanings that make up the background environment of competences, practices, and attitudes shared by social actors, without being reduced to a passive, static process. The problematic relationship between

systems and lifeworld lies, therefore, at the bottom of the normative grounds of social criticism, just as the basic ideas of cooperation and competition have determined social philosophical approaches to political theory. Following Habermas and Honneth's criticisms of systemic, instrumentalized power, we may recast reflexive self-formations in a democratic political culture through intersubjective recognition and social policies for distributive justice, so that they cannot ultimately be separated from their correlated lifeworldly practices of self-esteem, self-care, and self-understanding. Honneth's theory of recognition successfully revisits the critique of power so as to address the phenomenological deficit of critical theory inherent in any attempt to breaks away from the demonization of technological, instrumental domination of nature and human exploitation (Honneth, 1996). The ongoing democratization of emerging societies and developing countries like Brazil is a complex process that has engaged diverse segments of civil society and still has a long way to go, as a reflexive model of radical democracy is to be accomplished not only by social movements from below, let alone by governors, the elites or intellectuals, as it were, from above, but ultimately by civil society as a whole and its deliberative, reflective commitments to solidarity and networks of social cooperation. What is at stake, after all, is the institutionalization of the social world, beyond traditional accounts of society and state. Honneth has convincingly shown the impossibility of maintaining communicative reason immune from the instrumentalization of social action in the very attempt to tackle the paradox of the rationalization of lifeworldly relations, as anticipated by Habermas's own account of socialization. Honneth seeks thus to rescue the lifeworldly, civil society's locus of the democratic ethos, which tends to be eclipsed by Rawls's idea of public reason and Habermas's public sphere (Honneth, 1998). By all criteria, the normative thrust of a democratic ethos has been one of the major contributions of Habermas's monumental work to a discourse theory of law and democracy (between facts and norms, dealing with both *Faktizität* and *Geltung*) and to the critical theory of a democratic *Sittlichkeit* such as the one recently proposed by his successor (Honneth and Joas, 1988; Habermas, 1998). To the extent that those pathologies cannot be tackled by the social engineering of systemic globalization and the latter equated with the ongoing democratization of institutions worldwide, the normative dimension of "theories of justice" must be translated into the very challenges faced by the Brazilian transition to democracy, particularly those taken up by civil society, social movements, and organizations –including, but not limited to, NGOs. The main problem of my research can be now restated: "How can a social theory account for normativity within a political culture

whose democratic ethos is still in the making?" By effecting a rapprochement between the procedural conceptions of a reflective equilibrium (Rawls) and the lifeworld (Habermas) I have aimed at a hermeneutics of normativity correlated to the facticity of a democratic ethos inherent in a pluralist, political culture, capable of integrating semantic and pragmatic aspects of a gamut of practices and codifications (*modus vivendi*) that could be reasonably identified with that social ethos. Such a recasting of reflexive, democratic ethos, in this case, proves quite suitable for our endless experiments trying to make sense of the normative challenges of social-democratization in Brazil. Brazilian social and political thought in the 20th century has been caught between authoritarianism and democratization, under the sign of modernization, massive migrations from rural to urban areas, social movements, and the intellectual inputs of positivism and Marxism (Stepan, 1989). Even as we speak of modernization in Brazil, we must call into question a reduction of modernization to rationalization, secularization, and the differentiation of systemic spheres, as both premodern and modern forms of social life and institutional arrangements coexist in our reflexive, democratic ethos. In effect, subtle and explicit forms of authoritarianism are not only to be understood in systemic terms, say, in governmental, administrative, juridical, and political stances, but end up betraying a certain cumplicity and tacit consent across different segments of civil society and even within the social tissue of everyday practices, as attested by the so-called *jeitinho* or the Brazilian way of bending the law, rules, and norms. Furthermore, the Brazilian dream of realizing a social democracy has been ultimately haunted by two populist pathologies at the heart of their political culture of paternalist cordiality: the myth of racial democracy and the liberationist utopia of social egalitarianism. While the conservative elites promoted the former and still call into question intersectional approaches to race and ethnic relations in Brazil, leftist and socially-engaged segments of society tend to take social democracy for granted as a socialist promise to be delivered by a paternalist State to the poor. In order to avoid the ideological trends of this kind of approach, social theory must recast its own epistemic, normative claims in dialogue with social philosophy.

4. The Brazilian democratic ethos must deal with its own normative deficits from within. We must thus turn to "fieldwork in philosophy" in order to tackle not only the question of the Brazilian way itself, but whatever makes human sociability a determinate social ethos, a concrete *Sittlichkeit*, so as to address the question: "what is sociality all about?" After all, the full meaning of the social is best understood as it is to be found in a social ethos, in collective,

social, cultural identities, where social practices are at once constitutive and regulative, in a normative sense that transcends a political, national identity (as denounced by social criticisms of totalitarian and nationalist regimes) but remains within the immanent, structural view of a social ontology. It seems that both a robust theory of social practice such as Pierre Bourdieu's conception of *habitus* and a weak social constructionism or a moderate constructivism converge on successfully responding to the systematic criticisms raised by analytic, social epistemology, by showing how they cannot be reduced to a postmodernist hype of sorts ("social construction of what?") nor be taken for another variant of relativism. Bourdieu's social theory departs, in effect, from a critique of sociological deficits within linguistic theories that fail to make sense of the inextricable connection between language and social life, including structuralist and other fashionable trends that seduced many continental circles in the last quarter of the 20th century.

    In the preface to his major work – *Le sens pratique* (Bourdieu, 1980a), which was regarded as a carefully revised and enlarged version of his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972) –, Bourdieu stages the problematic of a sociology of knowledge that articulates social theory and cultural practice without reducing the former to a mere epistemological discourse (as Mannheim's work was then dismissed) or the latter to an aesthetic symbolism (as most poststructuralists and postmodernists were identified with). Bourdieu situates thus his own contribution to the methodology of the social sciences somewhere between ethnology[1] and the history of social ideas, i.e. in terms of a "sociology of culture" and "social history", in a strategic move that reminds of Foucault's own recasting of cultural history vis-à-vis the *École des Annales* (Chartier, 1988). Moreover, Bourdieu's pronounced interest in the sociological relation between language and power points to his methodological departure from Saussurean structuralism and Marxist positivism. The double-hermeneutical character of Bourdieu's social methodology can be clearly discerned in his critical account of the institutionalized distinction between "ethnology" and "sociology", in that the anthropologist's "splitting" (*dédoublement*) or "separation" (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 34) vis-à-vis her/his object of investigation often betrays a veritable "philologism" as the decoding of a given culture and its symbols naively presupposes an original, "true" meaning. Bourdieu's "double-hermeneutical" method is explicitly stated elsewhere, for instance, in *Questions de sociologie*: "The sociology of sociology is not... one 'specialty' among others but one of the first conditions of a scientific sociology" (Bourdieu,

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[1] "Ethnologie", in French, understood as "cultural anthropology", as opposed to both physical and philosophical anthropology. Bourdieu expressly calls into question epistemological traditions that inherited Kant's ahistorical dualism.

1980b, p. 22). Therefore, in order to analyze the social world and its practices, one must first overcome the dualistic opposition of theoretical knowledge to practical knowledge. For neither the anthropologist nor the sociologist can avoid the pitfalls of "intuitive participation", on the one hand, and "ethnocentrism", on the other, unless they first recognize the "practical sense" (*le sens pratique*) which, according to Bourdieu, underlies all modes of theoretical knowledge. That is why Bourdieu sets out to "overcome" the subjectivism-objectivism dichotomy of objectivist and ethnomethodological modes of theoretical knowledge by reintegrating different sociological conceptions (notably, those of *habitus*, "field", and "class") at the very constitutive level of social practices to be observed and studied by anthropologists and sociologists. In effect, the relation between the observer and what is being observed is a particular case of the knowing-doing relation, which Bourdieu defines as the relation between a logic of theorizing ("logical logic") and a practicing logic ("pre-logical logic"). It is precisely to elucidate the sense of the latter ("the logic of practice", "*le sens pratique*") that Bourdieu goes on to elaborate a "Critique of theoretical reason".

One legitimate question that can be raised as one goes through the first five chapters of Bourdieu's *magnum opus* is whether he is not ultimately seeking to reconcile the very phenomenological and objectivist views he criticizes. For Bourdieu, a science of the social world cannot be reduced either to a social phenomenology or to a social physics. Thus he seeks to "move beyond" (*dépasser*) the antagonism between these two modes of knowledge, so as to pass from the *modus operatum* to the *modus operandi* of social objectification. And yet his critique claims to construct the theory of the mode of generation of practices at the same time that it establishes an experimental science that requires, as a necessary moment in all research, "methodological objectivism". In social-epistemological we are dealing here with the problem of realism in opposition to noncognitivist and relativist views calling into question the possibility of objectivity. Bourdieu recasts a dialectical tension between "genesis" and "structure", between "empirical" analysis and "transcendental" synthesis, in a radical attempt to break away from the ahistorical objectification of structuralism and the intellectualist voluntarism of French phenomenology and rational-choice theories. Although it raises "the forgotten question of the particular conditions which make the doxic experience of the social world possible" (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 44), objectivism always implies a radical discontinuity between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge.

5. What both Saussure and Lévi-Strauss objectify in a structural, regulating system of signifiers, phenomenology and ethnomethodologists fail to decypher as

an "objectifying relationship", i.e. the epistemological break which, according to Bourdieu, is also a social discontinuity. Thus, Bourdieu's motto, "to objectify the objectification" (*objectiver l'objectivation*), translates his efforts to theorize the relationship between experiential meaning made explicit by social phenomenology and the objective meaning that is constructed by social physics or semiology. To move beyond the subject-object antinomy, one has not only to break with the native experience and the native representation of that experience but also to call into question the presuppositions inherent in the position of the "objective" observer –whom Bourdieu accuses of tending to privilege both epistemic and communicative functions.

Bourdieu's theory of practice seeks thus to rid such an objectifying mode of knowledge of the distortions arising from the epistemological and social conditions of its production. By analyzing the logic of practice in its pre-reflective objectifying relations, Bourdieu seems to call into question an academically established tradition that articulates the theory-praxis nexus in terms of value. This, to my mind, serves to explain why Bourdieu places his critique of Jon Elster's methodological individualism on the same level of his attack upon Sartre's voluntarist, finalist theory of action. I refrain from pronouncing here a hasty judgment on Bourdieu's critique of Elster, simply because I am assuming that Bourdieu's entire theory of practice systematically addresses this particular problem. Thus when Elster accuses Bourdieu of inconsistently mixing a "causal account" and an "intentional and functional explanation" in the latter's conception of "distinction" (Elster, 1983, p. 69s), Elster deliberately fails to take into account Bourdieu's relational (as opposed to valued) logic of practice and its holistic implications for the overcoming of the individual-society dichotomy. The social conception of *habitus*, developed in the third chapter, appears thus as a decisive feature of Bourdieu's critique of rational action theory and his ultimate attempt to come up with a conception of social practice that avoids the pitfalls of both continental and analytic accounts.

In order to arrive at a definition of *habitus* vis-à-vis the objectification of practices, Bourdieu returns to his critique of objectivism. According to this view, the social world is constituted as a "spectacle offered to an observer who takes up a 'point of view' on the action and who, putting into the object the principles of his relation to the object, proceeds as it were intended solely for knowledge and as if the interactions within it were purely symbolic exchanges" (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 87). As against positivist materialism, the theory of practice claims that the objects of knowledge are *constructed*, not passively recorded, and, contrary to intellectualist idealism, that " the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice

and is always oriented towards practical functions" (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 87). As Bourdieu himself indicates, what is actually at stake is not simply reversing Marx's eleventh "Thesis on Feuerbach" once again (namely, to *interpret* what has been *changed*, as it were, *in der Praxis*), but returning to "the this-sidedness" of social, practical activity (say, as stated in Theses 1 and 2). In other words, to escape the dualism of the realism of the structure and the idealism of transcendental dialectic, Bourdieu rehabilitates Marxian social praxis (*qua* practice *tout court*) as "the site of the dialectic of the *opus operatum* and the *modus operandi*; of the objectified products and the incorporated products of historical practice; of structures and *habitus*"(Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 88). Although keeping his distance from "official" Marxists (PCF intellectuals & Co.), Bourdieu clearly draws his structural conception of society from the "middle" Marx's[2] notion of *class* as the primary unity of analysis and its correlative function in the production and reproduction of social life, besides the systematic accounts of Durkheimian and Weberian influences that contribute to Bourdieu's sociology.

Bourdieu's conception of *habitus* cannot be separated from the structurally correlated terms "class" and "field".[3] In effect, according to Bourdieu, society is a system of relatively autonomous but structurally homologous fields. In one of his most puzzling formulas, Bourdieu goes on to assert:

$$\{(habitus)\ (capital)\} + field = practice\ (Bourdieu, 1984, p.\ 101s).$$

Bourdieu seeks thus to avoid the hierarchical approach of structuralists by defining *habitus* as the system of internalized dispositions mediating between social structures and practical activities, being shaped by the former and regulating the latter. As he put it bluntly,

> The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively "regulated" and "regular" without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 88).

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[2]   Notably the Marx of the "Theses on Feuerbach" and *The German ideology*.
[3]   The French word *champ* is semantically undercoded by the English term "field" – "discipline, force field, battlefield..."

A difficulty that immediately arises is, of course, related to the problem of social agency. After all, what is wrong with the conductor? For Bourdieu, the socialized agent, contra structuralism and rational-choice theories, is to be distinguished from the subject and the free individual (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 17s, 78s). Thus the *habitus* may well be accompanied by "strategic calculation" but, even in this case, the latter remains at the level of responsiveness in that conscious responses are themselves defined "in relation to objective potentialities, immediately inscribed in the present, things to do or not to do, things to say or not to say, in relation to a probable, 'upcoming' future (*un à venir*), which... puts itself forward with an urgency and a claim to existence that excludes all deliberation"(Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 89). Bourdieu goes on to assert that "stimuli do not exist for practice in their objective truth", they always already presuppose "agents conditioned to recognize them". I think this rather puzzling emphasis on the structural nature of his "science of practice" is what accounts for much of the widespread misunderstanding among Bourdieu's critics. Although I shall not seek to take his defense in this essay, I think Bourdieu's point here is that a social account of action, in order to keep its *social* specificity, must presuppose that the social world is indeed "a world of already realized ends" (e. g. "procedures to follow", "paths to take") in accordance with the "permanent teleological character" of its "tools or institutions". In order to illustrate Bourdieu's appropriation of this quasi-phenomenological conception of the social world, it would suffice to recall the Heideggerian, trivial example of the hammer (*Being and time* §§ 15-18) in his famous "Analysis of Environmentality and Worldhood in General", where each piece of equipment is defined in terms of what one uses it for (*Bewandtnis*, "involvement" but also its "functionality"). I cannot understand what a hammer is unless I recognize its place in the whole, its use in the way it is normally used, etc. Now, I can certainly use a hammer, say, as a weight that I place on top of loose papers to keep them from being scattered. And yet any other heavy object would do (a stone, for instance, or better still, a paper-weight). The main difference between the "genuine" and any other use of the hammer, as Heidegger points out, lies in the transparency of the former – so, when hammering a nail, "the hammering itself uncovers the specific 'manipulability' [*Handlichkeit*] of the hammer" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 98). In the same vein, a social institution like the church can be "used", say, in a revolutionary situation such as in Latin America, for purposes other than worshipping God (at least *not* in the traditional way). However, even the most irreligious liberationists committed to a Marxist program could not dispose of the ideological *telos* which characterizes the genuine,

historical institution of the church as a religious *ekklesia*. In fact, the ideological impasse of liberation theologies, in their de-ideologizing, deconstructive moves, points to the impossibility of "isolating" individual agencies of emancipation (i. e. women, blacks, natives, homosexuals, and so forth) from the social structure to be transformed. Moreover, it simply became impossible to focus only on one source of oppression (e. g. the military, US imperialism or Western capitalism) in the network of "institutionalized violence". This problem, being a structural one, seems to rather indicate that the very genesis of a social institution based on a logic of identity does not allow for liberating action to take place within the boundaries imposed by its *raison d'être*. Therefore, Bourdieu is not so much proposing a new "theory of action" as articulating the social structuring of any practice which takes place in-the-world. The limitations of a sour-grape situation is precisely that it remains too decontextualized, too idealized – or, as Bourdieu calls it "*idéaltypique*". Even though it truly depicts a common situation which can take place in everyday life, Elster's "rational actor" theory undermines the structural givenness of the social world, at once constituted by and constitutive of a bodily *Dasein*, always already a socially contextualized being: "Practical sense is a quasi-bodily involvement in the world which presupposes no representation either of the body or of the world, still less of their relationship" (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 111).

6. Bourdieu's immanent critique of rationality reintroduces thus the Wittgensteinian notions of game and play (the French *jeu* translating both in one single term, as the German *Spiel*) to illustrate his conception of "practical sense" as "feel for the game" (*sens du jeu*). The proleptic adjustment implied by Wittgenstein's notion of language-games allows Bourdieu to speak of the relation between habitus and social field as the learning of a game, homologous to what the acquisition of a mother tongue is to the learning of a foreign language. Just as beliefs imply, for the later Wittgenstein, a system of propositions, Bourdieu concludes that "belief is thus an inherent part of belonging to a field" (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 113). Granted, belief is understood here in its most accomplished form, as naive, native *doxa*, diametrically opposed to Kant's "pragmatic faith": "Doxa is the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a *habitus* and the field to which it is attuned, the pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense." (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 115).

Because it is an *état de corps* rather than an *état d'âme* ("disposition of feelings"), practical belief cannot account for rational decision-making

processes but simply appears as the agent's passageway between habitus and social fields. According to Bourdieu,

> Practical sense, social necessity turned into nature, converted into motor schemes and body automatisms, is what causes practices, in and through what makes them obscure to the eyes of their producers, to be *sensible*, that is, informed by a common sense. It is because agents never know completely what they are doing that what they do has more sense than they know (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 116).

Bourdieu gives several examples from his own ethnographic researches in Kabyle culture to illustrate the subject's socializing "thrownness" in her/his everyday existence (e. g., the organization of the internal space of their house, which Bourdieu relates to their male/female structuring of sexuality). The conclusions of Bourdieu's field researches can be summed up in these two rather descriptive quotes:

> The structures that help to construct the world of objects are constructed in the practice of a world of objects constructed in accordance with the same structures. The 'subject' born of the world of objects does not arise as a subjectivity facing an objectivity: the objective universe is made up of objects which are the product of objectifying operations structured according to the same structures that the *habitus* applies to them. The *habitus* is a metaphor of the world of objects, which is itself an endless circle of metaphors that mirror each other *ad infinitum* (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 130).

And he goes on to make it explicit:

> In a society divided into classes, all the products of a given agent, by an essential overdetermination, speak inseparably and simultaneously of his/her class – or, more precisely, his/her position and rising or falling trajectory within the social structure – and of his/her body – or, more precisely, of all the properties, always socially qualified, of which he/she is the bearer: sexual ones, of course, but also physical properties that are praised, like strength or beauty, or stigmatized (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 134).

We can easily gather that the double poststructuralist problematic of the metaphysical, binary logic ("thinking in couples") and the philosophy of the subject (unity of a transcendental signified) underlies Bourdieu's theory of practice. This becomes even more explicit in the fifth chapter ("The logic of

practice"), notably when Bourdieu criticizes the ahistorical "time" of scientific theory: "Practice unfolds in time and it has all the correlative properties, such as irreversibility, that synchronization destroys" (Bourdieu, 1980a, p.137). For practice's tempo (rhythm) is constitutive of its meaning. "Science has a time which is not that of practice." And he concludes, in a quasi-Heideggerian play on words: "The 'feel' (*sens*) for the game is the sense of the imminent future [*à-venir*] of the game, the sense of the direction [*sens*] of the history of the game that gives the game its sense" (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 138).

7. That Bourdieu's "feel for the game" is applied to his own playful account of social practices and sociological theories constitutes no great surprise. I think one should leave aside this matter of style and taste when reading Bourdieu's works – after all, perhaps against his own will, Bourdieu is indeed representative of the new *Homo academicus gallicus* – would this "confirm" his theory of habitus? In any case, I should like to bring in the problem of the logic of the social sciences, once again, in the present context of the *Methodenstreit*. Bourdieu ridicules science's use of "synoptic diagrams" to apprehend simultaneously and in a single glance, *uno intuitu et tota simul* (Descartes) what, in practice, cannot be totalized without overlooking the very constitutive "nature" of these facts. It seems that we would be returning to the old value-facts question – and Bourdieu, to my mind, is very aware of this post-Kantian problematic, especially in his appropriation of Husserlian and Heideggerian concepts. His account of the structuralist ideology of rational discontinuities, betrayed in the theoretical conception of genealogies, maps, and calendars, points to his own poststructuralist concern with a history of ideas. Thus, when he says that "practice has a logic which is not that of the logician", he is seriously attempting a way out of Bachelard's metaphorology and Althusser's logicism. In this regard, I think that Wittgenstein is more than a source of inspiration for Bourdieu, in that language-games do not require a rational, theoretical understanding of the rules on the part of players involved. It remains to be shown whether Bourdieu's "logic of practice" fulfills the practical functions promised by his theory of practice.

By way of conclusion, we can still resort to such an interesting conception of practice as *habitus* and combine it with recent developments in critical theory and social epistemology. For the Latin term *habitus* recasts somewhat the normative thrust of the Aristotelian notion of *hexis* and the civilizational, psychic individuation as it had already been used by Norbert Elias, as early as 1939, to refer to our "second nature" in the particular structures molded by social attitudes.

As Bernardo Sorj has aptly remarked,

> Individuals have a habitus, which, generically speaking, refers to the internalization and embodiment of attitudes and knowledge shared by the specific social class or group to which they belong. But each individual is also able to engage in active, creative social interactions beyond his/hers social groups based on a cognitive and affective charting of society as a whole. This ability to map out and deal with the social world is affected in both practical and intellectual terms by the position each individual occupies in the social system. However this very ability presupposes that a world of values, codes, and knowledge is shared with the rest of society – and this is what constitutes the form of sociability observed in a given nation (or any other social system or subsystem) (Sorj, 2000, p. 47).

Normativity is practical insofar as humans are conceived of as social beings, in their relational, intersubjective, societal, moral, ethical, legal, and political dealings. There remains a huge social epistemological task of relating this to a specifically theoretical take on knowledge, belief, and reason, without falling back into the theoretical reductions denounced by Bourdieu. There are indeed positive and negative features in both camps (continental social theorists and analytic philosophers) and we must continually seek to avoid reductionisms of both transcendental and naturalist camps, such as phenomenalism and physicalism, in our constant avoidance of both postmodernist, social constructionism and positivist realism. The very emergence of social epistemology within the analytic camp may strike some of us as an analytic recasting of Hegel's critique of Kant's solipsism and of the phenomenological, hermeneutical critical appropriation of Neo-Kantianism, so as to overcome the Platonic-Cartesian conception of knowledge as "justified true belief" and to unveil knowledge as "intrinsically social"(Goldman and Whitcomb, 2010). Our ongoing interdisciplinary research in social philosophy, especially in light of this proficuous interlocution with social epistemology and critical theory, might help us elaborate on analyses which mobilize *habitus* both in terms of their theoretical articulation and in terms of their grounding in empirical reality. On the one had, social practices have primacy over theoretical devices, just as sociability is prior to ethics and the political, as sociality unveils itself in the natural becoming of humans, as social evolution takes place within biological, evolutionary processes. On the other hand, naturalism cannot account for all reflexive, social developments, precisely because human beings also participate as social actors in the construction of this social reality. Even if one can no longer resort to a religious or moral principle as an absolute way of "giving reasons" for such and such action, the problem of normativity in social, legal, and political relations remain an open

question. John Searle's ingenious account attempted precisely at solving that problem, as he combined a systematic account of epistemic objectivity with an ontological subjectivity that, in the last analysis, complements hermeneutic, phenomenological accounts such as the one proposed by Berger and Luckmann almost thirty years earlier (Searle, 1995; Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Even though one doesn't have to go so far as to say that everything has been socially constructed or deny objectivity in scientific endeavors, it is quite reasonable to conceive of social practices in terms of constructionism, just as moral and political contractualism can be nowadays recast as variants of Kantian constructivism (Hacking, 1999).

It seems, therefore, that one may well proceed from an epistemic justification towards a moral epistemic justification (as long as one is not committed to an extreme noncognitivist view of ethics), so that one's goal may as well be having a system of moral beliefs and acting in accordance with moral epistemic norms. Substantive ethics and every case of normative ethics, including applied ethics, must come into being in social reality. Moral beliefs can be certainly justified according to traditional arguments of moral realism, universalism, intuitionism, and robust conceptions of rationality, as they are still justified on religious grounds. To be sure, many people would object, today, to religious and philosophical justifications. Social theory proves extremely helpful in keeping social philosophy and social epistemology closer to real, concrete people and their social, intersubjective relations. One may always move back and forth from descriptive to motivating and normative reasons, but one can never get rid of his/her sociality.

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