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Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory

Text and Readings



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14 POSTSTRUCTURALISM

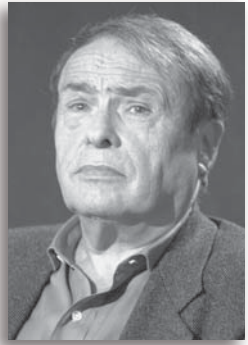


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Michel Foucault

Key Concepts

- Archaeology
- Discipline/Disciplinary Society
- Episteme
- Genealogy
- Panopticon
- Power/Knowledge
- Surveillance



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Pierre Bourdieu

Key Concepts

- Habitus
- Fields
- Cultural Capital
- Social Capital
- Economic Capital
- Symbolic Capital
- Symbolic Violence



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Edward Said

Key Concepts

- Orientalism
- Imaginative Geography

The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the “social worker” judge.

—Michel Foucault

When the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* was first published by the American Psychiatric Association in 1952, it was 130 pages and had 102 diagnostic categories. By the time of its fourth edition, in 1994, it had grown to 886 pages—increasing more than six times in size—and the number of diagnostic categories had more than tripled; the manual increased in weight from a mere eight ounces to almost three and a half pounds. The fifth edition, released in 2013, is 991 pages and catalogues some 250 disorders. This is an extraordinary sea change, and the question is, does this dramatic proliferation in the number and types of disorders catalogued in the manual simply reflect a marked increase in our knowledge and understanding of mental disorders? Or, as some scholars argue, does the tremendous expansion of the manual reflect the “re-medicalization” of the discipline of psychiatry and the broader institutional significance of the manual itself? (Rogler 1997:9–20). The poststructuralist theorists whose works you will read in this chapter—Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and Edward Said—would all tend toward the latter stance. In their own way, each illuminates what Dorothy Smith called the “relations of ruling”—the complex of discourses (scientific, technical, and cultural) that intersect, interpenetrate and coordinate social structures (see chapter 13). From a poststructuralist perspective, historical changes in the *discourse* of illness—that is, how and why particular conditions and behaviors come to be seen as “illnesses” and others not—is not merely the result of objective changes in scientific discovery, but rather, a concomitant expression of *power and knowledge*.

The *DSM* is used by clinicians, researchers, schools, insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, and policy makers, among others. It sets out a common language and standard criteria for the classification of mental disorders—and the impact of the manual on individuals’ lives is profound. For example, over the past decade, the number of 6- to 21-year-olds with autism in public schools has quadrupled.

Although virtually unheard of a mere generation ago, today a student diagnosed with autism may get private school placement, a classroom aide or curriculum adaptations, and in more than half of the 50 states today, insurance companies are required to provide behavioral therapies and other forms of care. Some autism advocates argue that acknowledging the neurological basis for socially odd behavior has a myriad of benefits, above and beyond eligibility for services. According to Michael John Carney, director of the Global and Regional Asperger Syndrome Partnership, “Having a diagnosis helps people understand why we process thoughts and emotions differently and make positive changes.” However, other medical professionals are concerned about overdiagnosis. “We have to make sure that not everybody who is a little odd gets a diagnosis of autism or Asperger disorder,” one doctor states (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/21/us/as-specialists-debate-autism-some-parents-watch-closely.html?_r=2&). Concerns about overclassification



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Photo 14.1 The Power of Categories and Classifications

From a poststructuralist perspective, whether same-sex attraction, attention deficit in adults, or defiance in children are classified as “disorders” (or not) reflects the interpenetration of power and knowledge.

might also be rooted in the fact that throughout most of the 20th century, homosexuality was classified as a mental illness. Homosexuality was first removed from the *DSM* in 1973, but it was reintroduced again under the label ego-dystonic homosexuality in 1980, before it was removed entirely in 1986.¹

We begin this chapter with the work of Michel Foucault, who is commonly identified as a chief progenitor of poststructuralist theory as well as one of the most influential intellectuals of the 20th century. Although Foucault died in 1984, his work still reverberates throughout many scholarly fields (e.g., history, philosophy, literary criticism, feminist studies, psychology, gay and lesbian studies, and sociology) and has become an important reference point for activists around the world. We then turn to the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who dominated French public intellectual life during the 1980s and 1990s. Bourdieu's work spanned a wide range of topics and his insights into the reproduction of class relations continue to be profoundly influential. We conclude this chapter by focusing on the Palestinian scholar Edward Said, best known for his political views on the "Palestinian question" and work on the social and cultural construction of the "Oriental." Although Said died in 2003, his essays on the subjective dimensions of Western expansion into non-Western societies remain a cornerstone in postcolonial theory.

■ DEFINING POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Poststructuralism is not so much a coherent theory as an assemblage of converging themes developed by theorists in the 1960s. These common themes (to be discussed shortly) include the fragmentation of meaning, the localization of politics, the decline of the idea of "truth", and the decentering of the subject. Put another way, poststructuralism is better understood as a theoretical trend, as a loosely articulated set of ideas that find common expression in the works of influential French writers of the second half of the twentieth century.²

Poststructuralism is so named because it represents a challenge to the central European and American tradition of theory dominant in the mid-20th century: **structuralism**. Structuralist thought emphasizes that there are forces in social life that emerge out of human activity but stand outside of human agency or intervention. Often called "emergent properties," these social forces are the external and constraining "social facts" that the classical sociological theorist Émile Durkheim described in his work; a similar structuralist emphasis is echoed in many of the works of other classical theorists in sociology, particularly Karl Marx and Max Weber (see chapters 2–4). Indeed, it was by drawing from these classical sources that Talcott Parsons would crystallize his structural functionalist theory that dominated American sociology during the middle years of the 20th century (see chapter 9). In terms of our metatheoretical framework, structuralism reflects a *collectivist* approach to order, that is, an emphasis on the *coerciveness* of societal structures and forces.

A different version of structuralism emerged during the mid-20th century in France.³ French structuralism is most distinct from American structural functionalism in its particular emphasis on language. In

¹"Ego dystonic homosexuality was indicated by: (1) a persistent lack of heterosexual arousal, which the patient experienced as interfering with initiation or maintenance of wanted heterosexual relationships, and (2) persistent distress from a sustained pattern of unwanted homosexual arousal." (http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/faculty_sites/rainbow/html/facts_mental_health.html). Among the most controversial diagnoses today are oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), gender identity disorder (GID), and sex addiction.

²In addition to Foucault, whose work is profiled in this chapter, these writers include Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari. Interestingly, although most of the writers identified with poststructuralism are French, poststructuralism has its general origins in American traditions of literary criticism (Poster 1989:6). It is the way in which American literary scholars adopted and unified the ideas of French thinkers that created what is known today as poststructural theory. Ironically but not surprisingly, then, most of those French theorists who were canonized and identified as "poststructuralists" do not write under the label of "poststructuralism" and do not identify themselves with poststructuralism as a theoretical movement.

³French structuralism emerged throughout a variety of disciplines and theoretical traditions, including the anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, the Marxist sociology of Louis Althusser, the psychoanalytic psychology of Jacques Lacan, the literary criticism of Roland Barthes, and the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure.

contrast to Parsons's structural functionalism, which emphasizes human social organization at the level of institutions and interaction, French structuralism focuses on meaning and the role of language in the organization of systems of ideas. French structuralists seek to demonstrate how language has formal properties (such as grammar) that provide the structure not only for communication, but also for broader aspects of human existence. Consider, for instance, language and gender. In the 1960s and 1970s, feminists in the United States challenged the sexism inherent in terms such as *fireman*, *policeman*, *mailman*, and so on. Defenders of the linguistic status quo maintained that obsessing over words was petty; everyone knew that "man" meant "men and women," just as "mankind" meant humankind. But feminists argued that irrespective of material, institutional issues (e.g., the number of men and women employed as police officers, fire fighters, etc.), *the terminology itself* was problematic because the terminology itself had consequences, reaffirming sexism both in individuals' thinking and in society as a whole. This argument coheres precisely with the basic premise of French structuralism: linguistic structures affect individuals and society in systematic ways *regardless of the intentions of the individual language users*.

For the most part, feminists won this battle, and today nongendered terms—such as *police officer*, *fire fighter*, and *mail carrier*—are preferred over gendered terms (*policeman*, *fireman*, *mailman*, etc.). In hindsight, it certainly seems like the feminists were right. Today most people realize the tremendous power and significance of language precisely because we live in a postmodern world. But French structuralists maintained that not only language, but myths, kinship systems, religious rituals, advertising, fashion, class relationships, and the human psyche all have formal elements that can be understood through an analysis of the structures of meaning. In sum, just as there are grammatical rules and linguistic structures in language that speakers follow without being cognizant of them, there is a rigid formula for virtually every aspect of social life that structures understanding, although social actors are not necessarily cognizant of its impact.

In most accounts, the story of French structuralism begins with Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857–1913) development of what is today known as *semiotics*.⁴ Semiotics is the study of signs, those aspects of human communication that are used to indicate and convey meaning. In *A Course in General Linguistics* (1915/1966), Saussure develops his theory by making a key distinction between the formal structure of language (*langue*) and the everyday use of speech (*parole*). For Saussure, language (*langue*) is the structural dimension of language that is institutionalized and patterned through the establishment of social conventions, while speech (*parole*) is the active use of language in everyday interaction. Thus, language (*langue*) has several characteristics that speech (*parole*) does not—it is collective, well defined, concrete, composed of systems of shared meanings, and subject to objective study, while speech (*parole*) is more transitory and individualized.

From this distinction, Saussure developed a description of the formal structure of the **sign**. For Saussure, a sign is that which is socially designated to represent the meaning of objects and experiences. Anything that carries meaning—language, nonverbal gestures, street signs, clothing, pictures—can function as a sign. Each sign in turn is constructed out of two interrelated elements: the **signified** and the **signifier**. The signified is that idea, object, experience, belief, concept, or feeling that one individual wishes to express to another (e.g., greeting a person on meeting). The signifier is that deeply inculcated representation designated to stand for the signified (e.g., shaking hands, kissing on both cheeks, or saying "Hello"). The *signified–signifier* pair combines to form two inseparable dimensions of a sign that has two fundamental characteristics. First, the relationship that connects a signifier to a signified is essentially arbitrary, produced only through social conventions established by a community of speakers. There is no "reason" that the sound-image of a concept *has* to be associated with any particular meaning. Second, the signifier–signified pair has a relatively stable meaning because signs exist only in the context of a stable, institutionalized structure of language. Meanings are the result of the *interplay* or relationships between signs, and these cannot be changed all at once. Thus, for Saussure, language has both static and dynamic properties, because it embodies the structured nature of a social institution but is also subject to shifts and changes as a consequence of its arbitrary nature.

⁴A parallel set of ideas is found in the works of American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, who is credited with coining the term semiotics. Saussure preferred the term semiology.

Poststructuralism developed out a critique of the semiotic model developed by Saussure. In contrast to French structuralists who emphasize the formal, patterned, and commonly shared meaning of a sign, poststructuralists are skeptical about the universality of shared meaning as conveyed by signs. They doubt the very existence of universal patterns of meaning and argue instead that the meaning of signs has fragmented. Poststructuralists contend that rather than universally understood signs, today we have “floating signifiers.” The links between signifieds and their signifiers have become destabilized, such that signifiers are no longer connected to only one signified, and signifieds are represented by various signifiers. The internal structure of the sign has collapsed, with signifiers disconnected from any stable signified, making meaning multiplicative, open ended, and fragmented.

However, it is not only language, meaning, and signs that are the objects of the poststructuralist critique. Rather, poststructuralists describe our entire sociocultural world as one of inherent fragmentation, instability, and confusion. From the perspective of poststructuralism, social life is chaotic and radically relative without any potential for unity, consensus, or coherent analysis. The notions of truth, knowledge, power, and identity are all challenged. This extreme relativism is one of the primary reasons that poststructural theories are thus named: the analysis of the social world is based on the assumption that the patterns, routines, and conventions of social life are inherently unstable and thus only temporarily structured.

In addition to challenging the notion that universal claims to a total understanding of reality exist, poststructuralists maintain that these claims themselves are derived from the perspective of individuals who inhabit positions of privilege (such as high levels of status and power). Truth is no longer seen as “the Truth,” with a capital *T*, but is instead seen as “*a* truth,” resulting from a particular, privileged point of view. Poststructuralists contend that the importance of social structures as constraining forces on individual action has been reduced and replaced by a more fluid exercise of power that manifests itself in multiple forms within local contexts, and without the coercive force of overarching social institutions. In short, from the perspective of poststructuralism, a sociological understanding of contemporary societies requires moving beyond the analysis of structures and unified perspectives and toward an investigation of local, everyday practices.

■ MICHEL FOUCAULT (1926–1984): A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Paul-Michel Foucault was born on October 15, 1926, in the city of Poitiers in central France. The son of a prominent surgeon, it was hoped that the younger Foucault would follow his father in his occupational aspirations. Michel, however, found himself drawn toward philosophy, history, and the social sciences. After graduating from the Jesuit College Saint-Stanislas, Foucault enrolled in the prestigious Lycée Henri IV in Paris, where he studied under the well-known French philosopher Jean Hyppolite (1907–1968), a noted Hegelian scholar. In 1946, Foucault passed the entrance exams for the *École Normale Supérieure*, one of the most prestigious universities in France, and entered as the fourth-highest ranked student in his class. His time at the *École* was difficult: he suffered from acute depression and even attempted suicide. However, Foucault was able to recover, and studied under the famous French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961). He completed his studies in 1950, earning diplomas in both philosophy and psychology, and received an additional academic degree in psychopathology in 1952 from the *Institut de Psychologie* in Paris.

Strongly influenced by the structuralist Marxism of Louis Althusser (1918–1990), Foucault became politically radicalized during the 1950s and joined the French Communist Party. (He would later leave the party in 1953.) At the invitation of Althusser, Foucault became a member of the faculty at the *École Normale Supérieure*, where he taught psychology. Between 1952 and 1969, Foucault was invited to teach at a number of universities throughout Europe—in France, Sweden, and Germany—and in Tunisia in North Africa. It was also during this time, in 1960, that Foucault met Daniel Defert, the man who would become his lover and companion throughout the rest of his life. In 1969, at the age of 43, Foucault was elected to the *Collège de France*, France’s most prestigious research university; there he accepted the chair of the newly developed department of History of Systems of Thought.

As Foucault established himself as an eminent lecturer and scholar during the 1960s, the publication of a number of works secured him considerable intellectual prominence. The first of these, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, published in 1960, was a historical account of the rise of Western conceptualizations of mental illness and the means by which systems of knowledge increasingly served to socially construct “madness.” This work was followed by *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (1963), an analysis of the institutionalization of clinical practices and the medical “gaze.” Foucault’s most celebrated book came with the publication of *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966/1971), a historical treatment of the socially constituted basis of knowledge, a work that surprisingly became a national best-seller in France. Foucault closed the 1960s with the publication of the *Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (1969), investigating the links between systems of discourse and the production of knowledge.

The 1970s marked a notable shift in Foucault’s lifestyle and work. After his election to the Collège de France, Foucault became a sought-after lecturer and traveled widely throughout Europe, the Americas, and the Far East. His political activities increased, especially in the area of prison reform. Throughout his travels, Foucault visited many prison facilities, including Attica State Prison in New York State, the site of a massive prison riot in 1971. In an effort to initiate prison reforms, Foucault helped to establish the Prison Information Group, and called for a radical reorganization of the care and treatment of prisoners. Also during this period, Foucault began to incorporate personal experiences into his philosophical investigations. Foucault experimented with LSD on a trip to Death Valley, California, in 1975, and described the experience as one of the most profound of his life.⁵ In addition, he immersed himself in anonymous sex in San Francisco’s sadomasochistic and gay subcultures, creating experiential ground for the exploration of the theoretical possibilities therein.

In the mid-1970s, Foucault published two of his most influential works: *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) and the first volume of his trilogy on sexuality, *The History of Sexuality* (1976). These two works incorporated a new dimension to Foucault’s analysis: the interpenetration of knowledge, discourse, and, most important, power. Foucault had just published the second and third volumes of his study of sexuality, *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, and was at work on a fourth volume when he succumbed to an AIDS-related illness in a Paris hospital on June 24, 1984. He was 57 years old.

FOUCAULT’S INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES AND CORE IDEAS ■

Michel Foucault emerged on the French intellectual scene amid an intense debate between two mid-20th-century philosophical perspectives: existentialism and French structuralism. Rather than taking a side in this debate, however, Foucault sought to simultaneously challenge them both. On the one hand, existentialism—spearheaded by one of France’s most famous intellectuals, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980)—emphasized the importance of individual autonomy and personal responsibility. Premised on the idea that individual human activity is a more potent and meaningful force than any underlying and determining structure, existentialism argues that human beings are charged with discovering the significance of their lives while confronted with the finality of their own deaths. In short, as Sartre puts it, human beings are “condemned to be free,” responsible for their every action and left alone with the daunting task of providing meaning to their own lives. In contrast, as we have seen, French structuralism emphasized the latent social, psychological, and linguistic structures that shape and mold human existence and activity.

In challenging these reigning perspectives, Foucault adopted two distinct methodologies: **archaeology** and **genealogy**. As Foucault uses the term, *archaeology* is a historical method whereby discursive practices

⁵This account is taken from one of Foucault’s biographers, James Miller (1993). Although it is clear that Foucault did experiment with psychedelic drugs and heightened sexual experiences, Miller claims that these events fundamentally shifted the course of Foucault’s philosophical investigations. The importance of Foucault’s experimentation with drugs and sexual experience on his philosophical work has been met with some controversy. See Halperin (1995) for a critical engagement of these ideas.

are “unearthed,” much like the artifacts of past civilizations. This makes it possible to expose the evolution or history of human understanding. By excavating forms of discourse, the knowledge that is embedded in them can be revealed, along with the means by which humans have come to construct particular meanings about reality and themselves. Central here are Foucault’s works of the 1960s in which he systematically investigated the origins of madness (1960), medical practices (1963), and the human sciences (1966). Foucault argues that the pattern of knowledge changes over time via discursive shifts in what he calls “epistemes.” For Foucault, an **episteme** is a framework of knowledge (such as religion or science) that shapes discourse—that collection of linguistic tools, rules, descriptions, and habits of logic that make possible specific understandings of the world. Guided by his archaeological investigations, Foucault seeks to uncover the development of epistemes and the social practices they set in motion. Thus, for example, in *Madness and Civilization* (1960) Foucault explores how the emergence of psychiatric labels and treatments served not to cure or increase the knowledge of mental illness, but to define and refine definitions of insanity and the identities of those who allegedly suffered from the affliction.

The mid-1970s reflects a notable shift in Foucault’s methodology. Now, his investigations borrow heavily from the 19th-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) and his method of “genealogy.” For Foucault, genealogy is a method of sociohistorical analysis of the impact of power on discourse. Unlike archaeology, which seeks to examine the role of discourse in the production of knowledge, genealogy articulates the dependence of the production of knowledge on relationships of power. Nietzsche had used the term “genealogy” to explore the changing nature of moral norms and value standards, revealing the intersection of ethics and power in the formation of morals and law.⁶ Foucault explores similar correlations focusing on the topics of punishment and sexuality, continuing and expanding Nietzschean motifs with sociological analyses.

Popular understanding of the interrelationship between knowledge and power is frequently expressed through the phrase “Knowledge is power.” Foucault, in his genealogical studies, reverses the logic of this expression. He contends that it is not the acquisition of knowledge that gives one power. Instead, knowledge is already always deeply invested with power in such a way that it must be said that “power is knowledge.” Thus, in Foucault’s analysis, knowledge is never separate from power but is instead a specific means for exercising power. In this way, power is not simply something embodied within an individual or a social structure and expressed by brute coercion or punishment. Power appears in its most potent form when successfully translated into systems of knowledge and thus removed from reflection under the veil of obvious truths. The inseparability of power and knowledge is so thoroughgoing, according to Foucault, that he often conjoins the two into the term **power/knowledge**.

Discipline and Punish (1975)—from which reading selections in this chapter are drawn—is Foucault’s first, and perhaps best, genealogical investigation. In what is among the most memorable openings of any academic work, Foucault begins *Discipline and Punish* with a description of the gruesome 1757 execution of Frenchman Robert-François Damiens (1715–1757). Damiens, who was commonly known during his day as “Robert the Devil,” was condemned to death for the attempted assassination of the French monarch Louis XV. Although he failed in his attempt, inflicting only a single stab wound, Damiens was mercilessly and publicly tortured, dismembered, and finally burned—all to the delight and appreciation of the crowd that had gathered to watch.

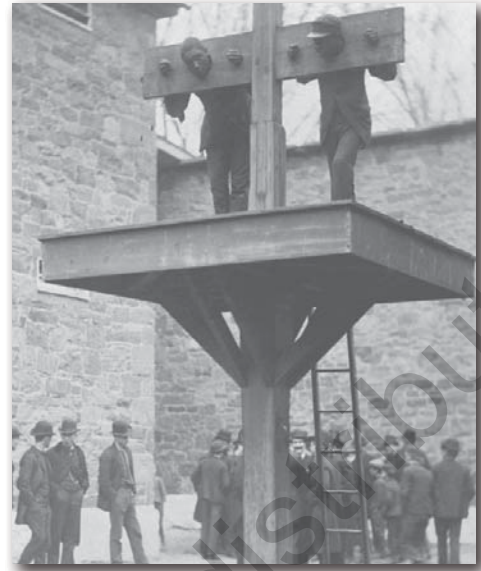
Foucault contends that public executions like that of Damiens, although condoned in 18th-century Europe as an established form of punishment, are today considered abhorrent not because they violate the boundaries of moral acceptability but, rather, because punishment and the power that guides it have taken new, more acceptable forms. Specifically, in his analysis of penal practices, Foucault argues that punishment has moved through three stages since the 18th century. The first stage of punishment, according to Foucault, is characterized by corporal practices such as torture, bodily mutilation, and disfigurement, such as those exemplified in the grisly execution of Damiens. Here, punishment is orchestrated and meted out by a centralized authority, like a king, and is clearly visible among and given legitimacy by the general

⁶Nietzsche’s genealogical method is especially illustrated in his works *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887).

population. In addition, there are explicit social structures and hierarchies through which the exercise of power is channeled. In short, the first phase of punishment is characterized by the existence of clear and unambiguous sources of power that adopt severe physical punitive practices typically performed for public demonstration and repressive intent.

The second phase of punishment moves Foucault's investigation into the 19th century and toward the contemporary era. Foucault presents this phase of punishment as marked by a noted decline in the ferocity and publicity of penal force, accompanied by the rise of humanistic concerns surrounding the implementation of punishment. However, Foucault suggests that the contemporary decline of torture and corporal punishment is much less an indication of a growing humaneness concerning penal practices than a transformation in the technologies of power. This new stage is marked by the introduction of penal practices based on **surveillance** and **discipline**. Physical harm as the central focus of punishment is replaced by technologies of observation and discipline aimed at the mind rather than at the body. While surveillance-based systems of punishment are certainly less physically severe, Foucault argues that they actually may be more insidious and sinister. In an era where penal practices are organized by surveillance and discipline, there is no longer a need for a sole, centralized authority around which punishment is legitimized and carried out. Instead, surveillance and discipline become penal techniques integral to a wide range of social institutions—schools, hospitals, military camps, asylums, workplaces, churches, and, most notably, prisons. (For instance, a file or record follows a student throughout his or her scholastic career.) Foucault contends that such social institutions do not need to rely on external forms of authority, like the state, in order to surveil and discipline their members and thus produce punishment. On the contrary, institutions have come to increasingly develop and incorporate technologies of surveillance and discipline into their own operations as normalized and taken-for-granted operating procedures. For instance, students and workers are routinely kept in line by the possibility of notes or warnings being placed in their files or records regarding violations of school or workplace policy or unsatisfactory progress in their work.

Pivotal in Foucault's investigation of surveillance and discipline is his analysis of the architectural form of an ideal prison called the **Panopticon**. The blueprint for the Panopticon was designed by the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) in the 1790s and was intended to be the model for a perfectly rational and efficient prison. The architecture of the Panopticon was based on two unique elements: a central guard tower, and a circular gallery of cells that surrounded that tower. The inward faces of each cell within the Panopticon were barred but left unobstructed, such that their contents could be completely visible from a single vantage point in the central tower. Thus, while hundreds of inmates might be confined within the circular architecture of the Panopticon, only a single, watchful guard would be required to surveil the inmates at any given time. However, with a bit of architectural ingenuity, Bentham added an important



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Photo 14.2a Foucault's First Phase in Punishment: Public Torture



Scanned from the postcard collection of Alex Wellerstein

Photo 14.2b The Second Phase: The Panopticon



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Photo 14.2c The Third Phase: Disciplinary Society—A Virtual Fortress

Table 14.1 Foucault's Three Phases of Punishment

Phase	Century	Basis of Authority/Power	Methods
1st	18th	Orchestrated by a central authority, e.g., king	Public corporal punishment, e.g., torture
2nd	19th–20th	Orchestrated by decentralized institutions	Surveillance, discipline, e.g., Panopticon
3rd	21st	Diffuse, multiple self-regulations	Surveillance, disciplinary individuals

element to the design: he made it impossible for inmates to see the guard in the central tower, making it difficult to discern at any given moment whether or not they were being observed or whether or not a guard was even present in the tower. Thus, in the Panopticon it was simply the threat of surveillance that provided the basis for the self-sanctioning of behavior, where inmates would develop a psychology of self-discipline motivated by the fear of being under constant observation.

Foucault argues that the architecture of the Panopticon is a metaphor for the general emergence of a new type of penal system that he calls the **disciplinary society**. Because the anxiety produced by being continually watched tends to put a person on his best behavior—as Foucault suggests, to be “visible” is to be “trapped”—the intimidation created by possible surveillance tends to normalize human activity and create a self-induced complicity with the rules. Foucault suggests, however, that surveillance need not take the form of the continual observation exemplified by the Panopticon. Instead, he argues, there are many methods by which the unrelenting “gaze” of surveillance has been operationalized in the contemporary world: routine inspections in the workplace, rigorous training in procedures and protocol, registration and credentialing, self-reports of daily activities, standardized work quotas, measurement of effort, grades, performance evaluations, and so on. Such technologies of surveillance have become part and parcel of normal and routine daily activity. In fact, Panopticonesque surveillance has become so effective that individuals now sanction and normalize their own behavior without any prompting, surveilling and disciplining themselves as if they were simultaneously the inmates and guards of their own self-produced Panopticons.

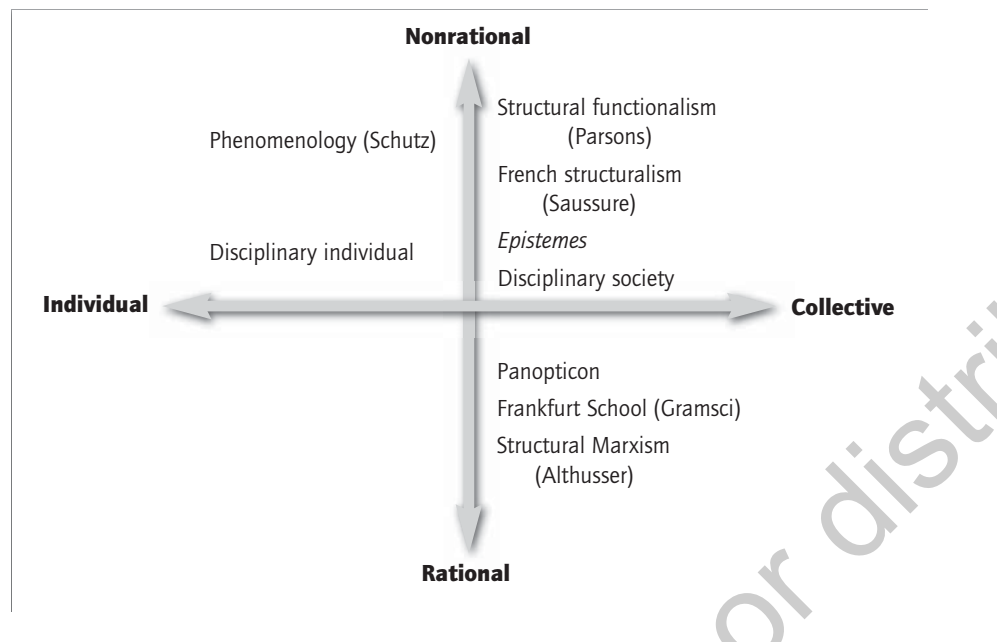
The systematic internalization of the Panopticon, where individuals continually surveil and discipline themselves, has resulted in the third and most recent phase of punishment. Foucault characterizes this phase by its increasingly diffuse and polymorphic locations of power. While the first phase of punishment was based on the centralization of power within a specific social institution, the second phase witnessed the expansion of power into surveillance and disciplinary practices of manifold institutions. This trend is intensified in the third phase of punishment, which is exemplified by a generalized and multiple physics of “micro-power” creating what Foucault describes as a “disciplinary individual.” No longer are social structures or specific institutions necessary for the exercise of power and the meting out of punishment. Power has become deconstructed and individualized, free-floating within society in multiple manifestations. These three distinct phases of power are summarized in Table 14.1.

It is with this last phase of punishment that Foucault makes an intriguing connection between knowledge and power. He argues that, while the development of new forms of knowledge (through scientific investigations, educational practices, psychotherapeutic techniques, pharmacological and medical discoveries, etc.) creates broader and deeper understandings of the social and physical world, it simultaneously generates new locations for the application of power. As that knowledge expands, so does the number of sites in which power is exercised. Thus, as knowledge grows, the techniques of discipline and surveillance multiply, such that power takes on an ever-increasing number of forms and circulates throughout society everywhere without originating in any single location or source.

FOUCAULT'S THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

As shown in Figure 14.1, Foucault's provocative poststructural approach can be understood as explicitly confronting and seeking to correct the theoretical weaknesses of structuralism. That is, whereas

Figure 14.1 Foucault's Basic Concepts, Intellectual Influences, and Theoretical Orientation



structuralism is predominantly collectivistic and nonrationalistic, Foucault's theory adds both individualistic and rationalistic dimensions to this theoretical orientation. Specifically, in terms of order, Foucault does not at all abandon French structuralists' (collectivistic/nonrationalistic) emphasis on language and sign systems as pregiven structures that shape and mold (or work *down* on) human activity and behavior. For both French structuralists and Foucault, language works in a relatively unconscious and habitual—rather than a strategically calculative—way. For the most part, we do not manipulate linguistic codes to maximize our self-interest; rather, we simply use them in a taken-for-granted, unreflective way.⁷ However, rather than adopting a unidimensional conceptualization of preexisting codes working down on individuals as French structuralists do, like the phenomenologists outlined in chapter 6, Foucault emphasizes that it is *only* in their use at the level of the individual that their existence takes form. In this sense, codes do not preexist the subject at all.

In terms of action, Foucault couples this emphasis on the relatively unconscious, and thereby nonrational, workings of semiotic, social, and psychological codes, with an appreciation of the *strategic* and manipulative nature of discipline and punishment, thereby reflecting the rational realm. Foucault stresses the fact that discipline and punishment suit the interests of power and governability. In addition, Foucault identifies an historical shift in the methods of punishment from external (e.g., physical torture) to unconscious and internal (e.g., self-regulation of the disciplinary society), which reflects an historical shift in emphasis from the rational to the nonrational realm.

⁷As foreign-language students know, it is exhausting to try to construe your thoughts in a language that you have to consciously think about and manipulate in order to use. One of the most important cognitive leaps in language acquisition occurs when you stop translating from your first language into your second language and can automatically use the new one. Many people recognize having made this transition by noting that they have begun to dream in their new tongue.

So, too, does Foucault's power/knowledge problematic reflect his stimulating multidimensional approach. Power is not something embodied within either an individual or a social structure and executed in a singularly coercive manner; rather, power is most potent when appearing in the guise of knowledge at both the individual and the collective levels. Power is at once profoundly strategic and manipulative (i.e., rational) and relatively unconscious and unreflective (i.e., nonrational). Power is not so much structured (collectivistic) or unstructured (individualistic) as it is *de*-structured.

Reading

Introduction to *Discipline and Punish*

The following excerpts from *Discipline and Punish* (1975) highlight the distinction between the first and third phases of punishment discussed earlier (see Table 14.1). In the first excerpt, taken from "The Body of the Condemned," we see Foucault dramatically enticing the reader with voyeuristic descriptions of the torture spectacle. Here, scintillating images of the tearing and burning of flesh, the pulling away of limbs, and so on are contrasted with placid descriptions from a mere 80 years later describing a prisoner's typical day. Foucault's point, of course, is that this shift in the methods of punishment reflects a profound cultural as well as social change. Rather than being based on physical, brute force, discipline and punishment are managed in a discursive—but, from Foucault's perspective, no less insidious—way.

In the second section, subtitled "Panopticism," Foucault develops his ideas regarding surveillance. Here Foucault draws a parallel between the aggressive mechanisms used by plague-stricken cities in the late 17th century; Bentham's Panopticon, which was intended to be the model for the perfectly rational and efficient prison; and the unrelenting "gaze" of surveillance in the contemporary world. The point of this genealogical investigation is that, although surveillance-based regulatory systems are certainly physically less severe than earlier methods of punishment, they may be more insidious and effective. Foucault's theme is the internalization of the Panopticon. The fear of being "watched" in contemporary disciplinary society normalizes and "traps" complicity within the individual's own psyche.

Discipline and Punish (1975)

Michel Foucault

TORTURE

The Body of the Condemned

On 2 March 1757 Damiens the regicide was condemned "to make the *amende honorable* before the main door of the Church of Paris," where he was to be "taken

and conveyed in a cart, wearing nothing but a shirt, holding a torch of burning wax weighing two pounds"; then, "in the said cart, to the Place de Grève, where, on a scaffold that will be erected there, the flesh will be torn from his breasts, arms, thighs and calves with red-hot pincers, his right hand, holding the knife with which he committed the said parricide, burnt with sulphur, and, on those

SOURCE: Excerpts from *Discipline and Punish* by Michel Foucault. English translation copyright © 1977 by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon). Originally published in French as *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison* by Editions Gallimard 1975, Allen Lane 1975. Copyright © 1975 by Editions Gallimard. Reprinted by permission of George Borchardt, Inc. for Editions Gallimard and Penguin Books, Ltd.

places where the flesh will be torn away, poured molten lead, boiling oil, burning resin, wax and sulphur melted together and then his body drawn and quartered by four horses and his limbs and body consumed by fire, reduced to ashes and his ashes thrown to the winds” (*Pièces originales* . . . , 372–4).

“Finally, he was quartered,” recounts *the Gazette d’Amsterdam* of 1 April 1757. “This last operation was very long, because the horses used were not accustomed to drawing; consequently, instead of four, six were needed; and when that did not suffice, they were forced, in order to cut off the wretch’s thighs, to sever the sinews and hack at the joints. . . .

“It is said that, though he was always a great swearer, no blasphemy escaped his lips; but the excessive pain made him utter horrible cries, and he often repeated: ‘My God, have pity on me! Jesus, help me!’ The spectators were all edified by the solicitude of the parish priest of St Paul’s who despite his great age did not spare himself in offering consolation to the patient.”

Bouton, an officer of the watch, left us his account: “The sulphur was lit, but the flame was so poor that only the top skin of the hand was burnt, and that only slightly. Then the executioner, his sleeves rolled up, took the steel pincers, which had been especially made for the occasion, and which were about a foot and a half long, and pulled first at the calf of the right leg, then at the thigh, and from there at the two fleshy parts of the right arm; then at the breasts. Though a strong, sturdy fellow, this executioner found it so difficult to tear away the pieces of flesh that he set about the same spot two or three times, twisting the pincers as he did so, and what he took away formed at each part a wound about the size of a six-pound crown piece.

“After these tearings with the pincers, Damiens, who cried out profusely, though without swearing, raised his head and looked at himself; the same executioner dipped an iron spoon in the pot containing the boiling potion, which he poured liberally over each wound. Then the ropes that were to be harnessed to the horses were attached with cords to the patient’s body; the horses were then harnessed and placed alongside the arms and legs, one at each limb.

“Monsieur Le Breton, the clerk of the court, went up to the patient several times and asked him if he had anything to say. He said he had not; at each torment, he cried out, as the damned in hell are supposed to cry out, ‘Pardon, my God! Pardon, my Lord.’ Despite all this pain, he raised his head from time to time and looked at himself boldly. The cords had been tied so tightly by the

men who pulled the ends that they caused him indescribable pain. Monsieur le [*sic*] Breton went up to him again and asked him if he had anything to say; he said no. Several confessors went up to him and spoke to him at length; he willingly kissed the crucifix that was held out to him; he opened his lips and repeated: ‘Pardon, Lord.’

“The horses tugged hard, each pulling straight on a limb, each horse held by an executioner. After a quarter of an hour, the same ceremony was repeated and finally, after several attempts, the direction of the horses had to be changed, thus: those at the arms were made to pull towards the head, those at the thighs towards the arms, which broke the arms at the joints. This was repeated several times without success. He raised his head and looked at himself. Two more horses had to be added to those harnessed to the thighs, which made six horses in all. Without success.

“Finally, the executioner, Samson, said to Monsieur Le Breton that there was no way or hope of succeeding, and told him to ask their Lordships if they wished him to have the prisoner cut into pieces. Monsieur Le Breton, who had come down from the town, ordered that renewed efforts be made, and this was done; but the horses gave up and one of those harnessed to the thighs fell to the ground. The confessors returned and spoke to him again. He said to them (I heard him): ‘Kiss me, gentlemen.’ The parish priest of St Paul’s did not dare to, so Monsieur de Marsilly slipped under the rope holding the left arm and kissed him on the forehead. The executioners gathered round and Damiens told them not to swear, to carry out their task and that he did not think ill of them; he begged them to pray to God for him, and asked the parish priest of St Paul’s to pray for him at the first mass.

“After two or three attempts, the executioner Samson and he who had used the pincers each drew out a knife from his pocket and cut the body at the thighs instead of severing the legs at the joints; the four horses gave a tug and carried off the two thighs after them, namely, that of the right side first, the other following; then the same was done to the arms, the shoulders, the arm-pits and the four limbs; the flesh had to be cut almost to the bone, the horses pulling hard carried off the right arm first and the other afterwards.

“When the four limbs had been pulled away, the confessors came to speak to him; but his executioner told them that he was dead, though the truth was that I saw the man move, his lower jaw moving from side to side as if he were talking. One of the executioners even said shortly afterwards that when they had lifted the trunk to throw it on the stake, he was still alive. The four limbs

were untied from the ropes and thrown on the stake set up in the enclosure in line with the scaffold, then the trunk and the rest were covered with logs and faggots, and fire was put to the straw mixed with this wood.

“... In accordance with the decree, the whole was reduced to ashes. The last piece to be found in the embers was still burning at half-past ten in the evening. The pieces of flesh and the trunk had taken about four hours to burn. The officers of whom I was one, as also was my son, and a detachment of archers remained in the square until nearly eleven o’clock.

“There were those who made something of the fact that a dog had lain the day before on the grass where the fire had been, chased away several times, and had always returned. But it is not difficult to understand that an animal found this place warmer than elsewhere” (quoted in Zevaes, 201–14).

Eighty years later, Léon Faucher drew up his rules “for the House of young prisoners in Paris”:

Art. 17. The prisoners’ day will begin at six in the morning in winter and at five in summer. They will work for nine hours a day throughout the year. Two hours a day will be devoted to instruction. Work and the day will end at nine o’clock in winter and at eight in summer.

Art. 18. *Rising.* At the first drum-roll, the prisoners must rise and dress in silence, as the supervisor opens the cell doors. At the second drum-roll, they must be dressed and make their beds. At the third, they must line up and proceed to the chapel for morning prayer. There is a five-minute interval between each drum-roll.

Art. 19. The prayers are conducted by the chaplain and followed by a moral or religious reading. This exercise must not last more than half an hour.

Art. 20. *Work.* At a quarter to six in the summer, a quarter to seven in winter, the prisoners go down into the courtyard where they must wash their hands and faces, and receive their first ration of bread. Immediately afterwards, they form into work-teams and go off to work, which must begin at six in summer and seven in winter.

Art. 21. *Meal.* At ten o’clock the prisoners leave their work and go to the refectory; they wash their hands in their courtyards and assemble in divisions. After the dinner, there is recreation until twenty minutes to eleven.

Art. 22. *School.* At twenty minutes to eleven, at the drum-roll, the prisoners form into ranks, and proceed in divisions to the school. The class lasts two hours and consists alternately of reading, writing, drawing and arithmetic.

Art. 23. At twenty minutes to one, the prisoners leave the school, in divisions, and return to their courtyards for recreation. At five minutes to one, at the drum-roll, they form into work-teams.

Art. 24. At one o’clock they must be back in the workshops: they work until four o’clock.

Art. 25. At four o’clock the prisoners leave their workshops and go into the courtyards where they wash their hands and form into divisions for the refectory.

Art. 26. Supper and the recreation that follows it last until five o’clock: the prisoners then return to the workshops.

Art. 27. At seven o’clock in the summer, at eight in winter, work stops; bread is distributed for the last time in the workshops. For a quarter of an hour one of the prisoners or supervisors reads a passage from some instructive or uplifting work. This is followed by evening prayer.

Art. 28. At half-past seven in summer, half-past eight in winter, the prisoners must be back in their cells after the washing of hands and the inspection of clothes in the courtyard; at the first drum-roll, they must undress, and at the second get into bed. The cell doors are closed and the supervisors go the rounds in the corridors, to ensure order and silence. (Faucher, 274, 82)

We have, then, a public execution and a time-table. They do not punish the same crimes or the same type of delinquent. But they each define a certain penal style. Less than a century separates them. It was a time when, in Europe and in the United States, the entire economy of punishment was redistributed. It was a time of great “scandals” for traditional justice, a time of innumerable projects for reform. It saw a new theory of law and crime, a new moral or political justification of the right to punish; old laws were abolished, old customs died out. “Modern” codes were planned or drawn up: Russia, 1769; Prussia, 1780; Pennsylvania and Tuscany, 1786; Austria, 1788; France, 1791, Year IV, 1808 and 1810. It was a new age for penal justice.

Among so many changes, I shall consider one: the disappearance of torture as a public spectacle. Today we are rather inclined to ignore it; perhaps, in its time, it gave rise to too much inflated rhetoric; perhaps it has been attributed too readily and too emphatically to a process of “humanization,” thus dispensing with the need for further analysis. And, in any case, how important is such a change, when compared with the great institutional transformations, the formulation of explicit,

general codes and unified rules of procedure; with the almost universal adoption of the jury system, the definition of the essentially corrective character of the penalty and the tendency, which has become increasingly marked since the nineteenth century, to adapt punishment to the individual offender? Punishment of a less immediately physical kind, a certain discretion in the art of inflicting pain, a combination of more subtle, more subdued sufferings, deprived of their visible display, should not all this be treated as a special case, an incidental effect of deeper changes? And yet the fact remains that a few decades saw the disappearance of the tortured, dismembered, amputated body, symbolically branded on face or shoulder, exposed alive or dead to public view. The body as the major target of penal repression disappeared.

DISCIPLINE

Panopticism

The following, according to an order published at the end of the seventeenth century, were the measures to be taken when the plague appeared in a town.

First, a strict spatial partitioning: the closing of the town and its outlying districts, a prohibition to leave the town on pain of death, the killing of all stray animals; the division of the town into distinct quarters, each governed by an intendant. Each street is placed under the authority of a syndic, who keeps it under surveillance; if he leaves the street, he will be condemned to death. On the appointed day, everyone is ordered to stay indoors: it is forbidden to leave on pain of death. The syndic himself comes to lock the door of each house from the outside; he takes the key with him and hands it over to the intendant of the quarter; the intendant keeps it until the end of the quarantine. Each family will have made its own provisions; but, for bread and wine, small wooden canals are set up between the street and the interior of the houses, thus allowing each person to receive his ration without communicating with the suppliers and other residents; meat, fish and herbs will be hoisted up into the houses with pulleys and baskets. If it is absolutely necessary to leave the house, it will be done in turn, avoiding any meeting. Only the intendants, syndics and guards will move about the streets and also, between the infected houses, from one corpse to another, the “crows,” who can be left to die: these are “people of little substance who carry the sick, bury the

dead, clean and do many vile and abject offices.” It is a segmented, immobile, frozen space. Each individual is fixed in his place. And, if he moves, he does so at the risk of his life, contagion or punishment.

Inspection functions ceaselessly. The gaze is alert everywhere: “A considerable body of militia, commanded by good officers and men of substance,” guards at the gates, at the town hall and in every quarter to ensure the prompt obedience of the people and the most absolute authority of the magistrates, “as also to observe all disorder, theft and extortion.” At each of the town gates there will be an observation post; at the end of each street sentinels. Every day, the intendant visits the quarter in his charge, inquires whether the syndics have carried out their tasks, whether the inhabitants have anything to complain of; they “observe their actions.” Every day, too, the syndic goes into the street for which he is responsible; stops before each house: gets all the inhabitants to appear at the windows (those who live overlooking the courtyard will be allocated a window looking onto the street at which no one but they may show themselves); he calls each of them by name; informs himself as to the state of each and every one of them—“in which respect the inhabitants will be compelled to speak the truth under pain of death”; if someone does not appear at the window, the syndic must ask why: “In this way he will find out easily enough whether dead or sick are being concealed.” Everyone locked up in his cage, everyone at his window, answering to his name and showing himself when asked—it is the great review of the living and the dead.

This surveillance is based on a system of permanent registration: reports from the syndics to the intendants, from the intendants to the magistrates or mayor. At the beginning of the “lock up,” the role of each of the inhabitants present in the town is laid down, one by one; this document bears “the name, age, sex of everyone, notwithstanding his condition”: a copy is sent to the intendant of the quarter, another to the office of the town hall, another to enable the syndic to make his daily roll call. Everything that may be observed during the course of the visits—deaths, illnesses, complaints, irregularities—is noted down and transmitted to the intendants and magistrates. The magistrates have complete control over medical treatment; they have appointed a physician in charge; no other practitioner may treat, no apothecary prepare medicine, no confessor visit a sick person without having received from him a written note “to prevent anyone from concealing and dealing with those sick of the contagion, unknown

to the magistrates.” The registration of the pathological must be constantly centralized. The relation of each individual to his disease and to his death passes through the representatives of power, the registration they make of it, the decisions they take on it.

Five or six days after the beginning of the quarantine, the process of purifying the houses one by one is begun. All the inhabitants are made to leave; in each room “the furniture and goods” are raised from the ground or suspended from the air; perfume is poured around the room; after carefully sealing the windows, doors and even the keyholes with wax, the perfume is set alight. Finally, the entire house is closed while the perfume is consumed; those who have carried out the work are searched, as they were on entry, “in the presence of the residents of the house, to see that they did not have something on their persons as they left that they did not have on entering.” Four hours later, the residents are allowed to re-enter their homes.

This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the centre and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead—all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism. The plague is met by order; its function is to sort out every possible confusion: that of the disease, which is transmitted when bodies are mixed together; that of the evil, which is increased when fear and death overcome prohibitions. It lays down for each individual his place, his body, his disease and his death, his well-being, by means of an omnipresent and omniscient power that subdivides itself in a regular, uninterrupted way even to the ultimate determination of the individual, of what characterizes him, of what belongs to him, of what happens to him. Against the plague, which is a mixture, discipline brings into play its power, which is one of analysis. A whole literary fiction of the festival grew up around the plague: suspended laws, lifted prohibitions, the frenzy of passing time, bodies mingling together without respect, individuals unmasked, abandoning their statutory identity and the figure under which they had been recognized, allowing a quite different truth to appear. But there was also a political dream of the plague, which was exactly its reverse: not the collective festival, but strict divisions; not laws

transgressed, but the penetration of regulation into even the smallest details of everyday life through the mediation of the complete hierarchy that assured the capillary functioning of power; not masks that were put on and taken off, but the assignment to each individual of his “true” name, his “true” place, his “true” body, his “true” disease. The plague as a form, at once real and imaginary, of disorder had as its medical and political correlative discipline. Behind the disciplinary mechanisms can be read the haunting memory of “contagions,” of the plague, of rebellions, crimes, vagabondage, desertions, people who appear and disappear, live and die in disorder.

If it is true that the leper gave rise to rituals of exclusion, which to a certain extent provided the model for and general form of the great Confinement, then the plague gave rise to disciplinary projects. Rather than the massive, binary division between one set of people and another, it called for multiple separations, individualizing distributions, an organization in depth of surveillance and control, an intensification and a ramification of power. The leper was caught up in a practice of rejection, of exile-enclosure; he was left to his doom in a mass among which it was useless to differentiate; those sick of the plague were caught up in a meticulous tactical partitioning in which individual differentiations were the constricting effects of a power that multiplied, articulated and subdivided itself; the great confinement on the one hand; the correct training on the other. The leper and his separation; the plague and its segmentations. The first is marked; the second analysed and distributed. The exile of the leper and the arrest of the plague do not bring with them the same political dream. The first is that of a pure community, the second that of a disciplined society. Two ways of exercising power over men, of controlling their relations, of separating out their dangerous mixtures. The plague-stricken town, traversed throughout with hierarchy, surveillance, observation, writing; the town immobilized by the functioning of an extensive power that bears in a distinct way over all individual bodies—this is the utopia of the perfectly governed city. The plague (envisaged as a possibility at least) is the trial in the course of which one may define ideally the exercise of disciplinary power. In order to make rights and laws function according to pure theory, the jurists place themselves in imagination in the state of nature; in order to see perfect disciplines functioning, rulers dreamt of the state of plague. Underlying disciplinary projects the image of the plague stands for all forms of confusion and disorder;

just as the image of the leper, cut off from all human contact, underlies projects of exclusion.

They are different projects, then, but not incompatible ones. We see them coming slowly together, and it is the peculiarity of the nineteenth century that it applied to the space of exclusion of which the leper was the symbolic inhabitant (beggars, vagabonds, madmen and the disorderly formed the real population) the technique of power proper to disciplinary partitioning. Treat “lepers” as “plague victims,” project the subtle segmentations of discipline onto the confused space of internment, combine it with the methods of analytical distribution proper to power, individualize the excluded, but use procedures of individualization to mark exclusion—this is what was operated regularly by disciplinary power from the beginning of the nineteenth century in the psychiatric asylum, the penitentiary, the reformatory, the approved school and, to some extent, the hospital. Generally speaking, all the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/ abnormal); and that of coercive assignment of differential distribution (who he is; where he must be; how he is to be characterized; how he is to be recognized; how a constant surveillance is to be exercised over him in an individual way, etc.). On the one hand, the lepers are treated as plague victims; the tactics of individualizing disciplines are imposed on the excluded; and, on the other hand, the universality of disciplinary controls makes it possible to brand the “leper” and to bring into play against him the dualistic mechanisms of exclusion. The constant division between the normal and the abnormal, to which every individual is subjected, brings us back to our own time, by applying the binary branding and exile of the leper to quite different objects; the existence of a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal brings into play the disciplinary mechanisms to which the fear of the plague gave rise. All the mechanisms of power which, even today, are disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him, are composed of those two forms from which they distantly derive.

Bentham’s Panopticon is the architectural figure of this composition. We know the principle on which it was based: at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two

windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible. The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately. In short, it reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather of its three functions—to enclose, to deprive of light and to hide—it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two. Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor capture better than darkness, which ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap.

To begin with, this made it possible—as a negative effect—to avoid those compact, swarming, howling masses that were to be found in places of confinement, those painted by Goya or described by Howard. Each individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor; but the side walls prevent him from coming into contact with his companions. He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication. The arrangement of his room, opposite the central tower, imposes on him an axial visibility; but the divisions of the ring, those separated cells, imply a lateral invisibility. And this invisibility is a guarantee of order. If the inmates are convicts, there is no danger of a plot, an attempt at collective escape, the planning of new crimes for the future, bad reciprocal influences; if they are patients, there is no danger of contagion; if they are madmen there is no risk of their committing violence upon one another; if they are schoolchildren, there is no copying, no noise, no chatter, no waste of time; if they are workers, there are no disorders, no theft, no coalitions, none of those distractions that slow down the rate of work, make it less perfect or cause accidents. The crowd, a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect, is abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities. From the point of view of the guardian, it is replaced by a multiplicity that can be numbered and supervised; from the point of view of the inmates, by a sequestered and observed solitude (Bentham, 60–64).

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. To achieve this, it is at once too much and too little that the prisoner should be constantly observed by an inspector: too little, for what matters is that he knows himself to be observed; too much, because he has no need in fact of being so. In view of this, Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so. In order to make the presence or absence of the inspector unverifiable, so that the prisoners, in their cells, cannot even see a shadow, Bentham envisaged not only venetian blinds on the windows of the central observation hall, but, on the inside, partitions that intersected the hall at right angles and, in order to pass from one quarter to the other, not doors but zig-zag openings; for the slightest noise, a gleam of light, a brightness in a half-opened door would betray the presence of the guardian. The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen.

It is an important mechanism, for it automatizes and disindividualizes power. Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up. The ceremonies, the rituals, the marks by which the sovereign's surplus power was manifested are useless. There is a machinery that assures dissymmetry, disequilibrium, difference. Consequently, it does not matter who exercises power. Any individual, taken almost at random, can operate the machine: in the absence of the director, his family, his friends, his visitors, even his servants (Bentham, 45). Similarly, it does not matter what motive animates him: the curiosity of the indiscreet, the malice of a child, the

thirst for knowledge of a philosopher who wishes to visit this museum of human nature, or the perversity of those who take pleasure in spying and punishing. The more numerous those anonymous and temporary observers are, the greater the risk for the inmate of being surprised and the greater his anxious awareness of being observed. The Panopticon is a marvellous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power.

A real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation. So it is not necessary to use force to constrain the convict to good behaviour, the madman to calm, the worker to work, the schoolboy to application, the patient to the observation of the regulations. Bentham was surprised that panoptic institutions could be so light: there were no more bars, no more chains, no more heavy locks; all that was needed was that the separations should be clear and the openings well arranged. The heaviness of the old "houses of security," with their fortress-like architecture, could be replaced by the simple, economic geometry of a "house of certainty." The efficiency of power, its constraining force have, in a sense, passed over to the other side—to the side of its surface of application. He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. By this very fact, the external power may throw off its physical weight; it tends to the non-corporal; and, the more it approaches this limit, the more constant, profound and permanent are its effects: it is a perpetual victory that avoids any physical confrontation and which is always decided in advance.

Bentham does not say whether he was inspired, in his project, by Le Vaux's menagerie at Versailles: the first menagerie in which the different elements are not, as they traditionally were, distributed in a park (Loisel, 104–7). At the centre was an octagonal pavilion which, on the first floor, consisted of only a single room, the king's salon; on every side large windows looked out onto seven cages (the eighth side was reserved for the entrance), containing different species of animals. By Bentham's time, this menagerie had disappeared. But one finds in the programme of the Panopticon a similar concern with individualizing observation, with characterization and classification, with the analytical arrangement of space. The Panopticon is a royal menagerie; the animal is replaced by man, individual

distribution by specific grouping and the king by the machinery of a furtive power. With this exception, the Panopticon also does the work of a naturalist. It makes it possible to draw up differences: among patients, to observe the symptoms of each individual, without the proximity of beds, the circulation of miasmas, the effects of contagion confusing the clinical tables; among school-children, it makes it possible to observe performances (without there being any imitation or copying), to map aptitudes, to assess characters, to draw up rigorous classifications and, in relation to normal development, to distinguish “laziness and stubbornness” from “incurable imbecility”; among workers, it makes it possible to note the aptitudes of each worker, compare the time he takes to perform a task, and if they are paid by the day, to calculate their wages (Bentham, 60–64).

So much for the question of observation. But the Panopticon was also a laboratory; it could be used as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals. To experiment with medicines and monitor their effects. To try out different punishments on prisoners, according to their crimes and character, and to seek the most effective ones. To teach different techniques simultaneously to the workers, to decide which is the best. To try out pedagogical experiments—and in particular to take up once again the well-debated problem of secluded education, by using orphans. One would see what would happen when, in the sixteenth or eighteenth year, they were presented with other boys or girls; one could verify whether, as Helvetius thought, anyone could learn anything; one would follow “the genealogy of every observable idea”; one could bring up different children according to different systems of thought, making certain children believe that two and two do not make four or that the moon is a cheese, then put them together when they are twenty or twenty-five years old; one would then have discussions that would be worth a great deal more than the sermons or lectures on which so much money is spent; one would have at least an opportunity of making discoveries in the domain of metaphysics. The Panopticon is a privileged place for experiments on men, and for analysing with complete certainty the transformations that may be obtained from them. The Panopticon may even provide an apparatus for supervising its own mechanisms. In this central tower, the director may spy on all the employees that he has under his orders: nurses, doctors, foremen, teachers, warders; he will be able to judge them continuously, alter their behaviour, impose upon them the methods he thinks best; and it will even be possible to

observe the director himself. An inspector arriving unexpectedly at the centre of the Panopticon will be able to judge at a glance, without anything being concealed from him, how the entire establishment is functioning. And, in any case, enclosed as he is in the middle of this architectural mechanism, is not the director’s own fate entirely bound up with it? The incompetent physician who has allowed contagion to spread, the incompetent prison governor or workshop manager will be the first victims of an epidemic or a revolt. “By every tie I could devise,” said the master of the Panopticon, “my own fate had been bound up by me with theirs” (Bentham, 177). The Panopticon functions as a kind of laboratory of power. Thanks to its mechanisms of observation, it gains in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men’s behaviour; knowledge follows the advances of power, discovering new objects of knowledge over all the surfaces on which power is exercised.

The plague-stricken town, the panoptic establishment—the differences are important. They mark, at a distance of a century and a half, the transformations of the disciplinary programme. In the first case, there is an exceptional situation: against an extraordinary evil, power is mobilized; it makes itself everywhere present and visible; it invents new mechanisms; it separates, it immobilizes, it partitions constructs for a time what is both a counter-city and the perfect society; it imposes an ideal functioning, but one that is reduced, in the final analysis, like the evil that it combats, to a simple dualism of life and death: that which moves brings death, and one kills that which moves. The Panopticon, on the other hand, must be understood as a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men. No doubt Bentham presents it as a particular institution, closed in upon itself. Utopias, perfectly closed in upon themselves, are common enough. As opposed to the ruined prisons, littered with mechanisms of torture, to be seen in Piranesi’s engravings, the Panopticon presents a cruel, ingenious cage. The fact that it should have given rise, even in our own time, to so many variations, projected or realized, is evidence of the imaginary intensity that it has possessed for almost two hundred years. But the Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use.

It is polyvalent in its applications; it serves to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, to instruct school-children, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work. It is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centres and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons. Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used. It is—necessary modifications apart—applicable “to all establishments whatsoever, in which, within a space not too large to be covered or commanded by buildings, a number of persons are meant to be kept under inspection” (Bentham, 40; although Bentham takes the penitentiary house as his prime example, it is because it has many different functions to fulfill—safe custody, confinement, solitude, forced labour and instruction).

In each of its applications, it makes it possible to perfect the exercise of power. It does this in several ways: because it can reduce the number of those who exercise it, while increasing the number of those on whom it is exercised. Because it is possible to intervene at any moment and because the constant pressure acts even before the offences, mistakes or crimes have been committed. Because, in these conditions, its strength is that it never intervenes, it is exercised spontaneously and without noise, it constitutes a mechanism whose effects follow from one another. Because, without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry, it acts directly on individuals; it gives “power of mind over mind.” The panoptic schema makes any apparatus of power more intense: it assures its economy (in material, in personnel, in time); it assures its efficacy by its preventative character, its continuous functioning and its automatic mechanisms. It is a way of obtaining from power “in hitherto unexampled quantity,” “a great and new instrument of government . . . ; its great excellence consists in the great strength it is capable of giving to any institution it may be thought proper to apply it to” (Bentham, 66).

It’s a case of “it’s easy once you’ve thought of it” in the political sphere. It can in fact be integrated into any function (education, medical treatment, production, punishment); it can increase the effect of this function, by being linked closely with it; it can constitute a mixed mechanism in which relations of power (and of knowledge) may be precisely adjusted, in the smallest detail, to

the processes that are to be supervised; it can establish a direct proportion between “surplus power” and “surplus production.” In short, it arranges things in such a way that the exercise of power is not added on from the outside, like a rigid, heavy constraint to the functions it invests, but is so subtly present in them as to increase their efficiency by itself increasing its own points of contact. The panoptic mechanism is not simply a hinge, a point of exchange between a mechanism of power and a function; it is a way of making power relations function in a function, and of making a function through these power relations. Bentham’s Preface to *Panopticon* opens with a list of the benefits to be obtained from his “inspection-house”: “Morals reformed—health preserved—industry invigorated—instruction diffused—public burthens lightened—Economy seated, as it were, upon a rock—the gordian knot of the Poor-Laws not cut, but untied—all by a simple idea in architecture!” (Bentham, 39)

Furthermore, the arrangement of this machine is such that its enclosed nature does not preclude a permanent presence from the outside: we have seen that anyone may come and exercise in the central tower the functions of surveillance, and that, this being the case, he can gain a clear idea of the way in which the surveillance is practised. In fact, any panoptic institution, even if it is as rigorously closed as a penitentiary, may without difficulty be subjected to such irregular and constant inspections: and not only by the appointed inspectors, but also by the public; any member of society will have the right to come and see with his own eyes how the schools, hospitals, factories, prisons function. There is no risk, therefore, that the increase of power created by the panoptic machine may degenerate into tyranny; the disciplinary mechanism will be democratically controlled, since it will be constantly accessible “to the great tribunal committee of the world.” This *Panopticon*, subtly arranged so that an observer may observe, at a glance, so many different individuals, also enables everyone to come and observe any of the observers. The seeing machine was once a sort of dark room into which individuals spied; it has become a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole.

The panoptic schema, without disappearing as such or losing any of its properties, was destined to spread throughout the social body; its vocation was to become a generalized function. The plague-stricken town provided an exceptional disciplinary model: perfect, but absolutely violent; to the disease that brought death, power opposed its perpetual threat of death; life inside it was reduced to its simplest expression; it was, against

the power of death, the meticulous exercise of the right of the sword. The Panopticon, on the other hand, has a role of amplification; although it arranges power, although it is intended to make it more economic and more effective, it does so not for power itself, nor for the immediate salvation of a threatened society: its aim is to strengthen the social forces—to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply. . . .

There are two images, then, of discipline. At one extreme, the discipline-blockade, the enclosed institution, established on the edges of society, turned inwards towards negative functions: arresting evil, breaking communications, suspending time. At the other extreme, with panopticism, is the discipline-mechanism: a functional mechanism that must improve the exercise of power by making it lighter, more rapid, more effective, a design of subtle coercion for a society to come. The movement from one project to the other, from a schema of exceptional discipline to one of a generalized surveillance, rests on a historical transformation: the gradual extension of the mechanisms of discipline throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, their spread throughout the whole social body, the formation of what might be called in general the disciplinary society.

A whole disciplinary generalization—the Benthamite physics of power represents an acknowledgement of this—had operated throughout the classical age. The spread of disciplinary institutions, whose network was beginning to cover an ever larger surface and occupying above all a less and less marginal position, testifies to this: what was an islet, a privileged place, a circumstantial measure, or a singular model, became a general formula; the regulations characteristic of the Protestant and pious armies of William of Orange or of Gustavus Adolphus were transformed into regulations for all the armies of Europe; the model colleges of the Jesuits, or the schools of Batencour or Demia, following the example set by Sturm, provided the outlines for the general forms of educational discipline; the ordering of the naval and military hospitals provided the model for the entire reorganization of hospitals in the eighteenth century.

But this extension of the disciplinary institutions was no doubt only the most visible aspect of various, more profound processes.

1. The functional inversion of the disciplines. At first, they were expected to neutralize dangers, to fix useless or disturbed populations, to avoid the inconveniences of over-large assemblies; now they were being asked to play a positive role, for

they were becoming able to do so, to increase the possible utility of individuals. Military discipline is no longer a mere means of preventing looting, desertion or failure to obey orders among the troops; it has become a basic technique to enable the army to exist, not as an assembled crowd, but as a unity that derives from this very unity an increase in its forces; discipline increases the skill of each individual, coordinates these skills, accelerates movements, increases fire power, broadens the fronts of attack without reducing their vigour, increases the capacity for resistance, etc. The discipline of the workshop, while remaining a way of enforcing respect for the regulations and authorities, of preventing thefts or losses, tends to increase aptitudes, speeds, output and therefore profits: it still exerts a moral influence over behaviour, but more and more it treats actions in terms of their results, introduces bodies into a machinery, forces into an economy. When, in the seventeenth century, the provincial schools or the Christian elementary schools were founded, the justifications given for them were above all negative: those poor who were unable to bring up their children left them “in ignorance of their obligations: given the difficulties they have in earning a living, and themselves having been badly brought up, they are unable to communicate a sound upbringing that they themselves never had”; this involves three major inconveniences: ignorance of God, idleness (with its consequent drunkenness, impurity, larceny, brigandage); and the formation of those gangs of beggars, always ready to stir up public disorder and “virtually to exhaust the funds of the Hotel-Dieu” (Demia, 60–61). Now, at the beginning of the Revolution, the end laid down for primary education was to be, among other things, to “fortify,” to “develop the body,” to prepare the child “for a future in some mechanical work,” to give him “an observant eye, a sure hand and prompt habits” (Talleyrand’s Report to the Constituent Assembly, 10 September 1791, quoted by Leon, 106). The disciplines function increasingly as techniques for making useful individuals. Hence their emergence from a marginal position on the confines of society, and detachment from the forms of exclusion or expiation, confinement or retreat. Hence the slow loosening of their kinship with religious regularities and enclosures. Hence also their rooting in the most important, most central and most productive

sectors of society. They become attached to some of the great essential functions: factory production, the transmission of knowledge, the diffusion of aptitudes and skills, the war-machine. Hence, too, the double tendency one sees developing throughout the eighteenth century to increase the number of disciplinary institutions and to discipline the existing apparatuses.

2. The swarming of disciplinary mechanisms. While, on the one hand, the disciplinary establishments increase, their mechanisms have a certain tendency to become “de-institutionalized,” to emerge from the closed fortresses in which they once functioned and to circulate in a “free” state; the massive, compact disciplines are broken down into flexible methods of control, which may be transferred and adapted. Sometimes the closed apparatuses add to their internal and specific function a role of external surveillance, developing around themselves a whole margin of lateral controls. Thus the Christian School must not simply train docile children; it must also make it possible to supervise the parents, to gain information as to their way of life, their resources, their piety, their morals. The school tends to constitute minute social observatories that penetrate even to the adults and exercise regular supervision over them: the bad behaviour of the child, or his absence, is a legitimate pretext, according to Demia, for one to go and question the neighbours, especially if there is any reason to believe that the family will not tell the truth; one can then go and question the parents themselves, to find out whether they know their catechism and the prayers, whether they are determined to root out the vices of their children, how many beds there are in the house and what the sleeping arrangements are; the visit may end with the giving of alms, the present of a religious picture, or the provision of additional beds (Demia, 39–40). . . .
3. The state-control of the mechanisms of discipline. In England, it was private religious groups that carried out, for a long time, the functions of social discipline (cf. Radzinovitz, 203–14); in France, although a part of this role remained in the hands of parish guilds or charity associations, another—and no doubt the most important part—was very soon taken over by the police apparatus.

The organization of a centralized police had long been regarded, even by contemporaries, as the most

direct expression of absolutism; the sovereign had wished to have “his own magistrate to whom he might directly entrust his orders, his commissions, intentions, and who was entrusted with the execution of orders and orders under the King’s private seal” (a note by Duval, first secretary at the police magistrature, quoted in Funck-Brentano, 1). In effect, in taking over a number of pre-existing functions—the search for criminals, urban surveillance, economic and political supervision—the police magistratures and the magistrature-general that presided over them in Paris transposed them into a single, strict, administrative machine: “All the radiations of force and information that spread from the circumference culminate in the magistrate-general. . . . It is he who operates all the wheels that together produce order and harmony. The effects of his administration cannot be better compared than to the movement of the celestial bodies” (Des Essarts, 344 and 528).

But, although the police as an institution were certainly organized in the form of a state apparatus, and although this was certainly lined directly to the centre of political sovereignty, the type of power that it exercises, the mechanisms it operates and the elements to which it applies them are specific. It is an apparatus that must be coextensive with the entire social body and not only by the extreme limits that it embraces, but by the minuteness of the details it is concerned with. Police power must bear “over everything”: it is not however the totality of the state nor of the kingdom as visible and invisible body of the monarch; it is the dust of events, actions, behaviour, opinions—“everything that happens”; the police are concerned with “those things of every moment,” those “unimportant things,” of which Catherine II spoke in her Great Instruction (Supplement to the Instruction for the drawing up of a new code, 1769, article 535). With the police, one is in the indefinite world of a supervision that seeks ideally to reach the most elementary particle, the most passing phenomenon of the social body: “The ministry of the magistrates and police officers is of the greatest importance; the objects that it embraces are in a sense definite, one may perceive them only by a sufficiently detailed examination” (Delamare, unnumbered Preface): the infinitely small of political power.

And, in order to be exercised, this power had to be given the instrument of permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance, capable of making all visible, as long as it could itself remain invisible. It had to be like a faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere, mobile attentions ever on the alert, a long, hierarchized network which, according to Le Maire,

comprised for Paris the forty-eight commissaires, the twenty inspecteurs, then the “observers,” who were paid regularly, the “basses mouches,” or secret agents, who were paid by the day, then the informers, paid according to the job done, and finally the prostitutes. And this unceasing observation had to be accumulated in a series of reports and registers; throughout the eighteenth century, an immense police text increasingly covered society by means of a complex documentary organization (on the police registers in the eighteenth century, cf. Chassaigne). And, unlike the methods of judicial or administrative writing, what was registered in this way were forms of behaviour, attitudes, possibilities, suspicions—a permanent account of individuals’ behaviour.

Now, it should be noted that, although this police supervision was entirely “in the hands of the king,” it did not function in a single direction. It was in fact a double-entry system: it had to correspond, by manipulating the machinery of justice, to the immediate wishes of the king, but it was also capable of responding to solicitations from below; the celebrated *lettres de cachet*, or orders under the king’s private seal, which were long the symbol of arbitrary royal rule and which brought detention into disrepute on political grounds, were in fact demanded by families, masters, local notables, neighbours, parish priests; and their function was to punish by confinement a whole infra-penalty, that of disorder, agitation, disobedience, bad conduct; those things that Ledoux wanted to exclude from his architecturally perfect city and which he called “offences of non-surveillance.” In short, the eighteenth-century police added a disciplinary function to its role as the auxiliary of justice in the pursuit of criminals and as an instrument for the political supervision of plots, opposition movements or revolts. It was a complex function since it linked the absolute power of the monarch to the lowest levels of power disseminated in society; since, between these different, enclosed institutions of discipline (workshops, armies, schools), it extended an intermediary network, acting where they could not intervene, disciplining the non-disciplinary spaces; but it filled in the gaps, linked them together, guaranteed with its armed forces an interstitial discipline and a meta-discipline. “By means of a wise police, the sovereign accustoms the people to order and obedience” (Vattel, 162).

The organization of the police apparatus in the eighteenth century sanctioned a generalization of the disciplines that became co-extensive with the state itself. Although it was linked in the most explicit way with everything in the royal power that exceeded the exercise

of regular justice, it is understandable why the police offered such slight resistance to the rearrangement of the judicial power; and why it has not ceased to impose its prerogatives upon it, with ever-increasing weight, right up to the present day; this is no doubt because it is the secular arm of the judiciary; but it is also because to a far greater degree than the judicial institution, it is identified, by reason of its extent and mechanisms, with a society of the disciplinary type. Yet it would be wrong to believe that the disciplinary functions were confiscated and absorbed once and for all by a state apparatus.

“Discipline” may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a “physics” or an “anatomy” of power, a technology. And it may be taken over either by “specialized” institutions (the penitentiaries or “houses of correction” of the nineteenth century), or by institutions that use it as an essential instrument for a particular end (schools, hospitals), or by pre-existing authorities that find in it a means of reinforcing or reorganizing their internal mechanisms of power (one day we should show how intra-familial relations, essentially in the parents-children cell, have become “disciplined,” absorbing since the classical age external schemata, first educational and military, then medical, psychiatric, psychological, which have made the family the privileged locus of emergence for the disciplinary question of the normal and the abnormal); or by apparatuses that have made discipline their principle of internal functioning (the disciplinarization of the administrative apparatus from the Napoleonic period), or finally by state apparatuses whose major, if not exclusive, function is to assure that discipline reigns over society as a whole (the police).

On the whole, therefore, one can speak of the formation of a disciplinary society in this movement that stretches from the enclosed disciplines, a sort of social “quarantine,” to an indefinitely generalizable mechanism of “panopticism.” Not because the disciplinary modality of power has replaced all the others; but because it has infiltrated the others, sometimes undermining them, but serving as an intermediary between them, linking them together, extending them and above all making it possible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements. It assures an infinitesimal distribution of the power relations. . . .

The formation of the disciplinary society is connected with a number of broad historical processes—economic, juridico-political and, lastly, scientific—of which it forms part.

1. Generally speaking, it might be said that the disciplines are techniques for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities. It is true that there is nothing exceptional or even characteristic in this; every system of power is presented with the same problem. But the peculiarity of the disciplines is that they try to define in relation to the multiplicities a tactics of power that fulfils three criteria: firstly, to obtain the exercise of power at the lowest possible cost (economically, by the low expenditure it involves; politically, by its discretion, its low exteriorization, its relative invisibility, the little resistance it arouses); secondly, to bring the effects of this social power to their maximum intensity and to extend them as far as possible, without either failure or interval; thirdly, to link this “economic” growth of power with the output of the apparatuses (educational, military, industrial or medical) within which it is exercised; in short, to increase both the docility and the utility of all the elements of the system. This triple objective of the disciplines corresponds to a well-known historical conjuncture. One aspect of this conjuncture was the large demographic thrust of the eighteenth century; an increase in the floating population (one of the primary objects of discipline is to fix; it is an antimadic technique); a change of quantitative scale in the groups to be supervised or manipulated (from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the eve of the French Revolution, the school population had been increasing rapidly, as had no doubt the hospital population; by the end of the eighteenth century, the peace-time army exceeded 200,000 men). The other aspect of the conjuncture was the growth in the apparatus of production, which was becoming more and more extended and complex, it was becoming more costly and its profitability had to be increased. The development of the disciplinary methods corresponded to these two processes, or rather, no doubt, to the new need to adjust their correlation. . . .

In short, to substitute for a power that is manifested through the brilliance of those who exercise it, a power that insidiously objectifies those on whom it is applied; to form a body of knowledge about these individuals, rather than to deploy the ostentatious signs of sovereignty. In a word, the disciplines are the ensemble of minute technical inventions that made it possible to increase the useful size of multiplicities by decreasing the inconveniences of the power which, in order to make them useful, must control them. A multiplicity, whether in a workshop or a nation, an army or a school,

reaches the threshold of a discipline when the relation of the one or the other becomes favourable. . . .

2. The panoptic modality of power—at the elementary, technical, merely physical level at which it is situated—is not under the immediate dependence or a direct extension of the great juridico-political structures of a society; it is nonetheless not absolutely independent. Historically, the process by which the bourgeoisie became in the course of the eighteenth century the politically dominant class was masked by the establishment of an explicit, coded and formally egalitarian juridical framework, made possible by the organization of a parliamentary, representative regime. But the development and generalization of disciplinary mechanisms constituted the other, dark side of these processes. The general juridical form that guaranteed a system of rights that were egalitarian in principle was supported by these tiny, everyday, physical mechanisms, by all those systems of micro-power that are essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical that we call the disciplines. And although, in a formal way, the representative regime makes it possible, directly or indirectly, with or without relays, for the will of all to form the fundamental authority of sovereignty, the disciplines provide, at the base, a guarantee of the submission of forces and bodies. The real, corporal disciplines constituted the foundation of the formal, juridical liberties. The contract may have been regarded as the ideal foundation of law and political power; panopticism constituted the technique, universally widespread, of coercion. It continued to work in depth on the juridical structures of society, in order to make the effective mechanisms of power function in opposition to the formal framework that it had acquired. The “Enlightenment,” which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines.

In appearance, the disciplines constitute nothing more than an infra-law. They seem to extend the general forms defined by law to the infinitesimal level of individual lives; or they appear as methods of training that enable individuals to become integrated into these general demands. They seem to constitute the same type of law on a different scale, thereby making it more meticulous and more indulgent. The disciplines should be regarded as a sort of counter-law. They have the precise role of introducing insuperable asymmetries and excluding reciprocities. First, because discipline creates between individuals a “private” link, which is a relation of constraints entirely different from contractual obligation; the acceptance of a discipline may be underwritten by contract; the way in which it is

imposed, the mechanisms it brings into play, the non-reversible subordination of one group of people by another, the “surplus” power that is always fixed on the same side, the inequality of position of the different “partners” in relation to the common regulation, all these distinguish the disciplinary link from the contractual link, and make it possible to distort the contractual link systematically from the moment it has as its content a mechanism of discipline. We know, for example, how many real procedures undermine the legal fiction of the work contract: workshop discipline is not the least important. Moreover, whereas the juridical systems define juridical subjects according to universal norms, the disciplines characterize, classify, specialize; they distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchize individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate. In any case, in the space and during the time in which they exercise their control and bring into play the asymmetries of their power, they effect a suspension of the law that is never total, but is never annulled either. Regular and institutional as it may be, the discipline, in its mechanism, is a “counter-law.” And, although the universal juridicism of modern society seems to fix limits on the exercise of power, its universally widespread panopticism enables it to operate, on the underside of the law, a machinery that is both immense and minute, which supports, reinforces, multiplies the asymmetry of power and undermines the limits that are traced around the law. The minute disciplines, the panopticisms of every day may well be below the level of emergence of the great apparatuses and the great political struggles. But, in the genealogy of modern society, they have been, with the class domination that traverses it, the political counterpart of the juridical norms according to which power was redistributed. Hence, no doubt, the importance that has been given for so long to the small techniques of discipline, to those apparently insignificant tricks that it has invented, and even to those “sciences” that give it a respectable face; hence the fear of abandoning them if one cannot find any substitute; hence the affirmation that they are at the very foundation of society, and an element in its equilibrium, whereas they are a series of mechanisms for unbalancing power relations definitively and everywhere; hence the persistence in regarding them as the humble, but concrete form of every morality, whereas they are a set of physico-political techniques.

To return to the problem of legal punishments, the prison with all the corrective technology at its disposal

is to be resituated at the point where the codified power to punish turns into a disciplinary power to observe; at the point where the universal punishments of the law are applied selectively to certain individuals and always the same ones; at the point where the redefinition of the juridical subject by the penalty becomes a useful training of the criminal; at the point where the law is inverted and passes outside itself, and where the counter-law becomes the effective and institutionalized content of the juridical forms. What generalizes the power to punish, then, is not the universal consciousness of the law in each juridical subject; it is the regular extension, the infinitely minute web of panoptic techniques.

3. Taken one by one, most of these techniques have a long history behind them. But what was new, in the eighteenth century, was that, by being combined and generalized, they attained a level at which the formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process. At this point, the disciplines crossed the “technological” threshold. First the hospital, then the school, then, later, the workshop were not simply “reordered” by the disciplines; they became, thanks to them, apparatuses such that any mechanism of objectification could be used in them as an instrument of subjection, and any growth of power could give rise in them to possible branches of knowledge; it was this link, proper to the technological systems, that made possible within the disciplinary element the formation of clinical medicine, psychiatry, child psychology, educational psychology, the rationalization of labour. It is a double process, then: an epistemological “thaw” through a refinement of power relations; a multiplication of the effects of power through the formation and accumulation of new forms of knowledge. . . .

In the Middle Ages, the procedure of investigation gradually superseded the old accusatory justice, by a process initiated from above; the disciplinary technique, on the other hand, insidiously and as if from below, has invaded a penal justice that is still, in principle, inquisitorial. All the great movements of extension that characterize modern penalty—the problematization of the criminal behind his crime, the concern with a punishment that is a correction, a therapy, a normalization, the division of the act of judgment between various authorities that are supposed to measure, assess, diagnose, cure, transform individuals—all this betrays the penetration of the disciplinary examination into the judicial inquisition.

What is now imposed on penal justice as its point of application, its “useful” object, will no longer be the body of the guilty man set up against the body of the king; nor will it be the juridical subject of an ideal contract; it will be the disciplinary individual. The extreme point of penal justice under the Ancien Regime was the infinite segmentation of the body of the regicide: a manifestation of the strongest power over the body of the greatest criminal, whose total destruction made the crime explode into its truth. The ideal point of penalty today would be an indefinite discipline: an interrogation without end, an investigation that would be extended without limit to a meticulous and ever more analytical observation, a judgment that would at the same time be the constitution of a file that was never closed, the calculated leniency of a penalty that would

be interlaced with the ruthless curiosity of an examination, a procedure that would be at the same time the permanent measure of a gap in relation to an inaccessible norm and the asymptotic movement that strives to meet in infinity. The public execution was the logical culmination of a procedure governed by the Inquisition. The practice of placing individuals under “observation” is a natural extension of a justice imbued with disciplinary methods and examination procedures. Is it surprising that the cellular prison, with its regular chronologies, forced labour, its authorities of surveillance and registration, its experts in normality, who continue and multiply the functions of the judge, should have become the modern instrument of penalty? Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?



■ PIERRE BOURDIEU (1930–2002): A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Pierre Bourdieu was born in 1930 in Denguin, a small village in southwestern France. Bourdieu was raised in a family of modest means; his father was a farmer turned town postman. Bourdieu proved to be a talented and hardworking student, enabling him to gain entry into the elite lycées (public secondary schools) in Paris. In 1951, Bourdieu entered the prestigious École Normale Supérieure, long a training ground for French intellectuals, including Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michel Foucault, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Louis Althusser, all of whom developed a decidedly Marxist orientation to their studies, as would Bourdieu. However, as a provincial outsider to the Parisian intellectual and cultural elite, Bourdieu became acutely aware of the advantages that his upper-class schoolmates possessed. This fostered within Bourdieu an antiestablishment sentiment that some have construed as an “extraordinary desire for revenge” against the Parisian intellectual world (Dufay and Dufort 1993:196, cited in Swartz 1997:18). Even though he himself was a successful product of it, Bourdieu would become a relentless critic of the French educational establishment and the aura of meritocracy with which it legitimated itself. He wrote extensively about the hostility harbored by the upper classes toward the middle and lower classes, a hostility that was embedded not only in the educational system, but also in matters such as the arts, sports, and food. In a number of his works, including *The Inheritors* (1964/1979; with coauthor Jean-Claude Passeron), *Distinction* (1979/1984), and *The State Nobility* (1989/1996), Bourdieu makes clear that education and cultural tastes are central to creating differences between social classes and to the reproduction of those class differences.

Bourdieu completed his *agrégation* (a highly competitive exam for teachers) in philosophy in 1955 and began teaching philosophy in the French provinces at the secondary level. Three years later, however, he was called into military service and sent to Algeria to combat the Algerians’ armed struggle to end French rule. Like many French intellectuals, Bourdieu opposed the French colonial war effort, and his military experience had a profound effect on him, leading to his lifelong commitment to producing socially relevant empirical research. After completing his military duties, Bourdieu remained in Algeria to lecture at the University of Algiers and to carry out ethnographic studies of tribal life, farming communities, and industrial laborers. Bourdieu left for Algeria as a philosopher, but after conducting extensive interviews with local inhabitants and migrant workers and taking hundreds of photographs, he returned to France in 1960 as a self-taught anthropologist.

Upon his return to France, Bourdieu attended the Sorbonne (University of Paris, Sorbonne), where he studied anthropology and sociology under the direction of Raymond Aron, one of France's leading sociologists. In 1962, he took a position at the University of Lille; two years later, he joined the faculty of the Practical School of Advanced Studies in Paris (École pratique des hautes études). Ever the agent provocateur, Bourdieu refused to complete the state doctorate degree, which is the standard requirement for those seeking chairs in French universities (Swartz and Zolberg 2004:19).⁸

In 1968, in the midst of the student political protests that swept through much of Western Europe, Bourdieu split with Aron and set up his own research center, the Center of Sociology for Education and Culture (*Centre de Sociologie de l'éducation et de la culture*). Thereafter followed a spate of groundbreaking publications. In 1970, Bourdieu coauthored with Jean-Claude Passeron *Reproduction: In Education, Society and Culture* (1970/1977), now considered a classic in the sociology of education. This was followed by *Distinction*, which was named the sixth most important social scientific work of the 20th century in a survey by the International Sociological Association (Swartz and Zolberg 2004:17), while his *The Logic of Practice* (1980/1990) placed fourth in the same survey. In addition, he published *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972/1977), *Sociology in Question* (1984/1993), *Language and Symbolic Power* (1982/1991), *Homo Academicus* (1984/1990), and dozens of articles addressing a wide variety of methodological, philosophical, and other issues. Meanwhile, in 1975, Bourdieu founded the review journal *Proceedings in Social Science Research*; in 1981 he was elected chair in sociology at the prestigious College of France, a position formerly held by Aron.

Bourdieu dominated French public intellectual life during the 1980s and 1990s. He continued to produce work at a prolific pace, publishing *The Rules of Art* (1992/1996) and the widely read *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (coauthored with Loïc Wacquant) in 1992. Two more books were published in 1993: *The Field of Cultural Production* (1968/1993) and *The Weight of the World*. (1968/1993). In 1993, he was awarded the Gold Medal from the National Center for Scientific Research in France—the highest accolade to be awarded to an intellectual (Grenfell 2004:8). His last publications dealt with such topics as masculine domination, neoliberal newspeak, globalization, and television. Apt to be recognized in the streets or cafés throughout France, particularly after he was featured in the documentary film *Sociology Is a Martial Art* (2000), Bourdieu's fame was unusual for an intellectual (Calhoun and Wacquant 2002). Bourdieu died from cancer in January 2002, with a lifetime achievement of more than 40 books and hundreds of articles published in a variety of languages; his influence on sociology will undoubtedly be felt for years to come.

BOURDIEU'S INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES AND CORE IDEAS ■

Bourdieu's work largely can be understood as an attempt to overcome the "dualism" that plagues much of social theory. Indeed, he notes, "I can say that all of my thinking started from this point: how can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?" (quoted in Swartz 1997:95). In seeking to answer this question, he developed an approach that takes into consideration the objective or external social forces that shape attitudes and behaviors as well as an individual's subjectivity or perception of and action in the world. Along the way, he has introduced a number of concepts into the lexicon of sociology: cultural and symbolic capital, fields, habitus, and symbolic violence, to name but a few. Moreover, his conceptual vocabulary evinces his cross-disciplinary influences: he draws not only from sociology, but also from anthropology and philosophy. In addition to Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, his work bears the imprint of Durkheim's nephew, the anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1872–1950), the structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), and a range of philosophers, including the "father" of phenomenology Edmund Husserl (1859–1938; see chapter 13) and many of his intellectual descendents,

⁸Grenfell (2004:3) subtitles his intellectual biography of Bourdieu "gent provocateur" because this "term seems best to sum up Bourdieu as iconoclast, as someone who was ready to challenge established orthodoxies and incite action against the violence (both symbolic and real) of the world."

most notably Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Alfred Schutz (1899–1959; see chapter 13), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), and the existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980). Finally, important aspects of Bourdieu's work were developed in reaction to the structural Marxist philosophy of Louis Althusser (1918–1990), his teacher at the *École Normale Supérieure*.

Bourdieu draws from these scholars but avoids adopting their ideas wholesale, opting instead to extend the themes they addressed by way of his own set of conceptual tools. In this way, the concepts he devises often fuse together those aspects of others' ideas that he finds most fruitful for his own empirical analyses, while casting off those ideas deemed least instructive or useful. The result is a highly creative and complex approach to the study of social life that defies easy summary. Nevertheless, in the remainder of this section we attempt the impossible, discussing several of the concepts that are central to Bourdieu's unique perspective while pointing to the intellectual sources from which he drew inspiration.

Habitus

The cornerstone of Bourdieu's efforts to link objectivist and subjectivist approaches is his notion of **habitus**, a concept he began to develop during his anthropological studies of Kabyle society in Algeria. The habitus is a mental filter that structures an individual's perceptions, experiences, and practices such that the world takes on a taken-for-granted, commonsense appearance. It refers to an individual's "dispositions" or "mental structures" through which the social world is apprehended and expressed through both verbal and bodily language (Bourdieu 1990:131). "As an acquired system of generative schemes, the habitus makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the condition of its production" (Bourdieu 1980/1990:55). In short, it is through the habitus that one acquires a "sense of one's place" in the world or a "point of view" from which one is able to interpret one's own actions as well as the actions of others. As a "way of being," however, the habitus shapes not only interpretive schemes and thoughts—the mind—but also the body, by molding one's "natural propensity" for a wide range of movements including posture, gait, and agility.⁹

Bourdieu's notion of habitus draws from Husserl's phenomenological philosophy and thus speaks to an understanding of social life that emphasizes its active construction as part and parcel of individuals' attempts to navigate their everyday world. Yet, Bourdieu goes to great lengths to demonstrate that individuals do not create their dispositions—rather, they *acquire* them. In this way, his notion of habitus offers a critique of not only Husserl's work, but also of that of Jean-Paul Sartre, a towering figure in French intellectual and political life. A Marxist philosopher, novelist, and playwright, Sartre's work and political activism made him the model "total intellectual," for which he served as a standard for some three decades. Most noted for his existentialist philosophy, Sartre maintained that "man is condemned to be free" (Sartre 1947:27) as a result of living in a world without meaning or design. However, this inherent meaninglessness provided the opportunity for the individual to develop an "authentic" self, a potential that he notes as the "first principle of existentialism": "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself" (*ibid.*:18). For Sartre, consciousness is not determined by one's social environment; rather, individuals possess the capacity to will themselves an existence that is freely chosen. Ultimately, individuals are solely responsible for being what they have willed themselves to be.

While drawing on phenomenology and existentialism, Bourdieu maintains that the habitus is not simply a mental or internal compass that shapes one's attitudes, perceptions, tastes, and "inclinations," nor does it refer to one's will or undetermined consciousness; it is instead an "internalization of externality" (Bourdieu 1980/1990:55). Bourdieu introduces this objectivist or structural element into the workings of the habitus by critically incorporating the insights of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose structural anthropology was a landmark in the social sciences. Lévi-Strauss sought, in part through a critique of

⁹Bourdieu's emphasis on the corporeal dimensions of the habitus stems from the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose phenomenology emphasized the centrality of embodied practice to everyday experience. See Jeremy Lane (2000).

Sartre's subjectivist orientation and emphasis on free will, to uncover the "fundamental structures of the human mind" (Lévi-Strauss [1949] 1969:75) in the binary codes that structure a society's cultural system. In essence, Lévi-Strauss was expanding Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics to explain what he took as the universal foundation of human society—namely, the binary opposites (good/evil, weak/strong, masculine/feminine, etc.) that structure all human ways of thinking, kinship systems, and myths. On the basis of his richly detailed anthropological studies, Lévi-Strauss created quasi-mathematical formulas to map out the structural relations according to which all cultures are said to be organized like so many variations on a common theme.

Lévi-Strauss's commitment to a scientific, as opposed to a philosophical, examination of social life had a major impact on Bourdieu's empirical research. It was in the "confrontation" between the works of Sartre and Lévi-Strauss that he saw the possibility "of reconciling theoretical and practical intentions, bringing together the scientific and the ethical or political vocation . . . in a humbler and more responsible way of performing [one's] task as researcher" (ibid.:2). Nevertheless, Bourdieu did not adopt Lévi-Strauss's structuralism wholesale. Most troubling for Bourdieu is structuralism's "mechanical" view of action, whereby individuals' consciousness or reasons for acting are of secondary interest, since they are held to be reflections of underlying cultural codes of which they are unaware. Through his conception of the habitus, Bourdieu sought "to reintroduce agents that Lévi-Strauss and the structuralists . . . tended to abolish, making them into simple epiphenomena of structure" (1990:9). Contrary to the structuralists' portrayal of conduct, Bourdieu contended, "action is not the mere carrying out of a rule, or obedience to a rule. Social agents . . . are not automata regulated like clocks, in accordance with laws they do not understand" (ibid.).

Despite Bourdieu's criticism of the mechanistic nature of Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology, there is a decidedly structuralist element in Bourdieu's notion of the habitus, since an individual's dispositions are a product of the "internalization of externality." The externality that shapes the habitus is readily apparent if we compare it to a "point of view." As the term itself suggests, points of view "are views taken from a certain point, that is, from a given position within social space. And we know too that there will be different or even antagonistic points of view, since points of view depend on the point from which they are taken, since the vision that every agent has of space depends on his or her position in that space" (ibid.:131). For example, your vision of geographic space is dependent on your position or the point you occupy within that space. If you were to stand facing north, your surroundings would appear to you in a particular way that is quite different from how they would appear to someone facing south. You each will see things that the other is unaware of, because it is outside of your (his) field of vision. Moreover, those things that you both see will not look the same, because your distinctive points of view will determine their appearance. Nevertheless, both of you will perceive the world as natural or self-evident despite the fact that your perceptions are dependent not on the world, but on the point of view from which you apprehend the world.

Now extend the notion of geographic space to social space. In this case, your point of view or disposition is determined by your position within a space that is structured by two "principles of differentiation": economic capital and cultural capital (Bourdieu [1994] 1998:6). **Economic capital** refers to the material resources—wealth, land, money—that one controls or possesses. **Cultural capital** refers to nonmaterial goods such as educational credentials, types of knowledge and expertise, verbal skills, and aesthetic preferences that can be converted into economic capital. It is these two forms of capital that constitute the "externality" that is internalized via the habitus by forming the social space within which points of view are taken. Within this social space, individuals are positioned relative to one another, first according to the overall volume of the capital they possess and, second, according to the relative amount of economic and cultural capital they possess. Moreover, the closer individuals are to one another in terms of the amount and types of capital they possess, the more they have in common (the more their lifestyles, tastes, and aspirations coincide), while the farther apart they are in social space (i.e., the less similar the composition of their capital), the less they have in common (ibid.:6, 7). Thus, you are more apt to see "eye to eye" or "hit it off" with someone, the more your position in social space overlaps. But

this is not a direct result of possessing similar amounts of money and types of educational credentials per se but rather a result of the similarity of the habitus each has acquired by virtue of being similarly positioned in social space.

The habitus, then, is a structured structure that structures how one views and acts in the world. First, as a scheme or structure of perceptions, dispositions, and actions, the habitus “generates and organizes practices and representations”—it *structures* an individual’s experience of and orientation to the social world. An individual’s early childhood socialization has a particularly strong effect in this regard because it provides the basis for apprehending and structuring all future experiences. As Bourdieu notes, the habitus is a system of durable dispositions that

tends to ensure its own constancy and defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information. . . . Through the systematic ‘choices’ it makes among the places, events and people that might be frequented, the habitus tends to protect itself from crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible, that is, a relatively constant universe of situations tending to reinforce its dispositions. (Bourdieu 1980/1990:60, 61)

It is not by happenstance that we tend to avoid situations and persons that make us uncomfortable because they challenge our point of view. Instead, we strategically avoid them in order to protect the certainty of our view of the social world.

However, as a structure, the habitus is itself *structured* by one’s position in social space, which is determined by the volume and types of capital possessed. As a product of an objective position within social space, the habitus encompasses a system of objectively determined practices that reflect the possibilities or “life chances” that are tied to a given social position. In this way, the habitus is an “embodiment of history” or a “present past” born out of the long accumulation of life experiences distinctive to a given social position.

Bourdieu sees in the habitus the union of structures and practices: “Objective structures tend to produce structured subjective dispositions that produce structured actions which, in turn, tend to reproduce objective structure” (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970/1977: 203, quoted in Swartz 1997:103). For Bourdieu, however, a central unintended consequence of this circular process is the legitimation and reproduction of a stratified social order that advantages some groups while disadvantaging others. Insofar as an individual’s habitus is structured by the existing social distribution of economic and cultural capital, the aspirations and expectations it engenders will conform to what is objectively accessible, given one’s class position. Objective probabilities for success or failure are translated into a subjective appraisal of a “sense of one’s place.” On one hand, a person whose parents are successful, college-educated professionals or corporate executives will grow up expecting to be a successful, college-educated professional or corporate executive; more than likely, he will not aspire to be a worker in a furniture assembly plant. On the other hand, a person whose family has worked as manual laborers for generations will be more likely to expect to do the same, while assuming that a career as a corporate executive or physician is outside of his reach. As a result, an individual’s internalized estimation of what is objectively possible or impossible, reasonable or unreasonable to accomplish, fosters aspirations and practices that reproduce the objective structures that generate the world of unequal possibilities. Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, the habitus perpetuates structural inequality across generations by adapting individuals’ expectations and behaviors to a social space that is constructed on an unequal distribution of resources (Swartz 1997:103–107).

The discriminatory effects of the habitus apply not only to life chances and career aspirations, but also to a wide range of lifestyle “choices.” For example, persons who possess relatively little economic capital but possess a relatively high volume of cultural capital (the “dominated fraction of the dominant class,” in Bourdieu’s terms) are likely to enjoy the same types of food, read the same types of books, listen to the same

types of music, speak with a similar vocabulary and accent, participate in the same types of sports, and share similar political views. These affinities are the product of a shared point of view that enables those who occupy this space to acquire the code necessary for understanding, for example, the distinctions that make Beethoven different from Mozart, James Joyce different from Joseph Conrad, a Monet different from a Manet, or a bottle of Bordeaux different from a bottle of Gallo. Those situated differently in social space—for instance, those who possess little in the way of economic and cultural capital—are unlikely to be exposed to the necessary socialization that would endow them with the categorical schemes required to appreciate these distinctions. Being unable to “understand” such types of music, novels, paintings, or wines, those so situated would be little interested in partaking of them.



Photographer: Russell Lee / Farm Security Administration

Photo 14.3 An Old Woman's Hands

In his groundbreaking book *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1979) analyzed the schemes of perception individuals bring to bear on the social world, including works of art. Based on interviews and questionnaires, he documented distinctive modes of apprehending art that corresponded to the class position of respondents. For instance, when asked to comment on the photo of an old woman's hands, working-class respondents—those who possessed little economic and cultural capital—replied in everyday terms that lacked an explicitly aesthetic judgment: “Oh, she's got terribly deformed hands! . . . Looks like she's got arthritis. . . . I really feel sorry seeing that poor old woman's hands, they're all knotted.” Respondents from the more privileged classes, however, described the photograph in abstract terms that reflect their own distance from the necessities of everyday life and their possession of the aesthetic code required for properly appreciating art: “I find this a very beautiful photograph. It's the very symbol of toil. It puts me in mind of Flaubert's old servant-woman. . . . That woman's gesture, [is] at once very humble. . . . It's terrible that work and poverty are so deforming” (Bourdieu 1984/1990: 44, 45).

Like their comments on the photo of the woman's hands, when responding to a “modernist” photo, those possessing little cultural capital were unable to apply an aesthetic code to the photograph that would allow them to perceive it as a form of artistic expression. Neither, however, could the image be decoded through common, “realist” perceptual schemes. Perplexed and defeated, manual workers offered the following descriptions: “At first sight it's a construction in metal but I can't make head or tail of it. It might be something used in an electric power station. . . . I can't make out what it really is, it's a mystery to me.” “Now, that one really bothers me, I haven't got anything to say about it. . . . I can't see what it could be, apart from lighting. It isn't car headlights, it wouldn't be all straight lines like that.” “That's something to do with electronics, I don't know anything about that.” Similarly situated in social space, small shopkeepers and craftsmen offered similar verdicts: “That is of no interest, it may be all very fine, but not for me. . . . Personally that stuff leaves me cold.” “I wouldn't know what to do with a photo like that. Perhaps it suits modern tastes.”

By contrast, members of the dominant class were able to appreciate the image by applying an abstract, aesthetic code in which judgments of form are freed from judgments of contents: “It's inhuman but aesthetically beautiful because of the contrasts” (ibid.:46, 47).

Bourdieu's analysis reveals how possessing the code—that is, the cultural capital—to properly understand works of art, haute cuisine, or the finer points of golf is not simply a matter of an individual's aesthetic preferences and tastes. Because differences in lifestyles and knowledge are the product of hierarchically ordered positions within social space, they, too, are ordered hierarchically. In class-based



Photo 14.4 Nighttime Industrial Scene

significance of such behavior often stress to their young children the need to refrain from holding their forks and spoons like a “caveman.”

Social Reproduction

While Bourdieu’s notion of the habitus speaks to a central debate that has long framed the social sciences—namely, the relationship between agency and structure—he combines the concept of the habitus with his discussion of economic and cultural capital to shed light on another long-standing problematic: How are societies reproduced from one generation to the next such that social stability is preserved? In answering this question, Bourdieu draws heavily from Marx, Durkheim, and Weber to fashion a novel account of the process of social reproduction. The resulting analyses of cultural capital and its accumulation through socialization and education represent one of his most important contributions to social theory.

Like Marx, Bourdieu sees modern societies as based fundamentally on relations of power. Arguing that “economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital” (Bourdieu 1990:252), Bourdieu shares with Marx’s work, and Marxism more generally, an emphasis on class-based forms of dominance. Economic capital (money and property) provides the means for acquiring other forms of capital, including cultural capital, by providing an escape from “necessity.” The more wealth a person possesses, the more he is able to remove himself from the necessary daily concerns over physical survival. By freeing one from pressing concerns over one’s material existence, economic capital grants opportunities for traveling to foreign lands, frequenting the bastions of high culture (museums, operas, etc.), and otherwise indulging one’s tastes. In short, economic capital affords an individual the possibility for becoming “worldly”—that is, “knowing” the world—and thus deserving of the privileged status that is bestowed on him by others. Most important for the purposes of social reproduction, economic capital can be readily transferred to succeeding generations through inheritance. Certainly it is easier to give your money to your family members than it is to give them your cultural capital in the form of knowledge and aesthetic preferences, no matter how “superior” they may be. Moreover, the value of specific tastes can fluctuate within a relatively short time, while the value of money remains an enduring feature of advanced societies.

Although Bourdieu contends that class relations form the basis of modern, hierarchical societies and that economic capital is the most valuable form of capital, his analysis of social reproduction parts in significant ways from traditional Marxist interpretations. Marxist social theory typically assigns

societies, it matters whether or not an individual prefers to visit museums or watch wrestling on TV, read *The New Yorker* or *The National Enquirer*, attend a tennis match or a stock car race. While the former are generally considered “highbrow” and refined, the latter are considered “lowbrow” and vulgar. As a result, tastes symbolically mark the social positions they are connected to—and the individuals who inhabit them—as either dignified or inferior, and serve to legitimate existing social inequalities. Even how a person handles his silverware at mealtime can signify the cultural capital he possesses; “cultured” parents who are attuned to the symbolic

a derivative role to noneconomic domains. Thus, political, legal, and cultural systems compose a “superstructure” that reflects the organization of production within the more primary economic “base.” However, as our discussion of cultural capital suggests, Bourdieu contends that economic resources alone do not form the social space of positions. Nor are money and property the only avenues for expressing and sustaining relations of domination. Moreover, in addition to cultural capital, social positions also are endowed with varying degrees of **social capital** or networks of contacts and acquaintances that can be used to secure or advance one’s position. For instance, a friend’s father may write a letter of recommendation on your behalf to attend a prestigious university of which he is an alumnus, or perhaps someone you know knows someone who can arrange an interview for you at a well-respected software firm. Of course, irrespective of the amount of economic and cultural capital we may possess, we all have friends and acquaintances that can help us in one way or another. Bourdieu’s point, however, is that social capital circulates within defined boundaries of social space and thus serves to reproduce existing relations of domination. If one is raised in a poor family living in a rural community, it is unlikely that one will have connections to corporate executives working in a major metropolitan center. Thus, social capital promotes the perpetuation of class position across generations by providing access to opportunities denied to those who do not possess such resources.

Social reproduction, then, essentially consists of the reproduction of stratified, hierarchical relations that deflect or resist calls for radical change by those positioned in dominated positions in social space. Typically, this requires that dominated social groups sanction the legitimacy of the existing system of relations, thus perpetuating their own domination. Like Marx, who argued that “the ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class,” Bourdieu sees relations of domination disguised through a false consciousness that renders the social system immune from challenges. This is made possible once the real sources of individuals’ domination are “misrecognized” as stemming from personal failings or from causes beyond the control of their society and its leaders.

According to Bourdieu, no institution does more to ensure the reproduction of class relations than education. Misrecognized as a meritocratic institution that rewards individual aptitudes over hereditary privileges, the educational system

maintains the preexisting social order, that is, the gap between pupils endowed with unequal amounts of cultural capital. More precisely, by a series of selection operations, the system separates holders of inherited cultural capital from those who lack it. Differences of aptitude being inseparable from social differences according to inherited capital, the system thus tends to maintain preexisting social differences. (Bourdieu 1994/1998:20)

As guardians of the dominant culture—what is worth knowing and what the worthy should know—universities are charged with separating the cultured from the uncultured. Their mission is effected through an application process and competitive entrance exams (e.g., SATs) that establish a “true magical threshold separating the last candidate to have passed from the first to have failed” and thus a boundary separating the sacred from the profane (ibid.:21). Applicants are judged, and, once admitted, grades are assigned, as much, if not more, on the basis of what students already know than on what they will have learned in class. And what successful students already know is the “feel for the game” that comes with prepossessing the same types of cultural capital that are enshrined in institutions of higher education. Was reading encouraged in your family? If so, what was favored? Hemingway, comic books, or the latest installment of the *Twilight* series? Success in school is not simply tied to writing and speaking well; rather, it is a matter of writing and speaking in a particular way. Similarly, knowing how to install home plumbing, repair a television, or provide emotional support to those who are distressed is of little value in university classrooms unless it is coupled with an understanding of, and ability to articulate, the *science* that underlies such skills. What the best schools do best—the Grandes Écoles in France or the Ivy League in the United States—is conceal the links between scholastic aptitude and inherited cultural capital in a diploma that consecrates a social difference in the guise of a technical competence (ibid.:22). Ostensibly meritocratic qualifications serve to perpetuate social inequalities by transforming their effects into the fate of personal traits.

Symbolic Struggles

While economic, cultural, and social capital are crucial resources that shape an individual's position in social space and thus his life chances, Bourdieu argues that these forms of capital are not directly responsible for charting one's destiny or for the reproduction of social relations more generally. Instead, these forms of capital are realized symbolically through a "war of words," the stakes of which are establishing a monopoly over the "legitimate principle of vision and division" on which social reality is constructed (Bourdieu 1990:134). In this "war," opposing sides struggle to define what is just and unjust, good and bad, right and wrong, pure and corrupt, who "belongs" and who doesn't. Both the stability of and challenges to the prevailing social order are the consequence of individuals and groups strategically marshalling the capital at their disposal in an effort to advance their particular interests.

However, the struggle to impose a particular vision of the world in the name of a universal truth cannot be waged through naked coercion or under the banner that "might makes right" if that vision is to retain its legitimacy. To be effective, capital must be deployed in a disinterested fashion such that all strategies, interests, and calculations appear to be untainted by self-serving ambition. This requires that individuals and groups possess **symbolic capital**. Commonly labeled prestige, honor, reputation, or charisma, symbolic capital is converted economic or cultural capital denied as capital, "recognized as legitimate, that is, misrecognized as capital" (Bourdieu 1980/1990:118). Here, Bourdieu is extending Weber's insights into charisma as a source of legitimacy and authority (Swartz 1997:43). In his studies of world religions, Weber examined how the charisma of prophets served as a basis for exercising authority over their followers. Charisma—a state of "grace"—endows religious prophets with a virtual magical power that instills in believers an unquestioned obedience to their commands. While Weber confined his discussion of charisma to the religious field, Bourdieu argues that charisma operates within the secular world as well. Artists, scientists, politicians, university professors, journalists, and others can use their charisma or reputation, accumulated within their respective areas of expertise, as a source of power to legitimately demand obedience from others. Those who possess symbolic capital possess the authority to make the world through a "magical power" that transforms and disguises what is the result of the self-interested exercise of economic and political domination into the naturally inevitable.

Bourdieu uses the term **symbolic violence** to refer to acts leading to the misrecognition of reality or distortion of underlying power relations. "Symbolic violence rests on the adjustment between the structures constitutive of the habitus of the dominated and the structure of the relation of domination to which they apply: the dominated perceive the dominant through the categories that the relation of domination has produced and which are thus identical to the interests of the dominant" (Bourdieu 1994/1998:121). In this way, relations of domination take on a "naturalness" that is inscribed in the habitus—the schemes of perception and apprehension—of both the dominant and the dominated. Through committing acts of symbolic violence, a misrecognized vision of the social world is legitimated—a vision that reproduces, with the complicity of the dominated, a stratified social order. Thus, for instance, through acts of symbolic violence the beneficiaries of the educational system appear intrinsically worthy of their success, while the less successful appear intrinsically unworthy (Bourdieu 1982/1991:24, 25).

The struggle to impose the legitimate categories according to which social life is understood is, for Bourdieu, at the root of all action. This struggle takes place within "fields," a concept central in Bourdieu's theoretical scheme. **Fields** are relatively autonomous arenas within which actors and institutions mobilize their capital in an effort to capture the stakes—the distribution of capital—that are specific to it. Examples of fields include art, literature, science, religion, the family, and education. The evolving history of each of these arenas is determined by the struggles that take place between its dominant and subordinate factions as each attempts to either defend or subvert the legitimacy of existing practices—the status quo—and the meanings assigned to them. For instance, painters and critics within the field of art are engaged in a continual struggle over what qualifies as art and whose works deserve

to be so consecrated. As is the case in all such struggles, participants here adopt strategies that correspond to the amount and types of capital they possess. Thus, artists, critics, dealers, and gallery owners whose interests and positions are aligned with established, orthodox styles will put into play their symbolic capital to denounce avant-garde or heretical works as “pretentious,” “undisciplined,” or, the worst of all charges in the artistic field, “commercial.” For their part, the “newcomers” will challenge the legitimacy of the establishment by classifying works associated with it as “stale,” “dated,” or “hackneyed.” While the former seek to fix the current boundaries of the field, the latter, who can make a name for themselves only by being different or distinctive from consecrated producers, seek to rupture those boundaries (Bourdieu 1984/1993).

No matter the field, those who have an interest or stake in it take a position—that is, they pursue a strategy that corresponds to the position they occupy in that field. In this light, all action is self-interested, although in order to be perceived as legitimate it must be misrecognized as disinterested. Because strategies of misrecognition are carried out symbolically, the words used to classify or assign meaning to acts and others are instruments of power. Symbolic power is a power of “worldmaking,” “a power of creating things with words” exercised in the struggle to impose the legitimate vision of the social world (Bourdieu 1980/1990:137, 138). Of course, not every individual or group is able to exercise symbolic power and define the “truth.” The power to name the world—to “make people see and believe”—is dependent on the amount of symbolic capital (charisma, authority, recognition) one possesses, which, in turn, is dependent on the outcome of previous struggles as well as one’s position within the relevant field.

Consider the controversies surrounding the definition of obscenity, attempts to form an employee union in a retail store chain, or efforts to redraw electoral districts. In each instance, the interested parties (artists and religious leaders, workers and business owners, politicians and community activists) seek to impose their particular vision on the issue as the universal, and thus legitimate, truth. When is a painting or song lyric a form of artistic expression and when is it an obscenity? What is the best way to strike a balance between workers’ rights and a corporation’s ability to turn a profit? When does redistricting serve to enhance democratic representation or unfairly distort the voting process? Seldom do such questions yield a simple, obvious answer. Nevertheless, they are answered, when one faction in the controversy is able to mobilize belief in the legitimacy of its words through “an almost magical power which enables [it] to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic)—namely, the ability to establish the social order (Bourdieu 1982/1991:170).

We conclude this section by briefly noting several of the influences Bourdieu draws on in developing his analyses of symbolic struggles and their relevance to the reproduction of social relations. Like Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss, Bourdieu views all symbolic systems as grounded in fundamental binary categories.¹⁰ Evincing the imprint of both scholars, he notes,

All the agents in a given social formation share a set of basic perceptual schemes, which receive the beginnings of objectification in the pairs of antagonistic adjectives commonly used to classify and qualify persons or objects in the most varied areas of practice. The network of oppositions between high (sublime, elevated, pure) and low (vulgar, low, modest), spiritual and material, fine (refined, elegant) and coarse (heavy, fat, crude, brutal), light (subtle, lively, sharp, adroit) and heavy (slow, thick, blunt, laborious, clumsy), free and forced,

¹⁰Durkheim (1912/1965) saw in the early religious distinction drawn between the sacred and the profane the basis for all other systems of thought. This distinction was born out of focused group activity in tribal societies that produced in participants an altered state of consciousness. Durkheim referred to this group energy as “mana” or “collective effervescence” and argued that tribal members attributed their newly found feelings of efficacy to the influence of supernatural spirits and gods. These feelings, in turn, provided the foundation for group solidarity and a sense of community. Lévi-Strauss would later develop Durkheim’s ideas regarding binary classifications into the basis for his structural anthropology.

broad and narrow, or, in another dimension, between unique (rare, different, distinguished, exclusive, exceptional, singular, novel) and common (ordinary, banal, commonplace, trivial, routine), brilliant (intelligent) and dull (obscure, grey, mediocre), is the matrix of all the commonplaces which find such ready acceptance because behind them lies the whole social order. (Bourdieu 1984/1990:468)

Bourdieu parts company with Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss, however, when he argues that binary classifications, while serving as the foundation for appending the everyday world and creating shared meaning and social solidarity, also provide the conceptual basis for social domination (Swartz 1997). The world of common sense produced by the logic of binary opposites is a world in which only some individuals and groups are entitled to the privileged axis of opposing terms. The binary categories we use to distinguish practices and things classify at the same time those individuals and groups associated with them. As an outcome of symbolic struggles, what is consecrated as sacred, pure, strong, or brilliant reflects and legitimates the underlying hierarchical social order that pits the dominant against the dominated (ibid:85, 86).

This leads us to consider the influence of Weber's work on Bourdieu. Like Weber, Bourdieu sees interests and power as deriving from a number of sources; his analyses of multiple forms of capital represent an important extension of Weber's earlier work in this regard.¹¹ Bourdieu's analyses of lifestyle patterns as signs of distinction that disguise class-based domination are particularly indebted to Weber's conceptualization of class and status groups (ibid.:45). Bourdieu also adopts a view similar to Weber's regarding the existence of social classes. For Weber, classes, contrary to Marxian definitions of the concept, are not real groups whose composition reflects existing property relations. Instead, classes refer to individuals who share life chances that are determined by "economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunity for income" (Weber 1925/1978:927). As you will read in the first selection excerpted here, Bourdieu argues that classes exist only "on paper," as individuals who are "related" to one another in social space, and not as real groups. This view has important ramifications for understanding how the social order and relations of domination are maintained and challenged, particularly by calling attention to the shortcomings of Marxist perspectives.

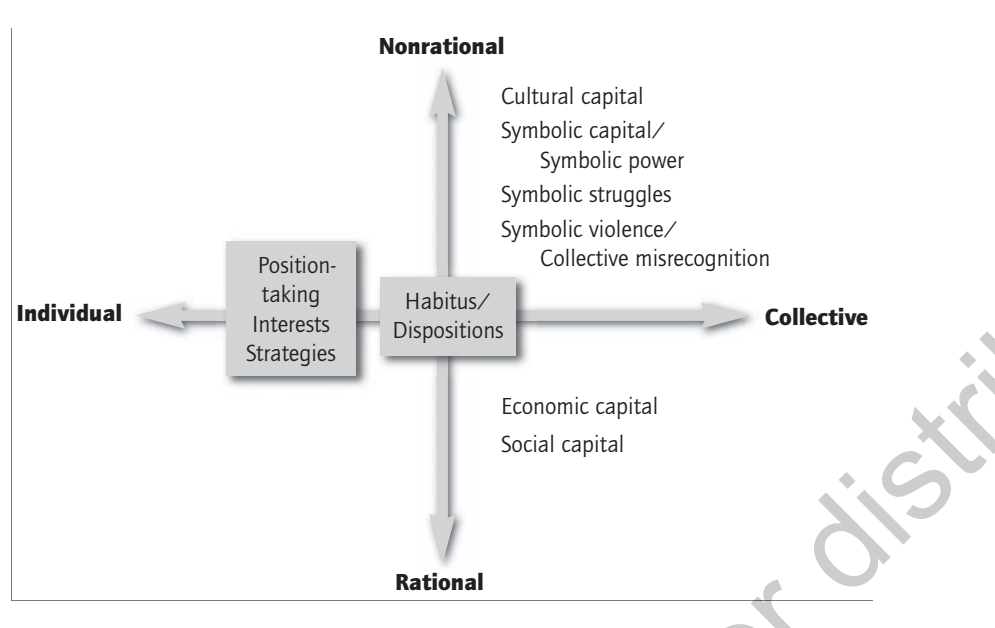
■ BOURDIEU'S THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS

As noted at the outset of this section, Bourdieu developed his theoretical model with the intention of overcoming the theoretical dualism that, in his estimation, is responsible for producing only partial understandings of social life. Bourdieu's concerns in this matter speak directly to the questions of both action and order. Specifically, with regard to the question of order, Bourdieu's concept of the habitus is a theoretical device that makes possible an encompassing answer to the question, "What accounts for the patterns of behavior that lead us to experience social life as routine and predictable?" Bourdieu's response is centered on the notion that the habitus, as the "internalization of externality," structures an individual's perception of the social world at the same time that it is itself a product of social and historical conditions.

Understood as "schemes of perception, thought and action," the habitus incorporates both individualist and collectivist dimensions of the nature of social order (see Figure 14.2). The habitus both enables and constrains our actions that then reproduce the very social conditions that structure the habitus. Bourdieu goes to great lengths to argue that the system of dispositions produced by the habitus does not lead to "mechanical" conduct that simply reflects the external conditions that structure the habitus. In this light, individuals actively make and remake the social order as they "take positions" or advance particular

¹¹In his essay "Class, Status, Party," Weber (1925) explored how interests and the power to realize them flow not only from one's class position, but from one's position in the status hierarchy as well. Moreover, Weber notes that "parties" can be formed in an effort to strategically pursue group goals or otherwise influence communal action that is not directly tied to specific class or status group interests.

Figure 14.2 Bourdieu's Basic Concepts and Theoretical Orientation



points of view, constructing their vision of the world in the process. However, position-taking is not unconstrained: individuals are not free to adopt any stance they choose. Points of view and the “strategies” individuals construct as they go about fitting their conduct to others’ are structured by the point they occupy in the space of social positions. The distribution of capital, in particular economic and cultural capital, structures the relation of positions within social space as well as within the specific fields in which individuals seek to impose the legitimate categories of perception. This is crucial, because the distribution of capital, in defining the space of positions, defines the space of possible position takings—that is, the dispositions or habitus that is internalized by those who are located in one point or another.

Concerning the question of action, Bourdieu has developed a framework that likewise seeks to incorporate both rational and nonrational dimensions. (This is indicated by the boxed terms that span the rational/nonrational axis in Figure 14.2.) His efforts are based on adopting a conceptual language linked to economic and utilitarian perspectives (“interests,” “strategies,” “calculation,” “profit”) that underscores the rational aspects of motivation while arguing that action is typically carried out in a prereflective, nonrational manner. Bourdieu argues that all action is “interested” and thus oriented to the maximization of profit. Indeed, Bourdieu extends the notion of interests and profits to incorporate economic or material gains and advantages as well as the pursuit of symbolic “goods” (Swartz 1997:42). Thus, Bourdieu contends that actors adopt strategies that maximize their economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. In this light, we might take Bourdieu to mean that action is motivated by a conscious, rational calculation of costs and benefits. Yet, this is the very interpretation of action he means to dispel. Action is not guided by the logic of profit: it is driven by a *practical* logic that Bourdieu likens to a prereflective “feel for the game.” Similar to how a good tennis player will position himself “not where the ball is but where it will be, one invests oneself and one invests not where the profit is but where it will be” (Bourdieu 1994/1998:79). Bourdieu argues that the habitus embodies actors with a “know-how” that enables them to strategically orient their conduct without necessarily having a strategic intention or goal that can be put into words. Actions are more adaptive than purposive in nature (Robbins 2000:29).

Put in another way, in taking a position, actors deploy their capital so as to realize their interests. However, conduct is not consciously chosen, as if alternative means were weighed according to their potential for achieving specific ends. Rather, conduct is inscribed in the very nature of the “game” in which actors are involved and in the habitus through which a taken-for-granted world is constructed. Although the strategies that actors pursue are rational—that is, fitting to the field in which they are “absorbed”—they are not pursued rationally. While a politician may find it “natural” to publicly express his religious commitments on the campaign trail, a scientist would not be predisposed to such a strategy when trying to convince the public of the significance of her findings.

Readings

In the first selection, “Social Space and the Genesis of Groups,” Bourdieu outlines his relational model for the study of social life. He conceptualizes social space as an arena in which individuals and groups are positioned in relation to one another based on the amount and types of capital they have at their disposal. It is on the basis of such relations that struggles are waged to classify the world. In the second selection, “Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception,” Bourdieu argues that artistic competence, far from being the product of an individual’s natural aesthetic preferences, is dependent on the possession of cultural capital. Unrecognized as such, artistic tastes function as a sign of distinction that legitimates the dominance of those who possess the code for deciphering works of art.

Introduction to “Social Space and the Genesis of Groups”

In this reading, Bourdieu addresses many of the themes discussed earlier. After describing social space as structured according to the distribution of capital, he embarks on a critique of “substantialist” approaches to social classes by emphasizing the space of relations within which ongoing struggles are waged to name the social world. In particular, Bourdieu takes aim at Marxist theory for treating classes as real groups mobilized solely on the basis of the conditions of economic production. He counters by presenting the view that classes and groups do not “exist”; rather, they are an outcome of symbolic struggles that seek to pronounce a reality that exists only because it is pronounced by those in an authorized position to declare its existence—that is, by those who possess the necessary symbolic capital. It is above all the spokesperson “who, speaking about a group, speaking on behalf of a group, surreptitiously posits the existence of the group in question, institutes the group, through that magical operation which is inherent in any act of naming” (Bourdieu 1982/1991:250). It is academics, journalists, media personalities, politicians, and organizational representatives who create through their magical words the existence of the “working class,” the “Tea Party,” “Christian conservatives,” or any other group that once authoritatively *pronounced* as real *becomes* real.

Yet, the struggle for the “monopoly of legitimate naming” is not an entirely symbolic affair. Imposing the legitimate vision of the social world reproduces the relations of power that structure the social world. Thus, to fully understand the classifications, the principles of vision and division, according to which the world is named, one must account for the positions occupied by those engaged in the struggle to establish meaning, because the categories through which the world is perceived “are the product of the incorporation of the very structures to which they are applied” (ibid.:238). Different points of view, and the categories of perception that are used to express them, are but expressions, mediated through the habitus, of different points or positions within the space of objective relations. Any “science of classifications” must acknowledge this fundamental reality if it is to offer sound analyses of social life.

"Social Space and the Genesis of Groups" (1982)

Pierre Bourdieu

Constructing a theory of the social space presupposes a series of breaks with Marxist theory. First, a break with the tendency to privilege substance—here, the real groups, whose number, limits, members, etc., one claims to define—at the expense of *relationships*; and with the intellectualist illusion which leads one to consider the theoretical class, constructed by the sociologist, as a real class, an effectively mobilized group. Secondly, there has to be a break with the economism which leads one to reduce the social field, a multi-dimensional space, solely to the economic field, to the relations of economic production, which are thus constituted as coordinates of social position. Finally, there has to be a break with the objectivism which goes hand-in-hand with intellectualism and which leads one to ignore the symbolic struggles of which the different fields are the site, where what is at stake is the very representation of the social world and, in particular, the hierarchy within each of the fields and among the different fields. . . .

THE SOCIAL SPACE

Initially, sociology presents itself as a *social topology*. Thus, the social world can be represented as a space (with several dimensions) constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation or distribution constituted by the set of properties active within the social universe in question, i.e. capable of conferring strength, power within that universe, on their holder. Agents and groups of agents are thus defined by their relative positions within that space. Each of them is assigned to a position or a precise class of neighbouring positions (i.e. a particular region in this space) and one cannot really—even if one can in thought—occupy two opposite regions of the space. Inasmuch as the properties selected to construct this space are active properties, one can also describe it as a field of forces, i.e. as a set of objective power relations which impose themselves on all who enter the field and which are irreducible to the intentions of the individual agents or even to the direct *interactions* among the agents.

The active properties which are selected as principles of construction of the social space are the different kinds of power or capital which are current in the different fields. Capital, which may exist in objectified form—in the form of material properties—or, in the case of cultural capital, in the embodied state, and which may be legally guaranteed, represents a power over the field (at a given moment) and, more precisely, over the accumulated products of past labour (in particular over the set of instruments of production) and thereby over the mechanisms tending to ensure the production of a particular category of goods and so over a set of incomes and profits. The kinds of capital, like the aces in a game of cards, are powers which define the chances of profit in a given field (in fact, to each field or sub-field there corresponds a particular kind of capital, which is current, as a power or stake, in that game). For example, the volume of cultural capital (the same thing would be true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the economic game) determines the aggregate chances of profit in all the games in which cultural capital is effective, thereby helping to determine position in social space (to the extent that this is determined by success in the cultural field).

The position of a given agent within the social space can thus be defined by the positions he occupies in the different fields, that is, in the distribution of the powers which are active within each of them. These are, principally, economic capital (in its different kinds), cultural capital and social capital, as well as symbolic capital, commonly called prestige, reputation, renown, etc., which is the form in which the different forms of capital are perceived and recognized as legitimate. One can thus construct a simplified model of the social field as a whole which makes it possible to conceptualize, for each agent, his position in all possible spaces of competition (it being understood that, while each field has its own logic and its own hierarchy, the hierarchy which prevails among the different kinds of capital and the statistical link between the different types of assets tends to impose its own logic on the other fields).

The social field can be described as a multi-dimensional space of positions such that every actual position can be defined in terms of a multi-dimensional system of co-ordinates whose values correspond to the

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values of the different pertinent variables. Thus, agents are distributed within it, in the first dimension, according to the overall volume of the capital they possess and, in the second dimension, according to the composition of their capital—i.e. according to the relative weight of the different kinds of assets within their total assets. . . .

Thus, in the first dimension, which is undoubtedly the most important, the holders of a great volume of overall capital, such as industrial employers, members of liberal professions, and university professors are opposed, in the mass, to those who are most deprived of economic and cultural capital, such as unskilled workers. But from another point of view, that is, from the point of view of the relative weight of economic capital and cultural capital in their patrimony, professors (relatively wealthier in cultural capital than in economic capital) are strongly opposed to industrial employers (relatively wealthier in economic capital than in cultural capital). . . . The second opposition, like the first, is the source of differences in dispositions and, therefore, in position-takings. This is the case of the opposition between intellectuals and industrial employers or, on a lower level of the social hierarchy, between, [for instance,] primary school teachers and small merchants. . . .

In a more general sense, the space of social positions is retranslated into a space of position-takings through the mediation of the space of dispositions (or habitus). In other words, the system of differential deviations which defines the different positions in the two major dimensions of social space corresponds to the system of differential deviations in agents' properties (or in the properties of constructed classes of agents), that is, in their practices and in the goods they possess. To each class of positions there corresponds a class of habitus (or *tastes*) produced by the social conditioning associated with the corresponding condition and, through the mediation of the habitus and its generative capability, a systematic set of goods and properties, which are united by an affinity of style.

One of the functions of the notion of habitus is to account for the unity of style, which unites the practices and goods of a single agent or a class of agents. . . . The habitus is this generative and unifying principle which retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a unitary lifestyle, that is, a unitary set of choices of persons, goods, practices.

Like the positions of which they are the product, habitus are differentiated, but they are also differentiating. Being distinct and distinguished, they are also distinction operators, implementing different principles of differentiation or using differently the common principles of differentiation.

Habitus are generative principles of distinct and distinctive practices—what the worker eats, and especially the way he eats it, the sport he practices and the way he practices it, his political opinions and the way he expresses them are systematically different from the industrial owner's corresponding activities. But habitus are also classificatory schemes, principles of classification, principles of vision and division, different tastes. They make distinctions between what is good and what is bad, between what is right and what is wrong, between what is distinguished and what is vulgar, and so forth, but the distinctions are not identical. Thus, for instance, the same behavior or even the same good can appear distinguished to one person, pretentious to someone else, and cheap or showy to yet another.

But the essential point is that, when perceived through these social categories of perception, these principles of vision and division, the differences in practices, in the goods possessed, or in the opinions expressed become symbolic differences and constitute a veritable *language*. Differences associated with different positions, that is, goods, practices, and especially *manners*, function, in each society, in the same way as differences which constitute symbolic systems, such as the set of phonemes of a language or the set of distinctive features and of differential "*écarts*" that constitute a mythical system, that is, as *distinctive signs*. . . .

The form that is taken, at every moment, in each social field, by the set of distributions of the different kinds of capital (embodied or materialized), as instruments for the appropriation of the objectified product of accumulated social labour, defines the state of the power relations, institutionalized in long-lasting social statuses, socially recognized or legally guaranteed, between social agents objectively defined by their position in these relations; it determines the actual or potential powers within the different fields and the chances of access to the specific profits that they offer.¹

¹In some social universes, the principles of division which, like volume and structure of capital, determine the structure of the social space, are reinforced by principles of division relatively independent of economic or cultural properties, such as ethnic or religious affiliation. In such cases, the distribution of the agents appears as the product of the intersection of two spaces which are partially independent: an ethnic group situated in a lower position in the space of the ethnic groups may occupy positions in all the fields, including the highest, but with rates of representation inferior to those of an ethnic group situated in a higher position. Each ethnic group may thus be characterized by the social positions of its members, by the rate of dispersion of these positions, and by its degree of social integration despite this dispersion. (Ethnic solidarity may have the effect of ensuring a form of collective mobility.)

Knowledge of the position occupied in this space contains information as to the agents' intrinsic properties (their condition) and their relational properties (their position). This is seen particularly clearly in the case of the occupants of the intermediate or middle positions, who, in addition to the average or median values of their properties, owe a number of their most typical properties to the fact that they are situated *between* the two poles of the field, in the *neutral* point of the space, and that they are balanced between the two extreme positions.

CLASSES ON PAPER

On the basis of knowledge of the space of positions, one can separate out *classes*, in the logical sense of the word, i.e. sets of agents who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and subjected to similar conditionings, have every likelihood of having similar dispositions and interests and therefore of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances. This "class on paper" has the *theoretical* existence which is that of theories: insofar as it is the product of an explanatory classification, entirely similar to those of zoologists or botanists, it makes it possible to *explain* and predict the practices and properties of the things classified—including their group-forming practices. It is not really a class, an *actual* class, in the sense of a group, a group mobilized for struggle; at most, it might be called a *probable class*, inasmuch as it is a set of agents which will present fewer hindrances to efforts at mobilization than any other set of agents.

Thus, contrary to the *nominalist relativism* which cancels out social differences by reducing them to pure theoretical artefacts, one must therefore assert the existence of an objective space determining compatibilities and incompatibilities, proximities and distances. Contrary to the *realism of the intelligible* (or the reification of concepts), one must assert that the classes which can be separated out in social space (for example, for the purposes of the statistical analysis which is the only means of manifesting the structure of the social space) do not exist as real groups although they explain the probability of individuals constituting themselves as practical groups, in families (homogamy), clubs, associations and even trade-union or political "movement."

What does exist is a *space of relationships* which is as real as a geographical space, in which movements are paid for in work, in efforts and above all in time (moving up means raising oneself, climbing, and acquiring the marks, the stigmata, of this effort). Distances within it are also measured in time (time taken to rise or to convert capital, for example). And the probability of mobilization into organized movements, equipped with an apparatus and spokesmen, etc. (precisely that which leads one to talk of a "class") will be inverse ratio to distance in this space. While the probability of assembling a set of agents, really or nominally—through the power of the delegate—rises when they are closer in social space and belong to a more restricted and therefore more homogeneous constructed class, alliance between those who are closest is never *necessary*, inevitable (because the effects of immediate competition may act as a screen), and alliance between those most distant from each other is never *impossible*. Though there is more chance of mobilizing the set of workers than the set composed of workers and bosses, it is possible, in an international crisis, for example, to provoke a grouping on the basis of links of national identity (partly because, by virtue of its specific history, each national social space has its specific structure—e.g. as regards hierarchical distances within the economic field).

Like "being," according to Aristotle, the social world can be uttered and constructed in different ways. It may be practically perceived, uttered, constructed, according to different principles of vision and division—for example, ethnic division. But groupings grounded in the structure of the space constructed in terms of capital distribution are more likely to be stable and durable, while other forms of grouping are always threatened by the splits and oppositions linked to distances in social space. To speak of a social space means that one cannot group just *anyone* with *anyone* while ignoring the fundamental differences, particularly economic and cultural ones. But this never entirely excludes the possibility of organizing agents in accordance with other principles of division—ethnic or national ones, for example,—though it has to be remembered that these are generally linked to the fundamental principles, with ethnic groups themselves being at least roughly hierarchized in the social space, in the USA for example (through seniority in immigration).ⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱThe same thing would be true of the relationship between geographical space and social space. These two spaces never coincide completely, but a number of differences that are generally attributed to the effect of geographical space, e.g. the opposition between centre and periphery, are the effect of distance in social space, i.e. the unequal distribution of the different kinds of capital in geographical space.

This marks a first break with the Marxist tradition. More often than not, Marxism either summarily identifies constructed class with real class (in other words, as Marx complained about Hegel, it confuses the things of logic with the logic of things); or, when it does make the distinction, with the opposition between “class-in-itself,” defined in terms of a set of objective conditions, and “class-for-itself,” based on subjective factors, it describes the movement from one to the other (which is always celebrated as nothing less than an ontological promotion) in terms of a logic which is either totally determinist or totally voluntarist. In the former case, the transition is seen as a logical, mechanical or organic necessity (the transformation of the proletariat from class-in-itself to class-for-itself is presented as an inevitable effect of time, of the “maturing of the objective conditions”); in the latter case, it is seen as the effect of an “awakening of consciousness” (*prise de conscience*) conceived as a “taking cognizance” (*prise de connaissance*) of theory, performed under the enlightened guidance of the Party. In all cases, there is no mention of the mysterious alchemy whereby a “group in struggle,” a personalized collective, a historical agent assigning itself its own ends, arises from the objective economic conditions.

A sleight of hand removes the most essential questions. First, the very question of the political, of the specific action of the agents who, in the name of a theoretical definition of the “class,” assign to its members the goals *officially* best matching their “objective”—i.e. theoretical—interests; and of the work whereby they manage to produce, if not the mobilized class, then belief in the existence of the class, which is the basis of the authority of its spokesmen. Secondly, the question of the relationship between the would-be scientific classifications produced by the social scientist (in the same way as a zoologist) and the classifications that the agents themselves constantly produce in their ordinary existence, and through which they seek to modify their position within the objective classifications or to modify the very principles which underlie these classifications.

PERCEPTION OF THE SOCIAL WORLD AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE

The most resolutely objectivist theory has to integrate the agents’ representation of the social world; more precisely, it must take account of the contribution that agents make towards constructing the view of the social world, and through this, towards constructing this

world, by means of the *work of representation* (in all senses of the word) that they constantly perform in order to impose their view of the world or the view of their own position in this world—their social identity. Perception of the social world is the product of a double social structuration: on the “objective” side, it is socially structured because the properties attached to agents or institutions do not offer themselves independently to perception, but in combinations that are very unequally probable (and, just as animals with feathers are more likely to have wings than are animals with fur, so the possessors of a substantial cultural capital are more likely to be museum-goers than those who lack such capital); on the “subjective” side, it is structured because the schemes of perception and appreciation available for use at the moment in question, especially those that are deposited in language, are the product of previous symbolic struggles and express the state of the symbolic power relations, in a more or less transformed form. The objects of the social world can be perceived and uttered in different ways because, like objects in the natural world, they always include a degree of indeterminacy and fuzziness—owing to the fact, for example, that even the most constant combinations of properties are only founded on statistical connections between interchangeable features; and also because, as historical objects, they are subject to variations in time so that their meaning, insofar as it depends on the future, is itself in suspense, in waiting, dangling, and therefore relatively indeterminate. This element of play, or uncertainty, is what provides a basis for the plurality of world views, itself linked to the plurality of points of view, and to all the symbolic struggles for the power to produce and impose the legitimate world view and, more precisely, to all the cognitive “filling-in” strategies which produced the meaning of the objects of the social world by going beyond the directly visible attributes by reference to the future or the past. This reference may be implicit and tacit, through what Husserl calls protention and retention, practical forms of prospection or retrospection without a positing of the future and the past as such; or it may be explicit, as in political struggles, in which the past—with retrospective reconstruction of a past tailored to the needs of the present—and especially the future, with creative forecasting, are endlessly invoked, to determine, delimit and define the always open meaning of the present.

To point out that perception of the social world implies an act of construction in no way entails acceptance of an intellectualist theory of knowledge: the

essential part of the experience of the social world and of the act of construction that it implies takes place in practice, below the level of explicit representation and verbal expression. More like a class unconscious than a “class consciousness” in the Marxist sense, the sense of the position occupied in social space (what Erving Goffman calls the “sense of one’s place”) is the practical mastery of the social structure as a whole that reveals itself through the sense of the position occupied within that structure. The categories of perception of the social world are, as regards their most essential features, the product of the internalization, the incorporation, of the objective structures of social space. Consequently, they incline agents to accept the social world as it is, to take it for granted, rather than to rebel against it, to counterpose to it different, even antagonistic, possibilities. The sense of one’s place as a sense of what one can or cannot “permit oneself,” implies a tacit acceptance of one’s place, a sense of limits (“that’s not for the likes of us,” etc.), or, which amounts to the same thing, a sense of distances, to be marked and kept, respected or expected. It does so all the more strongly where the conditions of existence are most rigorous and where the reality principle most rigorously asserts itself. (Hence the profound realism which generally characterizes the world view of the dominated; functioning as a sort of socially constituted instinct of conservation, it can be seen as conservative only in terms of an external, and therefore normative, representation of the “objective interest” of those whom it helps to live, or survive.)

If objective power relations tend to reproduce themselves in views of the social world which contribute to the permanence of these relations, this is therefore because the structuring principles of a world view are rooted in the objective structures of the social world: power relations are also present in people’s minds, in the form of the categories of perception of these relations. However, the degree of indeterminacy and fuzziness in the objects of the social world, together with the practical, pre-reflexive and implicit nature of the schemes of perception and appreciation that are applied to them, is the Archimedean leverage point that is objectively offered for political action proper. Knowledge of the social world and, more precisely, the categories which make it possible, are the stakes, par excellence, of political struggle, the inextricably theoretical and practical struggle for the power to conserve or transform the social world by conserving or transforming the categories through which it is perceived.

The capacity to make entities exist in the explicit state, to publish, make public (i.e. render objectified, visible, and even official) that which had not previously attained objective and collective existence and had therefore remained in the state of individual or serial existence—people’s malaise, anxiety, disquiet, expectations—represents a formidable social power, the power to make groups by making the *common sense*, the explicit consensus, of the whole group. In fact, this work of categorization, i.e. of making-explicit and of classification, is performed incessantly, at every moment of ordinary existence, in the struggles in which agents clash over the meaning of the social world and of their position within it, the meaning of their social identity, through all the forms of benediction or malediction, eulogy, praise, congratulations, compliments, or insults, reproaches, criticisms, accusations, slanders, etc. . . .

It becomes clear why one of the elementary forms of political power, in many archaic societies, consisted in the quasi-magical power to *name* and to make-exist by virtue of naming. Thus in traditional Kabylia, the function of making-explicit and the work of symbolic production that the poets performed, particularly in crisis situations, when the meaning of the world slips away, conferred on them major political functions, those of the warlord or ambassador. But with the growing differentiation of the social world and the constitution of relatively autonomous fields, the work of producing and imposing meaning is carried on in and through the struggles within the field of cultural production (particularly the political sub-field); it becomes the particular concern, the specific interest, of the professional producers of objectified representations of the social world or, more precisely, of methods of objectification.

If the legitimate mode of perception is such an important prize at stake in social struggles, this is partly because the shift from the implicit to the explicit is in no way automatic: the same experience of the social may be uttered in very different expressions. And partly it is because the most marked objective differences may be masked by more immediately visible differences (e.g. those between ethnic groups). It is true that perceptual configurations, social *Gestalten*, exist objectively, and that the proximity of conditions, and therefore of dispositions, tends to be translated into durable linkages and groupings, immediately perceptible social units, such as socially distinct regions or neighbourhoods (with spatial segregation), or sets of agents endowed with entirely similar visible properties, such as Weber’s *Stände*. But the fact remains that

socially known and recognized differences only exist for a subject capable not only of perceiving differences but of recognizing them as significant, interesting, i.e. only for a subject endowed with the capacity and inclination to *make* the distinctions that are regarded as significant in the social universe in question.

Thus, particularly through properties and their distributions, the social world achieves, objectively, the status of a *symbolic system*, which, like the system of phonemes, is organized according to the logic of difference, differential deviation, thereby constituted as significant *distinction*. The social space, and the differences that “spontaneously” emerge within it, tends to function symbolically as a *space of life-styles* or as a set of *Stände*, of groups characterized by different life-styles.

Distinction does not necessarily imply the pursuit of distinction, as is often supposed, following Veblen and his theory of conspicuous consumption. All consumption and, more generally, all practice, is “conspicuous,” visible, whether or not it is performed *in order to be seen*; it is distinctive, whether or not it springs from the intention of being “conspicuous,” standing out, or distinguishing oneself or behaving with distinction. As such, it inevitably functions as a *distinctive sign* and, when the difference is recognized, legitimate and approved, as a *sign of distinction* (in all senses of the phrase). However, because social agents are capable of perceiving as significant distinctions the “spontaneous” distinctions that their categories of perception lead them to regard as pertinent, it follows that they are also capable of intentionally underscoring these spontaneous differences in life-style by what Weber calls “the stylization of life” (*die Stilisierung des Lebens*). The pursuit of distinction—which may be expressed in ways of speaking or the refusal of misalliances—produces separations intended to be perceived or, more precisely, known and recognized, as legitimate differences, which most often means differences in nature (“natural distinction”).

Distinction—in the ordinary sense of the word—is the difference inscribed in the very structure of the social space when perceived through categories adapted to that structure; and the Weberian *Stände*, which is often contrasted with the Marxist class, is the class constructed by an adequate division of social space, when perceived through categories derived from the structure of that space. Symbolic capital—another name for distinction—is nothing other than capital, in whatever form, when perceived by an agent endowed with categories of perception arising from the internalization

(embodiment) of the structure of its distribution, i.e., when it is known and recognized as self-evident. Distinctions, as symbolic transfigurations of de facto differences and, more generally, ranks, orders, grades, and all other symbolic hierarchies, are the product of the application of schemes of construction which, like (for example) the pairs of adjectives used to utter most social judgements, are the product of the internalization of the structures to which they are applied; and the most absolute recognition of legitimacy is nothing other than the apprehension of the everyday world as self-evident which results from the quasi-perfect coincidence of objective structures and embodied structures.

It follows, among other things, that symbolic capital goes to symbolic capital, and that the—real—autonomy of the field of symbolic production does not prevent it being dominated, in its functioning, by the constraints which dominate the social field, so that objective power relations tend to reproduce themselves in symbolic power relations, in views of the social world which help to ensure the permanence of these power relations. In the struggle to impose the legitimate view of the social world, in which science itself is inevitably involved, agents wield a power proportionate to their symbolic capital, i.e. to the recognition they receive from a group. The authority which underlies the performative efficacy of discourse about the social world, the symbolic strength of the views and forecasts aimed at imposing principles of vision and division of the social world, is a *percipi*, a being-known and being-recognized (this is the etymology of *nobilis*), which makes it possible to impose a *percipere*. Those most *visible* in terms of the prevailing categories of perception are those best placed to change the vision by changing the categories of perception. But also, on the whole, those least inclined to do so.

THE SYMBOLIC ORDER AND THE POWER TO NAME

In the symbolic struggle over the production of common sense or, more precisely, for the monopoly of legitimate *naming*, that is to say, official—i.e. explicit and public—imposition of the legitimate vision of the social world, agents engage the symbolic capital they have acquired in previous struggles, in particular, all the power they possess over the instituted taxonomies, inscribed in minds or in objectivity, such as qualifications. Thus, all the symbolic strategies through which

agents seek to impose their vision of the divisions of the social world and their position within it, can be located between two extremes: the insult, and *idios logos* with which an individual tries to impose his point of view while taking the risk of reciprocity, and *official nomination*, an act of symbolic imposition which has behind it all the strength of the collective, the consensus, the common sense, because it is performed by a delegated agent of the state, the holder of the *monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence*. On the one hand, there is the world of particular perspectives, singular agents who, from their individual viewpoint, their personal position, produce particular, self-interested namings of themselves and others (nicknames, by-names, insults, even accusations, slanders) that lack the capacity to force recognition, and therefore to exert a symbolic effect, to the extent that their authors are less authorized and have a more direct interest in forcing recognition of the viewpoint they seek to impose. On the other hand, there is the authorized viewpoint of an agent authorized, in his personal capacity, such as a “major critic,” a prestigious prefacer or a consecrated author (cf. Zola’s *J’accuse*); and, above all, the legitimate viewpoint of the authorized spokesman of the mandated representative of the state, the “plane of all perspectives,” in Leibniz’s phrase—official nomination, the “entitlement” (*titre*) which, like the academic qualification (*titre scolaire*) is valid on all markets and which, as an official definition of official identity, rescues its holders from the symbolic struggle of all against all, by uttering the authorized, universally recognized perspective on all social agents. The state, which produces the official classifications, is in a sense the supreme tribunal to which Kafka was referring in *The Trial* when he had Block say of the advocate and his claim to be one of the “great advocates”: “Naturally anyone can call himself ‘great’ if he wants to, but in such matters it is the practices of the court that decide.” The fact is that scientific analysis does not have to choose between perspectivism and what has to be called absolutism; the truth of the social world is the stake in a struggle between agents very unequally equipped to achieve absolute, i.e. self-fulfilling, vision and pre-vision.

One could analyse in this light the functioning of an institution like the French national statistics office, INSEE, a state institute which produces official taxonomies, invested with quasi-legal authority, particularly, in relations between employers and employees, that of the *title*, capable of conferring rights independent of actual productive activity. In so doing, it tends to fix the

hierarchies and thus to sanction and consecrate a power relationship between the agents with respect to the names of trades and occupations, an essential component of social identity. The management of names is one of the ways of managing material scarcity, and the names of groups, especially occupational groups, record a state of the struggles and bargaining over official designations and the material and symbolic advantages associated with them. The occupational name which is conferred on agents, the title they are given, is one of the positive or negative retributions (on the same footing as their salary), inasmuch as it is a *distinctive mark* (an emblem or stigma) which receives its *value* from its position in a hierarchically organized system of titles and which thereby helps to determine the relative positions of agents and groups. Consequently, agents have recourse to practical or symbolic strategies aimed at maximizing the symbolic profit of naming: for example, they may decline the economic gratifications provided by one job in order to occupy a less well-paid but more prestigiously named position; or they may try to move towards positions whose designation is less precise and so escape the effects of symbolic devaluation. Similarly, in stating their personal identity, they may give themselves a name which includes them in a class sufficiently broad to include agents occupying positions superior to their own: for example, in France, a primary school teacher, an *instituteur*, may refer to himself as an *enseignant*, thereby implying that he might be a *lycée* teacher or a university teacher. More generally, they always have a choice between several names and they can play on the uncertainties and the effects of vagueness linked to the plurality of perspectives so as to try to escape the verdict of the official taxonomy.

But the logic of official naming is most clearly seen in the case of all the symbolic property rights which in French are called *titres*—titles of nobility, educational qualifications, professional titles. Titles are symbolic capital, socially and even legally recognized. The noble is not just someone who is known (*nobilis*), noteworthy, well-regarded, recognized, he is someone recognized by an *official*, “universal” tribunal, in other words known and recognized by all. The professional or academic title is a kind of legal rule of social perception, a “being-perceived” guaranteed as a right. It is symbolic capital in an institutionalized, legal (and no longer merely legitimate) form. Increasingly inseparable from the academic qualification, since the educational system increasingly tends to represent the ultimate and only guarantee of professional titles, it has a value in

itself and, although it is a “common noun,” it functions like a “great name” (the name of a great family or a proper name), securing all sorts of symbolic profits (and assets that cannot be obtained directly with money).ⁱⁱⁱ It is the symbolic scarcity of the title in the space of the names of professions that tends to govern the rewards of the occupation (and not the relationship between the supply of and demand for a particular form of labour). It follows from this that the rewards of the title tend to acquire autonomy with respect to the rewards of labour. Thus the same work may receive different remuneration depending on the titles of the person who does it (e.g. tenured, official post-holder (*titulaire*) as opposed to a part-timer (*intérimaire*) or someone “acting” (*faisant fonction*) in that capacity, etc.). Since the title is in itself an institution (like language) that is more durable than the intrinsic characteristics of the work, the rewards of the title may be maintained despite changes in the work and its relative value. It is not relative value of the work that determines the value of the name, but the institutionalized value of the title that can be used as a means of defending or maintaining the value of the work.^{iv}

This means that one cannot conduct a science of classifications without conducting a science of the struggle over classifications and without taking account of the position occupied, in this struggle over the power of knowledge, for power through knowledge, for the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence, by each of the agents or groups of agents who are involved in it, whether they be ordinary individuals, exposed to the vicissitudes of the everyday symbolic struggle, or authorized (and full-time) professionals, which includes all those who speak or write about the social classes, and who are distinguished according to the greater or lesser extent to which their classifications commit the authority of the state, the holder of the monopoly of *official naming*, correct classification, the correct order.

While the structure of the social world is defined at every moment by the structure of the distribution of the capital and profits characteristic of the different particular fields, the fact remains that in each of these arenas,

the very definition of the stakes and of the “trump cards” can be called into question. Every field is the site of more or less overt struggle over the definition of the legitimate principles of division of the field. The question of legitimacy arises from the very possibility of this questioning, of a break with the *doxa* which takes the ordinary order for granted. Having said this, the symbolic strength of the participants in this struggle is never completely independent of their position in the game, even if the specifically symbolic power of nomination constitutes a strength relatively independent of the other forms of social power. The constraints of the necessity inscribed in the very structure of the different fields continue to bear on the symbolic struggles aimed at conserving or transforming that structure. The social world is, to a large extent, what the agents make of it, at each moment; but they have no chance of un-making and re-making it except on the basis of realistic knowledge of what it is and of what they can do with it from the position they occupy within it.

In short, scientific work aims to establish adequate knowledge both of the space of objective relations between the different positions constituting the field and of the necessary relations set up, through the mediation of the *habitus* of their occupants, between these positions and their corresponding stances (*prises de position*), that is to say, between the points occupied within that space and the points of view on that very space, which play a part in the reality and the evolution of that space. In other words, the objective delimitation of constructed classes, i.e. of *regions* of the constructed space of positions, makes it possible to understand the principle and the efficacy of the classificatory strategies by means of which agents seek to conserve or modify this space, in the forefront of which is the constituting of groups organized with a view to defending their members’ interests.

Analysis of the struggle over classifications brings to light the political ambition which pervades the epistemic ambition of producing the correct classification—the ambition which defines the *rex*, to whom it falls, according to Emile Benveniste, to *regere fines* and

ⁱⁱⁱEntry into an occupation endowed with a title is increasingly subordinated to possession of an educational qualification (*titre scolaire*), and there is a close relationship between educational qualifications and remuneration, in contrast to untitled occupations in which agents doing the same work may have very different qualifications.

^{iv}The possessors of the same title tend to constitute themselves into a group and to equip themselves with permanent organizations—medical associations, alumni associations, etc. intended to ensure the group’s cohesion—periodic meetings, etc. and to promote its material and symbolic interests.

regere sacra, to set forth the frontier between the sacred and the profane, good and evil, the vulgar and the distinguished. If he is not to make social science merely a way of pursuing politics by other means, the sociologist must take as his object the intention of assigning others to classes and of telling them thereby what they are and what they have to be (this is the whole ambiguity of forecasting); he must analyse, in order to repudiate, the ambition of the creative world view, a kind of *intuitus originarius* that would make things exist in accordance with its vision (this is the whole ambiguity of the Marxist conception of class, which is inextricably an “is” and an “ought”). He must objectify the ambition of objectifying, of classifying from outside, objectively, agents who struggle to classify others and to classify themselves. If he does classify—by making divisions, for the purposes of statistical analysis, in the continuous space of social positions—he does so precisely so as to be able to objectify *all* forms of objectification, from the particular insult to the official nomination, not forgetting the claim, characteristic of science in its positivist, bureaucratic, definition, to arbitrate in these struggles in the name of “axiological neutrality.” The symbolic power of agents, understood as the power to make things seen—*theorein*—and to make things believed, to produce and impose the legitimate or legal classification, in fact depends, as the case of the *rex* reminds us, on the position occupied in the space (and in the classifications potentially inscribed in it). But objectifying objectification means, above all, objectifying the field of production of objectified representations of the social world, in particular, of the law-making taxonomies, in a word, the field of cultural or ideological production, a space and a game in which the social scientist himself is caught, like all those who argue about the social classes (and who else talks about them?).

THE POLITICAL FIELD AND THE EFFECT OF THE HOMOLOGIES

It is this field of political struggles, in which the professional practitioners of representation, in all senses of the word, clash with one another over another field of struggles, that has to be analysed if one wants to understand (without subscribing to the mythology of the “awakening of consciousness”) the shift from the practical sense of the position occupied, itself amenable to being made explicit in different ways, to specifically political manifestations. Those who occupy the

dominated positions within the social space are also located in dominated positions in the field of symbolic production, and it is not clear where they could obtain the instruments of symbolic production that are needed in order to express their specific viewpoint on the social space, were it not that the specific logic of the field of cultural production, and the particular interests that are generated within it, have the effect of inclining a fraction of the professionals involved in this field to supply the dominated, on the basis of homology of position, with the means of challenging the representations that arise from the immediate complicity between social structures and mental structures, and which tend to ensure the continuous reproduction of the distribution of symbolic capital. . . .

The inadequacies of the Marxist theory of classes, in particular its inability to explain the set of objectively observed differences, stems from the fact that, in reducing the social world solely to the economic field, it is forced to define social position solely in terms of position in the relations of economic production and consequently ignores positions in the different fields and sub-fields, particularly in the relations of cultural production, as well as all the oppositions that structure the social field, which are irreducible to the opposition between owners and non-owners of the means of economic production. It thereby secures a one-dimensional social world, simply organized around the opposition between two blocs (and one of the major questions is then that of the *boundary* between these two blocs, with all the associated, endlessly debated, questions of the “labour aristocracy,” the “embourgeoisement” of the working class, etc.). In reality, the social space is a multi-dimensional space, an open set of fields that are relatively autonomous, i.e. more or less strongly and directly subordinated, in their functioning and their transformations, to the field of the economic production. Within each of these sub-spaces, the occupants of the dominated positions are constantly engaged in struggles of different forms (without necessarily constituting themselves into antagonistic groups).

But the most important thing, from the standpoint of the problem of breaking the circle of symbolic production, is the fact that, on the basis of the homologies between positions within different fields (and the invariant, or indeed universal, content of the relationship between the dominant and the dominated), *alliances* can be set up which are more or less lasting and always based on a more or less conscious misunderstanding. Homology of position between intellectuals and industrial

workers—with the former occupying within the field of power, i.e. vis-à-vis industrial and commercial employers, positions which are homologous to those which industrial workers occupy within the social space as a whole—is the basis of an ambiguous alliance, in which the cultural producers, dominated agents among the dominant, divert their accumulated cultural capital so as to offer to the dominated the means of objectively constituting their view of the world and the representation of their interest in an explicit theory and in institutionalized instruments of representation—trade-union organizations, parties, social technologies for mobilization and demonstration, etc. . . .

But above all it would become clear that the effect of the specific interests associated with the position they occupy in the field and in the competition to impose views of the social world, inclines professional theoreticians and spokesmen, i.e. all those who are called in everyday language “full-time” or “permanent” officials, to produce differentiated, distinctive products which, because of the homology between the field of professional producers and the field of the consumers of opinions, are quasi-automatically adjusted to the different forms of demand—this demand being defined, especially in this case, as a demand for difference, for opposition, which they actually help to produce by helping it to find expression. It is the structure of the political field, in other words the objective relationship to the occupants of the other positions, and the relationship to the competing stances which they offer, which, as much as the direct relationship to their mandators, determines the stances they take, i.e. the supply of political products. Because the interests directly involved in the struggle for the monopoly of the legitimate expression of the truth of the social world tend to be the specific equivalent of the interests of the occupants of homologous positions in the social field, political discourses have a sort of structural duplicity. They seem to be directly addressed to the mandators, but in reality they are aimed at competitors within the field. . . .

CLASS AS REPRESENTATION AND AS WILL

But to establish how the power to constitute and institute that is held by the authorized spokesman—a party leader or trade-union leader, for example—is itself constituted and instituted, it is not sufficient to give an account of the specific interests of the theoreticians or spokesmen and of the structural affinities that link them to their mandators. One must also analyze the logic of the process of

institution, which is ordinarily perceived and described as a process of delegation, in which the mandated representative receives from the group the power to make the group. Here, making the necessary transpositions, we may follow the historians of law (Kantorowicz, Post and others), when they describe the mystery of “ministry”—the *mysterium* of *ministerium*, a play on words much favoured by the canonists. The mystery of the process of transubstantiation whereby the spokesman becomes the group that he expresses can only be understood through a historical analysis of the genesis and functioning of *representation*, through which the representative makes the group he represents. The spokesman endowed with full power to speak and act in the name of the group, and first of all to act on the group through the magic of the slogan, the password (*mot d'ordre*), is the substitute of the group which exists only through this surrogacy. Personifying a fictitious person, a social fiction, he raises those whom he represents from the state of separate individuals, enabling them to act and speak, through him, as one man. In exchange, he receives the right to take himself for the group, to speak and act as if he were the group made man: “*status est magistratus*,” “*l'état c'est moi*,” “the union thinks that . . .,” etc.

The mystery of ministry is one of those cases of social magic in which a thing or a person becomes something other than what it or he is, so that a man (a government minister, a bishop, a delegate, a member of parliament, a general secretary, etc.) can identify himself, and be identified, with a set of men, the People, the Workers, etc. or a social entity, the Nation, the State, the Church, the Party. The mystery of ministry culminates when the group can only exist through delegation to a spokesman who will make it exist by speaking for it, i.e. on its behalf and in its place. The circle is then complete: the group is made by the man who speaks in its name, who thus appears as the source of the power which he exerts on those who are its real source. This circular relationship is the root of the charismatic illusion in which, in extreme cases, the spokesman can appear to himself or herself and others as *causa sui*. Political alienation arises from the fact that isolated agents—the more so the less strong they are symbolically—cannot constitute themselves as a group, i.e. as a force capable of making itself heard in the political field, except by dispossessing themselves in favour of an apparatus; in other words from the fact that one always has to risk political dispossession in order to escape political dispossession. Fetishism, according to Marx, is what happens when “the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of

their own”; political fetishism lies precisely in the fact that the value of the hypostatized individual, a product of the human brain, appears as charisma, a mysterious objective property of the person, an impalpable charm, an unnameable mystery. The minister—a minister of religion or a minister of state—is related metonymically to the group; a part of the group, he functions as a sign in place of the whole of the group. It is he who, as an entirely real for an entirely symbolic being, induces a “category mistake,” as Ryle would have said, rather like that of the child who, after seeing the soldiers composing a regiment march past, asks where the regiment is. By his mere visible existence, he constitutes the pure serial diversity of the separate individuals (*collectio personarum plurium*) into an “artificial person” (*une personne morale*), a *corporatio*, a constituted body, and, through the effect of mobilization and demonstration, he may even make it appear as a social agent.

Politics is the site par excellence of symbolic efficacy, the action that is performed through signs capable of producing social things and, in particular, groups. Through the potency of the oldest of the metaphysical effects linked to the existence of a symbolism, the one that enables one to regard as really existing everything that can be *symbolized* (God or non-being), political representation produces and reproduces at every moment a derived form of the case of the bald king of France, so dear to the logicians: any predicative proposition having “the working class” as its subject disguises an existential proposition (*there is a working class*). More generally, all utterances which have as their subject a collective noun—people, class, university, school, state, etc.—presuppose the existence of the group in question and conceal the same sort of metaphysical boot-strapping that was denounced in the ontological argument. The spokesman is he who, in speaking of a group, on behalf of a group, surreptitiously posits the existence of the group in question, institutes the group, through the magical operation that is inherent in any act of naming. That is why one must perform a critique of political reason, which is intrinsically inclined to abuses of language that are also abuses of power, if one wants to pose the question with which all sociology ought to begin, that of the existence and the mode of existence of collectives.

A class exists insofar—and only insofar—as mandated representatives endowed with *plena potestas agendi* can be and feel authorized to speak in its *name*—in

accordance with the question “the Party is the working class,” or “the working class is the Party,” a formula which reproduces the canonists’ equation: “The Church is the Pope (or the Bishops), the Pope is (or the Bishops are) the Church”—and so to make it exist as a real force within the political field. The mode of existence of what is nowadays called, in many societies (with variations, of course), “the working class,” is entirely paradoxical: it is a sort of *existence in thought*, an existence in the thinking of a large proportion of those whom the taxonomies designate as workers, but also in the thinking of the occupants of the positions remotest from the workers in the social space. This almost universally recognized existence is itself based on the existence of a *working class in representation*, i.e. of political and trade-union apparatuses and professional spokesmen, vitally interested in believing that it exists and in having this believed both by those who identify with it and those who exclude themselves from it, and capable of making the “working class” *speak*, and with one voice, of invoking it, as one invokes gods or patron saints, even of symbolically manifesting it through *demonstration*, a sort of theatrical deployment of the class-in-representation, with on the one hand the corps of professional representatives and all the symbolism constitutive of its existence, and on the other the most convinced fraction of the believers who, through their presence, enable the representatives to manifest their representativeness. This working class “as will and representation” (in the words of Schopenhauer’s famous title) is not the self-enacting class, a real group really mobilized, which is evoked in the Marxist tradition. But it is no less real, with the magical reality which (as Durkheim and Mauss maintained) defines institutions as social fictions. It is a “mystical body,” created through an immense historical labour of theoretical and practical invention, starting with that of Marx himself, and endlessly re-created through the countless, constantly renewed, efforts and energies that are needed to produce and reproduce belief and the institution designed to ensure the reproduction of belief. It exists in and through the corps of mandated representatives who give it material speech and visible presence, and in the belief in its existence which this corps of plenipotentiaries manages to enforce, by its sheer existence and by its representations, on the basis of the affinities objectively uniting the members of the same “class on paper” as a probable group.



Introduction to "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception"

In this essay, Bourdieu examines artistic competence as a symbolic asset that legitimates relations of social domination. As an asset, the ability to appropriately decipher and appreciate works of art functions as a sign of distinction that separates those who possess the ability from those who do not. Individuals are not born with this competence; rather, they acquire it through exposure to and internalization of uniquely artistic interpretive schemes. These schemes allow the viewer to understand works of art in an aesthetic manner that is freed from the "necessities" of everyday reality. However, the connection between "being" cultured and "acquiring" culture is seldom recognized. Instead, the link between artistic competence and education is denied by a "charismatic ideology" that misrecognizes social privilege as a gift of nature. Thus, while art is made accessible to all, not everyone is equally comfortable in its presence. To the extent that we understand the "unfortunate" as simply being born without the blessings of grace that allow an individual's spirit to be touched by works of art, we fail to uncover the ideological functions of culture. Bourdieu speaks directly to the ideological or political dimensions of art when he notes,

By symbolically shifting the essential of what sets them apart from other classes from the economic field to that of culture, or rather, by adding to strictly economic differences, namely those created by the simple possession of material wealth, differences created by the possession of symbolic wealth such as works of art, or by the pursuit of symbolic distinctions in the manner of using such wealth (economic or symbolic) . . . the privileged members of bourgeois society replace the difference between two cultures, historic products of social conditions, by the essential difference between two natures, a naturally cultivated nature and a naturally natural nature. Thus, the sacralization of culture and art fulfills a vital function of contributing to the consecration of the social order: to enable educated people to believe in barbarism and persuade the barbarians within the gates of their own barbarity, all they must and need do is manage to conceal themselves and to conceal the social conditions which render possible not only culture as a second nature in which society recognizes human excellence or "good form" as the "realization" in a habitus of the aesthetics of the ruling classes, but also the legitimized dominance . . . of a particular definition of culture. (Bourdieu 1968/1993:236)

To reproduce their privileged position, the "civilized" need only convince the "barbarians" that the conditions that produce the culturally gifted and ungifted are but the expression of a state of nature that condemns both to their destinies.

"Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception" (1968)

Pierre Bourdieu

I

Any art perception involves a conscious or unconscious deciphering operation.

An act of deciphering *unrecognized as such*, immediate and adequate "comprehension," is possible and effective

only in the special case in which the cultural code which makes the act of deciphering possible is immediately and completely mastered by the observer (in the form of cultivated ability or inclination) and merges with the cultural code which has rendered the work perceived possible. . . .

SOURCE: "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception" from *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 20, Winter 1968, pp. 518–612. Copyright © 1968. Reprinted with permission of Wiley Blackwell.

The question of the conditions that make it possible to experience the work of art (and, in a more general way, all cultural objects) as at once endowed with meaning is totally excluded from the experience itself, because the recapturing of the work's objective meaning (which may have nothing to do with the author's intention) is completely adequate and immediately effected in the case—and only in the case—where the culture that the originator puts into the work is identical with the culture or, more accurately, the *artistic competence* which the beholder brings to the deciphering of the work. In this case, everything is a matter of course and the question of the meaning, of the deciphering of the meaning and of the conditions of this deciphering does not arise.

Whenever these specific conditions are not fulfilled, misunderstanding is inevitable: the illusion of immediate comprehension leads to an illusory comprehension based on a mistaken code. In the absence of the perception that the works are coded, and coded in another code, one unconsciously applies the code which is good for everyday perception, for the deciphering of familiar objects, to works in a foreign tradition. There is no perception which does not involve an unconscious code and it is essential to dismiss the myth of the “fresh eye,” considered a virtue attributed to naïveté and innocence. One of the reasons why the less educated beholders in our societies are so strongly inclined to demand a realistic representation is that, being devoid of specific categories of perception, they cannot apply any other code to works of scholarly culture than that which enables them to apprehend as meaningful objects of their everyday environment. Minimum, and apparently immediate, comprehension, accessible to the simplest observers and enabling them to recognize a house or a tree, still presupposes partial (unconscious) agreement between artist and beholder concerning categories that define the representation of the real that a historic society holds to be “realistic.” . . .

The spontaneous theory of art perception is founded on the experience of familiarity and immediate comprehension—an unrecognized special case.

Educated people are at home with scholarly culture. They are consequently carried towards that kind of ethnocentrism which may be called class-centrism and which consists in considering as natural (in other words, both as a matter of course and based on nature)

a way of perceiving which is but one among other possible ways and which is acquired through education that may be diffuse or specific, conscious or unconscious, institutionalized or non-institutionalized. “When, for instance, a man wears a pair of spectacles which are so close to him physically that they are ‘sitting on his nose,’ they are environmentally more remote from him than the picture on the opposite wall. Their proximity is normally so weakly perceived as to go unnoticed.” Taking Heidegger's analysis metaphorically, it can be said that the illusion of the “fresh eye” as a “naked eye” is an attribute of those who wear the spectacles of culture and who do not see that which enables them to see, any more than they see what they would not see if they were deprived of what enables them to see.

Conversely, faced with scholarly culture, the least sophisticated are in a position identical with that of ethnologists who find themselves in a foreign society and present, for instance, at a ritual to which they do not hold the key. The disorientation and cultural blindness of the less-educated beholders are an objective reminder of the objective truth that art perception is a mediate deciphering operation. Since the information presented by the works exhibited exceeds the deciphering capabilities of the beholder, he perceives them as devoid of signification—or, to be more precise, of structuration and organization—because he cannot “decode” them, i.e. reduce them to an intelligible form.

Scientific knowledge is distinguished from naïve experience (whether this is shown by disconcertment or by immediate comprehension) in that it involves an awareness of the conditions permitting adequate perception. The object of the science of the work of art is that which renders possible both this science and the immediate comprehension of the work of art, that is, culture. It therefore includes, implicitly at least, the science of the difference between scientific knowledge and naïve perception.

II

The work of art considered as a symbolic good (and not as an economic asset, which it may also be) only exists as such for a person who has the means to appropriate it, or in other words, to decipher it.¹

¹The laws governing the reception of works of art are a special case of the laws of cultural diffusion: whatever may be the nature of the message—religious prophecy, political speech, publicity image, technical object—reception depends on the categories of perception, thought and action of those who receive it. In a differentiated society, a close relationship is therefore

The degree of an agent's art competence is measured by the degree to which he or she masters the set of instruments for the appropriation of the work of art, available at a given time, that is to say, the interpretation schemes which are the prerequisite for the appropriation of art capital or, in other words, the prerequisite for the deciphering of works of art offered to a given society at a given moment.

Art competence can be provisionally defined as the preliminary knowledge of the possible divisions into complementary classes of a universe of representations. A mastery of this kind of system is necessarily determined in relation to another class, itself constituted by all the art representations consciously or unconsciously taken into consideration which do not belong to the class in question. The *style* proper to a period and to a social group is none other than such a class defined in relation to all the works of the same universe which it excludes and which are complementary to it. The *recognition* (or, as the art historians say when using the vocabulary of logic, the *attribution*) proceeds by *successive elimination* of the possibilities to which the class is—negatively—related and to which the possibility which has become a reality in the work concerned belongs. It is immediately evident that the uncertainty concerning the different characteristics likely to be attributed to the work under consideration (authors, schools, periods, styles, subjects, etc.) can be removed by employing different codes, functioning as classification systems; it may be a case of a properly artistic code which, by permitting the deciphering of specifically stylistic characteristics, enables the work concerned to be assigned to the class formed by the whole of the works of a period, a society, a school or an author (“that’s a Cézanne”), or a code from everyday life which, in the form of previous knowledge of the possible divisions into complementary classes of the universe of signifiers and of the universe of signifieds, and of the correlations between the divisions of the one and the divisions of the other, enables the particular representation, treated as a sign, to be assigned to a class of signifiers and consequently makes it possible to know, by means of the correlations with the universe of signifieds, that the corresponding signified belongs to a certain class of signifieds (“that’s a forest”). In the first case the beholder is paying attention to the manner of treating the

leaves or the clouds, that is to say to the stylistic indications, locating the possibility realized, characteristic of one class of works, by reference to the universe of stylistic possibilities; in the other case, she is treating the leaves or the clouds as indications or signals associated, according to the logic set forth above, with significations transcendent to the representation itself (“that’s a poplar,” “that’s a storm”).

Artistic competence is therefore defined as the previous knowledge of the strictly artistic principles of division which enable a representation to be located, through the classification of the stylistic indications which it contains, among the possibilities of representation constituting the universe of art and not among the possibilities of representation constituting the universe of everyday objects or the universe of signs, which would amount to treating it as a mere monument, i.e. as a mere means of communication used to transmit a transcendent signification. The perception of the work of art in a truly aesthetic manner, that is, as a signifier which signifies nothing other than itself, does not consist of considering it “without connecting it with anything other than itself, either emotionally or intellectually,” in short of giving oneself up to the work apprehended in its irreducible singularity, but rather of noting its *distinctive stylistic features* by relating it to the ensemble of the works forming the class to which it belongs, and to these works only. On the contrary, the taste of the working classes is determined, after the manner of what Kant describes in his *Critique of Judgement* as “barbarous taste,” by the refusal or the impossibility (one should say the impossibility-refusal) of operating the distinction between “what is liked” and “what pleases” and, more generally, between “disinterestedness,” the only guarantee of the aesthetic quality of contemplation, and “the interest of the senses” which defines “the agreeable” or “the interest of reason”: it requires that every image shall fulfil a function, if only that of a sign. This “functionalist” representation of the work of art is based on the refusal of gratuitousness, the idolatry of work or the placing of value on what is “instructive” (as opposed to what is “interesting”) and also on the impossibility of placing each individual work in the universe of representations, in the absence of strictly stylistic principles of classification. . . .

established between the nature and quality of the information transmitted and the structure of the public, its “readability” and its effectiveness being all the greater when it meets as directly as possible the expectations, implicit or explicit, which the receivers owe chiefly to their family upbringing and social circumstances (and also, in the matter of scholarly culture at least, to their school education) and which the diffuse pressure of the reference group maintains, sustains and reinforces by constant recourse to the norm.

Being an historically constituted system, founded on social reality, this set of instruments of perception whereby a particular society, at a given time, appropriates artistic goods (and, more generally, cultural goods) does not depend on individual wills and consciousnesses and forces itself upon individuals, often without their knowledge, defining the distinctions they can make and those which escape them. Every period arranges artistic representations as a whole according to an institutional system of classification of its own, bringing together works which other periods separated, or distinguishing between works which other periods placed together, and individuals have difficulty in imagining differences other than those which the available system of classification allows them to imagine. . . .

III

Since the work of art only exists as such to the extent that it is perceived, or, in other words, deciphered, it goes without saying that the satisfactions attached to this perception—whether it be a matter of purely aesthetic enjoyment or of more indirect gratification, such as the *effect of distinction*—are only accessible to those who are disposed to appropriate them because they *attribute a value to them*, it being understood that they can do this only if they have the means to appropriate them. Consequently, the need to appropriate goods which, like cultural goods, only exist as such for those who have received the means to appropriate them from their family environment and school, can appear only in those who can satisfy it, and it can be satisfied as soon as it appears. . . .

The disposition to appropriate cultural goods is the product of general or specific education, institutionalized or not, which creates (or cultivates) art competence as a mastery of the instruments for appropriation of these goods, and which creates the “cultural need” by giving the means to satisfy it.

The repeated perception of works of a certain style encourages the unconscious internalization of the rules that govern the production of these works. Like rules of grammar, these rules are not apprehended as such, and are still less explicitly formulated and capable of being formulated; for instance, lovers of classical music may have neither awareness nor knowledge of the laws obeyed by the sound-making art to which they are accustomed, but their auditive education is such that, having heard a dominant chord, they are induced urgently to await the tonic which seems to them the

“natural” resolution of this chord, and they have difficulty in apprehending the internal coherence of music founded on other principles. The unconscious mastery of the instruments of appropriation which are the basis of familiarity with cultural works is acquired by slow familiarization, a long succession of “little perceptions,” in the sense in which Leibniz uses the expression. Connoisseurship is an “art” which, like the art of thinking or the art of living, cannot be imparted entirely in the form of precepts or instruction, and apprenticeship to it presupposes the equivalent of prolonged contact between disciple and initiate in traditional education, i.e. repeated contact with the work (or with works of the same class). And, just as students or disciples can *unconsciously* absorb the rules of the art—including those which are not explicitly known to the initiates themselves—by giving themselves up to it, excluding analysis and the selection of elements of exemplary conduct, so art-lovers can, by abandoning themselves in some way to the work, internalize the principles and rules of its construction without there ever being brought to their consciousness and formulated as such. This constitutes the difference between the art theorist and the connoisseur, who is usually incapable of explicating the principles on which his judgements are based. In this field as in others (learning the grammar of one’s native tongue, for instance), school education tends to encourage the conscious reflection of patterns of thought, perception or expression which have already been mastered unconsciously by formulating explicitly the principles of the creative grammar, for example, the laws of harmony and counterpoint or the rules of pictorial composition, and by providing the verbal and conceptual material essential for naming differences previously experienced in a purely intuitive way. . . .

Even when the educational institution makes little provision for art training proper (as is the case in France and many other countries), even when, therefore, it gives neither specific encouragement to cultural activities nor a body of concepts specifically adapted to the plastic arts, it tends on the one hand to inspire a certain *familiarity*—conferring a feeling of belonging to the cultivated class—with the world of art, in which people feel at home and among themselves as the appointed addressees of works which do not deliver their message to the first-comer; and on the other to inculcate (at least in France and in the majority of European countries, at the level of secondary education) a *cultivated disposition* as a durable and generalized attitude which implies recognition of the value of works of art and the ability to

appropriate them by means of generic categories.ⁱⁱ Although it deals almost exclusively with literary works, in-school learning tends to create on the one hand a transposable inclination to admire works approved by the school and a duty to admire and to love certain works or, rather, certain classes of works which gradually seem to become linked to a certain educational and social status; and, on the other hand, an equally generalized and transposable aptitude for categorizing by authors, by genres, by schools and by periods, for the handling of educational categories of literary analysis and for the mastery of the code which governs the use of the different codes, giving at least a tendency to acquire equivalent categories in other fields and to store away the typical knowledge which, even though extrinsic and anecdotal, makes possible at least an elementary form of apprehension, however inadequate it may be. Thus, the first degree of strictly pictorial competence shows itself in the mastery of an arsenal of words making it possible to name differences and to apprehend them while naming them: these are the proper names of famous painters—da Vinci, Picasso, Van Gogh—which function as generic categories, because one can say about any painting or non-figurative object “that suggests Picasso,” or, about any work recalling nearly or distantly the manner of the Florentine painter, “that looks like a da Vinci”; there are also broad categories, like “the Impressionists” (a school commonly considered to include Gauguin, Cézanne and Degas), “the Dutch School,” “the Renaissance.” It is particularly significant that the proportion of subjects who think in terms of schools very clearly grows as the level of education rises and that, more generally, generic knowledge which is required for the perception of differences and consequently for memorizing—proper names and historical, technical or aesthetic concepts—becomes increasingly specific as we go towards the more educated beholders, so that the most adequate perception differs only from the least adequate in so far as the specificity, richness and subtlety of the categories employed are concerned. By no means contradicting these arguments is the fact that the less educated visitors to museums—who tend to prefer the most famous paintings and those sanctioned by school teaching, whereas modern painters who have the least chance of being mentioned in schools are quoted only by those with the highest educational qualifications—live in large cities. To be able to form discerning or so-called

“personal” opinions is again a result of the education received: the ability to go beyond school constraints is the privilege of those who have sufficiently assimilated school education to make their own the free attitude towards scholastic culture taught by a school so deeply impregnated with the values of the ruling classes that it accepts the fashionable depreciation of school instruction. The contrast between accepted, stereotyped and, as Max Weber would say, “routinized” culture, and genuine culture, freed from school discourse, has meaning only for an infinitely small minority of educated people for whom culture is second nature, endowed with all the appearances of talent, and the full assimilation of school culture is a prerequisite for going beyond it towards this “free culture”—free, that is to say, from its school origins—which the bourgeois class and its school regard as the value of values.

But the best proof that the general principles for the transfer of training also hold for school training lies in the fact that the practices of one single individual and, *a fortiori*, of individuals belonging to one social category or having a specific level of education, tend to constitute a system, so that a certain type of practice in any field of culture very probably implies a corresponding type of practice in all the other fields; thus, frequent visits to museums are almost necessarily associated with an equal amount of theatre-going and, to a lesser degree, attendance at concerts. Similarly, everything seems to indicate that knowledge and preferences tend to form into constellations that are strictly linked to the level of education, so that a typical structure of preferences in painting is most likely to be linked to a structure of preferences of the same type in music or literature.

Owing to the particular status of the work of art and the specific logic of the training which it implies, art education which is reduced to a discourse (historical, aesthetic or other) on the works is necessarily at a secondary level; like the teaching of the native tongue, literary or art education (that is to say “the humanities” of traditional education) necessarily presupposes, without ever, or hardly ever, being organized in the light of this principle, that individuals are endowed with a previously acquired competence and with a whole capital of experience unequally distributed among the various social classes (visits to museums or monuments, attending concerts, lectures, etc.).

ⁱⁱSchool instruction always fulfils a function of legitimation, if only by giving its blessing to works which it sets up as worthy of being admired, and thus helps to define the hierarchy of cultural goods valid in a particular society at a given time.

In the absence of a methodical and systematic effort, involving the mobilization of all available means from the earliest years of school onwards, to procure for all those attending school a direct contact with the works or, at least, an approximate substitute for that experience (by showing reproductions or reading texts, organizing visits to museums or playing records, etc.), art education can be of full benefit only to those who owe the competence acquired by slow and imperceptible familiarization to their family milieu, because it does not explicitly give to all what it implicitly demands from all. While it is true that only the school can give the continuous and prolonged, methodical and uniform training capable of *mass production*, if I may use that expression, of competent individuals, provided with schemes of perception, thought and expression which are prerequisites for the appropriation of cultural goods, and endowed with that generalized and permanent inclination to appropriate them which is the mark of devotion to culture, the fact remains that the effectiveness of this formative action is directly dependent upon the degree to which those undergoing it fulfil the preliminary conditions for adequate reception: the influence of school activity is all the stronger and more lasting when it is carried on for a longer time (as is shown by the fact that the decrease of cultural activity with age is less marked when the duration of schooling was longer), when those upon whom it is exercised have greater previous competence, acquired through early and direct contact with works (which is well known to be more frequent always as one goes higher up the social scale) and finally when a propitious cultural atmosphere sustains and relays its effectiveness. Thus, humanities students who have received a homogeneous and homogenizing training for a number of years, and who have been constantly selected according to the degree to which they conform to school requirements, remain separated by systematic differences, both in their pursuit of cultural activities and in their cultural preferences, depending upon whether they come from a more or less cultivated milieu and for how long this has been so; their knowledge of the theatre (measured according to the average number of plays that they have seen on the stage) or of painting is greater if their father or grandfather (or, *a fortiori*, both of them) belongs to a higher occupational category; and, furthermore, if one of these variables (the category of the father or of the grandfather) has a fixed value, the other tends, by itself, to hierarchize the scores. Because of the slowness of the acculturation process, subtle differences linked with the

length of time that they have been in contact with culture thus continue to separate individuals who are apparently equal with regard to social success and even educational success. Cultural nobility also has its quarterings.

Only an institution like the school, the specific function of which is methodically to develop or create the dispositions which produce an educated person and which lay the foundations, quantitatively and consequently qualitatively, of a constant and intense pursuit of culture, could offset (at least partially) the initial disadvantage of those who do not receive from their family circle the encouragement to undertake cultural activities and the competence presupposed in any discourse on works, on the condition—and only on the condition—that it employs every available means to break down the endless series of cumulative processes to which any cultural education is condemned. For if the apprehension of a work of art depends, in its intensity, its modality and in its very existence, on the beholders' mastery of the generic and specific code of the work, i.e. on their competence, which they owe partly to school training, the same thing applies to the pedagogic communication which is responsible, among its other functions, for transmitting the code of works of scholarly culture (and also the code according to which it effects this transmission). Thus the intensity and modality of the communication are here again a function of culture (as a system of schemes of perception, expression and historically constituted and socially conditioned thinking) which the receiver owes to his or her family milieu and which is more or less close to scholarly culture and the linguistic and cultural models according to which the school effects the transmission of this culture. Considering that the direct experience of works of scholarly culture and the institutionally organized acquisition of culture which is a prerequisite for adequate experience of such works are subject to the same laws, it is obvious how difficult it is to break the sequence of the cumulative effects which cause cultural capital to attract cultural capital. In fact, the school has only to give free play to the objective machinery of cultural diffusion without working systematically to give to all, in and through the pedagogical message itself, what is given to some through family inheritance—that is, the instruments which condition the adequate reception of the school message—for it to redouble and consecrate by its approval the socially conditioned inequalities of cultural competence, by treating them as natural inequalities or, in other words, as inequalities of gifts or natural talents.

Charismatic ideology is based on parenthesizing the relationship, evident as soon as it is revealed, between art competence and education, which alone is capable of creating both the disposition to recognize a value in cultural goods and the competence which gives a meaning to this disposition by making it possible to appropriate such goods. Since their art competence is the product of an imperceptible familiarization and an automatic transferring of aptitudes, members of the privileged classes are naturally inclined to regard as a gift of nature a cultural heritage which is transmitted by a process of unconscious training. But, in addition, the contradictions and ambiguities of the relationship which the most cultured among them maintain with their culture are both encouraged and permitted by the paradox which defines the “realization” of culture as *becoming natural*. Culture is thus achieved only by negating itself as such, that is, as artificial and artificially acquired, so as to become second nature, a habitus, a possession turned into being; the virtuosi of the judgement of taste seem to reach an experience of aesthetic grace so completely freed from the constraints of culture and so little marked by the long, patient training of which it is the product that any reminder of the conditions and the social conditioning which have rendered it possible seems to be at once obvious and scandalous. It follows that the most experienced connoisseurs are the natural champions of charismatic ideology, which attributes to the work of art a magical power of conversion capable of awakening the potentialities latent in a few of the elect, and which contrasts authentic experience of a work of art as an “affection” of the heart or immediate enlightenment of the intuition with the laborious proceedings and cold comments of the intelligence, ignoring the social and cultural conditions underlying such an experience, and at the same time treating as a birth-right the virtuosity acquired through long familiarization or through the exercises of a methodical training; silence concerning the social prerequisites for the appropriation of culture or, to be more exact, for the acquisition of art competence in the sense of mastery of all the means for the specific appropriation of works of art is a self-seeking silence because it is what makes it possible to legitimize a social privilege by pretending that it is a gift of nature.

To remember that culture is not what one is but what one has, or rather, what one has become; to remember the social conditions which render possible aesthetic

experience and the existence of those beings—art lovers or “people of taste”—for whom it is possible; to remember that the work of art is given only to those who have received the means to acquire the means to appropriate it and who could not seek to possess it if they did not already possess it, in and through the possession of means of possession as an actual possibility of effecting the taking of possession; to remember, finally, that only a few have the real possibility of benefitting from the theoretical possibility, generously offered to all, of taking advantage of the works exhibited in museums—all this is to bring to light the hidden force of the effects of the majority of culture’s social uses.

The parenthesizing of the social conditions which render possible culture and culture become nature, cultivated nature, having all the appearances of grace or a gift and yet acquired, so therefore “deserved,” is the precedent condition of charismatic ideology which makes it possible to confer on culture and in particular on “love of art” the all-important place which they occupy in bourgeois “sociodicy.” The bourgeoisie find naturally in culture as cultivated nature and culture that has become nature the only possible principle for the legitimation of their privilege. Being unable to invoke the right of birth (which their class, through the ages, has refused to the aristocracy) or nature which, according to “democratic” ideology, represents universality, i.e. the ground on which all distinctions are abolished, or the aesthetic virtues which enabled the first generation of bourgeois to invoke their merit, they can resort to cultivated nature and culture become nature, to what is sometimes called “class,” through a kind of tell-tale slip, to “education,” in the sense of a product of education which seems to owe nothing to education,ⁱⁱⁱ to distinction, grace which is merit and merit which is grace, an unacquired merit which justifies unmerited acquisitions, that is to say, inheritance. To enable culture to fulfil its primary ideological function of class co-optation and legitimation of this mode of selection, it is necessary and sufficient that the link between culture and education, which is simultaneously obvious and hidden, be forgotten, disguised and denied. The unnatural idea of inborn culture, of a gift of culture, bestowed on certain people by nature, is inseparable from blindness to the functions of the institution which ensures the profitability of the cultural heritage and legitimizes its transmission while concealing that it fulfils this function. The school in fact is the institution which, through

ⁱⁱⁱIt was understood thus by a very cultivated old man who declared during a conversation: “Education, Sir, is inborn.”

its outwardly irreproachable verdicts, transforms socially conditioned inequalities in regard to culture into inequalities of success, interpreted as inequalities of gifts which are also inequalities of merit. Plato records, towards the end of *The Republic*, that the souls who are to begin another life must themselves choose their lot among “patterns of life” of all kinds and that, when the choice has been made, they must drink of the water of the river Lethe before returning to earth. The function which Plato attributes to the water of forgetfulness falls, in our societies, on the university which, in its impartiality, through pretending to recognize students as equal in rights and duties, divided only by inequalities of gifts and of merit, in fact confers on individuals degrees judged according to their cultural heritage, and therefore according to their social status.

By symbolically shifting the essence of what sets them apart from other classes from the economic field to that of culture, or rather, by adding to strictly economic differences, namely those created by the simple possession of material goods, differences created by the possession of symbolic goods such as works of art, or by the pursuit of symbolic distinctions in the manner of using such goods (economic or symbolic), in short, by turning into a fact of nature everything which determines their “value,” or to take the word in the linguistic sense, their *distinction*—a mark of difference which, according to the Littré, sets people apart from the common herd “by the characteristics of elegance, nobility and good form”—the privileged members of bourgeois society replace the difference between two cultures, historic products of social conditions, by the essential difference between two natures, a naturally cultivated nature and a naturally natural nature. Thus, the sacralization of culture and art fulfils a vital function by contributing to the consecration of the social order: to enable educated people to believe in barbarism and persuade the barbarians within the gates of their own barbarity, all they must and need do is to manage to conceal themselves and to conceal the social conditions which render possible not only culture as a second nature in which society recognizes human excellence or

“good form” as the “realization” in a habitus of the aesthetics of the ruling classes, but also the legitimized dominance (or, if you like, the legitimacy) of a particular definition of culture. And in order that the ideological circle may be completely closed, all they have to do is to find in an essentialist representation of the bipartition of society into barbarians and civilized people the justification of their right to conditions which produce the possession of culture and the dispossession of culture, a state of “nature” destined to appear based on the nature of the men who are condemned to it.

If such is the function of culture and if it is love of art which really determines the choice that separates, as by an invisible and insuperable barrier, those who have from those who have not received this grace, it can be seen that museums betray, in the smallest details of their morphology and their organization, their true function, which is to strengthen the feeling of belonging in some and the feeling of exclusion in others.^{iv} Everything, in these civic temples in which bourgeois society deposits its most sacred possessions, that is, the relics inherited from a past which is not its own, in these holy places of art, in which the chosen few come to nurture a faith of virtuosi while conformists and bogus devotees come and perform a class ritual, old palaces or great historic homes to which the nineteenth century added imposing edifices, built often in the Greco-Roman style of civic sanctuaries, everything combines to indicate that the world of art is as contrary to the world of everyday life as the sacred is to the profane. The prohibition against touching the objects, the religious silence which is forced upon visitors, the puritan asceticism of the facilities, always scarce and uncomfortable, the almost systematic refusal of any instruction, the grandiose solemnity of the decoration and the decorum, colonnades, vast galleries, decorated ceilings, monumental staircases both outside and inside, everything seems done to remind people that the transition from the profane world to the sacred world presupposes, as Durkheim says, “a genuine metamorphosis,” a radical spiritual change, that the bringing together of the worlds “is always, in itself, a

^{iv}It is not infrequent that working-class visitors explicitly express the feeling of exclusion which, in any case, is evident in their whole behaviour. Thus, they sometimes see in the absence of any indication which might facilitate the visit—arrows showing the direction to follow, explanatory panels, etc.—the signs of a deliberate intention to exclude the uninitiated. The provision of teaching and didactic aids would not, in fact, really make up for the lack of schooling, but it would at least proclaim the right not to know, the right to be there in ignorance, the right of the ignorant to be there, a right which everything in the presentation of works and in the organization of the museum combines to challenge, as this remark overheard in the Chateau of Versailles testifies: “This chateau was not made for the people, and it has not changed.”

delicate operation which calls for precaution and a more or less complicated initiation,” that “it is not even possible unless the profane lose their specific characteristics, unless they themselves become sacred to some extent and to some degree.”^v Although the work of art, owing to its sacred character, calls for particular dispositions or predispositions, it brings in return its consecration to those who satisfy its demands, to the small elite who are self-chosen by their aptitude to respond to its appeal.

The museum gives to all, as a public legacy, the monuments of a splendid past, instruments of the sumptuous glorification of the great figures of bygone ages, but this is false generosity, because free entrance is also optional entrance, reserved for those who, endowed with the ability to appropriate the works, have the privilege of using this freedom and who find themselves consequently legitimized in their privilege, that is, in the possession of the means of appropriating cultural goods or, to borrow an expression of Max Weber, in the *monopoly* of the handling of cultural goods and of the institutional signs of cultural salvation (awarded by the school). Being the keystone

of a system which can function only by concealing its true function, the charismatic representation of art experience never fulfills its function of mystifying so well as when it resorts to a “democratic” language: to claim that works of art have power to awaken the grace of aesthetic enlightenment in anyone, however culturally uninitiated he or she may be, to presume in all cases to ascribe to the unfathomable accidents of grace or to the arbitrary bestowal of “gifts” aptitudes which are always the product of unevenly distributed education, and therefore to treat inherited aptitudes as personal virtues which are both natural and meritorious. Charismatic ideology would not be so strong if it were not the only outwardly irreproachable means of justifying the right of the heirs to the inheritance without being inconsistent with the ideal of formal democracy, and if, in this particular case, it did not aim at establishing in nature the sole right of the bourgeoisie to appropriate art treasures to itself, to appropriate them to itself *symbolically*, that is to say, in the only legitimate manner, in a society which pretends to yield to all, “democratically,” the relics of an aristocratic past.

^vE. Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, 6th edn (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960), 55–6. The holding of a Danish exhibition showing modern furniture and utensils in the old ceramic rooms of the Lille museum brought about such a “conversion” in the visitors as can be summarized in the following contrasts, the very ones which exist between a department store and a museum: noise/silence; touch/see; quick, haphazard exploration, in no particular order/leisurely, methodical inspection, according to a fixed arrangement; freedom/constraint; economic assessment of works which may be purchased/aesthetic appreciation of “priceless” works. However, despite these differences, bound up with the things exhibited, the solemnizing (and distancing) effect of the museum no less continued to be felt, contrary to expectations, for the structure of the public at the Danish exhibition was more “aristocratic” (in respect of level of education) than the ordinary public of the museum. The mere fact that works are consecrated by being exhibited in a consecrated place is sufficient, in itself, profoundly to change their signification and, more precisely, to raise the level of their emission; were they presented in a more familiar place, a large emporium for instance, they would be more accessible.

■ EDWARD SAID (1935–2003): A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Edward Said was born in Jerusalem in 1935 to a Christian Arab family. At that time, Jerusalem was a Palestinian city under British colonial rule. Said spent his formative years living in both Jerusalem and Cairo until 1948, when the state of Israel was established and his family became refugees. In 1951, Said emigrated to the United States to attend an elite boarding school in Massachusetts while his family stayed behind in the Middle East. He proved to be an exceptional student in his new country, graduating at the top of his class. The school, however, withheld his deserved title as valedictorian or salutatorian (Said does not recall graduating first or second) on the dubious moral grounds of being unfit for the honor (Said 2000:559). Nevertheless, he would go on to receive his bachelor’s degree from Princeton

University and his master's and doctorate from Harvard, where he studied Western literature, music, and philosophy.

In 1963, Said joined the faculty of Columbia University, where he would remain for the next four decades as professor of English and comparative literature. During this time, he also taught courses at Yale, Johns Hopkins, and Harvard universities and delivered lectures in Canada, Europe, and the Middle East, among other locations. He received more than half a dozen honorary doctorates from universities in some eight countries. He published more than a dozen books (with translations in 36 languages) and wrote countless articles and essays appearing in both scholarly journals and the popular media. Said's writings run the gamut from literary criticism and music criticism (he was a Juilliard-trained classical pianist) to the cultural dynamics of colonialism, the Arab–Israeli conflict, media depictions of Arabs and Islam, and personal memoirs. Said was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Royal Society of Literature. He served as president of the Modern Language Association in 1999.

Said is arguably best known for his political views on the “Palestinian question.” An ardent supporter of the Palestinians’ right of return, he remained an outspoken critic of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the United States’ complicity in the continued degradation of the Palestinian people. He was a regular contributor to newspapers and magazines published in England, France, and the United States and across the Arab world. For more than a decade, he served on the Palestinian National Council, until a falling-out with Yasser Arafat and his leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) led him to resign his position. Such was Said’s vocal opposition to Arafat’s leadership that the Palestinian Authority banned the sale of his books. Once an official spokesperson for the Palestinian struggle for independence, Said was now considered a traitor to the cause. His disagreement with the PLO came largely in response to Arafat’s signing of the Oslo Peace Accord in 1993. For Said, the accord was fundamentally flawed, because it did not establish the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes in Israel and left unchecked the expansion of Israeli settlements into the occupied territories. In his view, a lasting Middle East peace could be secured only through the creation of a single, binational state in which Israelis and Palestinians shared political authority. A coexistence between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs based on a mutual equality was for Said the only “road map” capable of ending the continuing oppression of refugees and the violence that occupation breeds. Said summed up his position in this way:

I’ve been consistent in my belief that no military option exists for either side, that only a process of peaceful reconciliation, and justice for what the Palestinians have had to endure by way of dispossession and military occupation, would work. (ibid.:564)

As for his views on the United States and the media’s role in the politics of the Middle East, Said noted all too presciently in 1980,

So far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Moslems and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab–Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have instead is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression. (Said 1980)

Over the decades, Said’s position earned him his share of enemies on both the political right and left. His office at Columbia University was set on fire, his family was subjected to countless death threats, and in 1985 he was labeled a Nazi by the Jewish Defense League. His more recent criticisms of the ongoing Iraq War also made him a popular target for those in the media and government who supported the invasion and subsequent occupation. Nevertheless, Said remained steadfastly committed to his principles and vision of a humane world until his death at the age of 67 in September 2003.

■ SAID'S INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES AND CORE IDEAS

Said, is a postcolonial theorist who underscores the subjective dimensions of Western expansion into non-Western societies. Developing largely out of English and comparative literature departments, postcolonial studies examines the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized as it is inscribed in language. More specifically, postcolonial theorists analyze how scientists, philosophers, novelists, and political officials from imperialist powers (most notably England, France, and the United States) construct, understand, and subjugate the populations of colonized nations through the written word. In addition, postcolonial theory explores how writers living under colonial rule seek to reconstruct their cultural identity and resist domination through their own appropriation or use of the colonial language (i.e., English or French).

While the term “post” colonial implies a specific relationship between the colonizer and the colonized—after colonial rule has ended—it should not be taken literally. Postcolonial scholars explore writings produced prior to and during colonial rule, as well as after a nation has gained its political independence. Indeed, it is often the case that political independence does not bring with it complete autonomy or freedom from foreign intervention but leads, instead, to neocolonial relations aimed at “modernizing” underdeveloped nations. Under these conditions, Western powers install “puppet regimes” in their former colonies to ensure their continued economic (if not political or military) exploitation of the region. For their part, the leaders of these regimes all too often resort to ruthless repression of their own native populations in order to maintain the favor of Western investors. Unfortunately, the list of such dictators is quite long: Saddam Hussein of Iraq, King Fahd in Saudi Arabia, Papa Doc and Baby Doc Duvalier of Haiti, Manuel Noriega of Panama, Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam, and Reza Muhammed Shah Pahlavi, the former shah of Iran, to name but a few.

At its root, postcolonial studies explore relations of power that have defined geopolitics from the age of European colonial expansion to the present-day era of declining Western dominance. Although spearheaded by scholars associated with the field of comparative literature, this emphasis has led to a host of questions that sociologists have recently taken up, a sign of the increasing cross-disciplinary encounters between the humanities and the sciences. Perhaps the most compelling question involves how colonizing powers use language to fix the meaning of the colonized “Other.” In other words, how do colonizing powers use texts—the written word—to simplify complex civilizations, to erase the existence of a rich cultural heritage, and to deny the humanity of a population as part of the effort to legitimate the subjugation of those nations they seek to control? Such efforts demand that a population be torn from its history in order to create a new future—a future literally written by the West. For those seeking to fashion an alternative, “postcolonial” means of expression freed from the dehumanizing effects of the colonial language, a central task involves reclaiming the culture, the history, and the language of marginalized populations in order to speak as and for themselves. (Examining the promises and pitfalls tied to this struggle for self-representation is a primary concern for Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a leading postcolonial theorist whose work we highlight in the Significant Others box and who, as an Indian woman living in the United States, knows firsthand what it means to be the “Other.”)

The notion of the Other raises several interesting issues, two of which we address here. First, colonization is premised on the notion that the colonized Other is inherently inferior, weak, and evil. This understanding of the native population allows for the implementation of brutal and repressive tactics as a means for “civilizing the savages.” Yet, such an understanding must first be constructed, and it is colonial discourse that accomplishes this very objective: “to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction. . . . The colonized population is then deemed to be both the cause and effect of the system, imprisoned in the circle of interpretation” (Bhabha 1986:154, 171). Thus, people throughout the Arab world, the Caribbean islands, Africa, and elsewhere in the developing world have been defined in Western literary texts and in scientific works as simultaneously irrational, bloodthirsty, infantile, and

deceitful, and in need of “correct training.” And who better to provide this correct training than those in the colonizing West, who, by virtue of not being the inferior and degenerate Other, are superior, strong, righteous, and pure? To the colonizers, then, the colonized are an untamed group who, despite their inferiority, are to be feared because of their potential to corrupt civilized Western culture, hence the need to tame those who are less civilized. Such is the “white man’s burden.”¹²

Significant Others

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1942–): Can the Subaltern Speak?

Alongside Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is one of the leading postcolonial scholars. Spivak was born in Calcutta, West Bengal, to an urban middle-class family. After graduating from the University of Calcutta with a degree in English, she moved to the United States to pursue a graduate education in comparative literature at Cornell University. After completing her degree, Spivak achieved notoriety with the publication of *Of Grammatology* (Derrida 1967/1975), an English translation of *De la Grammatologie* (1967), written by the French poststructuralist theorist Jacques Derrida. This work is most notable for Spivak’s contribution to “deconstruction,” a branch of philosophy that seeks to deconstruct the hierarchical binary oppositions (such as black and white, male and female, good and evil) on which Western thought is based. In doing so, deconstructionists expose how otherwise unquestioned “truths” are produced. However, the practice of deconstruction necessarily involves adopting the existing system of binary codes in order to articulate a critique of that system. Unable to escape from this hierarchical system, the deconstructionist unavoidably reproduces the prevailing patterns of social domination that are understood and legitimated through it.

Spivak’s work in large measure addresses this problematic, a problematic that for her takes on a particularly personal dimension. On one hand, as a woman from a “third world” nation, Spivak inhabits a marginalized social position. Yet, on the other hand, she is a member of the educated elite who enjoys a privileged career as a professor at one of the most prestigious institutions, Columbia University. In what is her most oft-cited piece, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), Spivak borrows Antonio Gramsci’s notion of the “subaltern” to argue that those groups who remain shut out from the dominant social institutions and whose voices do not conform to the assumptions of the dominant discourse are effectively mute. While such groups can indeed speak, they will not be heard by those who occupy positions of privilege. Yet intellectuals committed to dismantling Western imperialism and advocating the independence of colonized nations all too often do a disservice to those oppressed groups on whose behalf they speak. Speaking from a vantage point of privilege, intellectuals cannot help but distort the lived truth of those who, because of their marginalized status, are unable to represent themselves.

In the end, Spivak calls into question the very foundation of postcolonial studies by asking whether or not intellectuals are necessarily complicit in perpetuating the colonizing forces and institutions they are ostensibly seeking to unmask. Aligned with male-dominated educational

(Continued)

¹²It is important to note that a similar colonial discourse is often used to subjugate segments of a population within a nation, and not only as a means for justifying the oppression of those living in a foreign country. The history of racism within the United States, as well as its contemporary manifestations, provides ample evidence of this. Black Americans in particular have been subjected to a litany of negative depictions, from violent, oversexed, and conniving, to childish, inept, and feeble-minded.

(Continued)

institutions (many of which have dubious records with regard to foreign investment practices) located in imperialist countries, Spivak asks if it is possible for Western intellectuals to develop a postcolonial discourse that is not, however inadvertently, colonizing. Speaking *for* the subaltern, whether it is Iraqi women, Indian women, or East Timorese peasants, intellectuals simultaneously construct the subaltern through a discourse that essentializes what is in reality always a diverse, heterogeneous group. Spivak warns that such a discursive practice is a form of colonization, a way of erasing and remaking the identity and culture of a group that is analogous to the economic exploitation and political domination exercised by colonial powers. For those engaged with postcolonial studies, their best hope is not to “give” the subaltern a voice in hopes of protecting or fighting for “them,” for this only reinforces their subaltern status. Rather, they should work toward institutionalizing avenues that allow subalterns to speak for themselves.

This relationship between the Other and the West leads to a central paradox in the development of cultural identity. In a very real sense, the West, despite its alleged superiority and strength, is dependent on the inferior, colonized Other who alone is capable of producing its sublime identity. In other words, one cannot be “superior” unless there is an “inferior” against which the necessary comparison can be made. As a result, the source of the West’s superiority lies not in its own “advanced” civilization but, rather, in constructing non-Western cultures through negative terms that project onto the colonized all those traits that the West cannot possess if it is to legitimate its position as the center of progress and the beacon of humanity. The purity of the West is thus intertwined with the impurity of the non-West. And such oversimplified, homogenized depictions of both Western and non-Western cultures and peoples must be maintained in order to perpetuate existing relations based on domination and subordination.¹³ Thus, when a politician remarks that Muslims “hate us for our freedom,” he is making a claim dependent on a purified notion of what Western freedom has promoted around the world, in turn justifying an ennobled aggression against those who are “against freedom.”

The second set of issues raised by the notion of the Other turns our attention from the colonizers to the colonized. For colonized groups, or those who have won political independence from colonial rule, the question remains as to how they can shed their identity as an inferior Other. Educated in schools established by the colonizers and adopting the language of their rulers, the colonized are effectively cut off from their history and cultural traditions. What the colonized come to learn about themselves, their identity, and their heritage is shaped by the images and meanings that the colonizers project back onto their subject populations. In this context, reclaiming their past and their precolonized identity becomes a near-impossible task. Yet, doing so is a necessary and fundamental step in the struggle for the freedom to “be.” In this regard, the colonized share a parallel fate with their oppressors, for they, too, are unable to escape the duality of their identity. Every attempt to shed their “otherness” entails incorporating the very terms that define them as an Other. Thus, even after their independence is won, the colonized are condemned to an identity that is defined at least in part through the vision of their colonizers.

The psychological turmoil this situation exacts was described by Frantz Fanon, whose penetrating work represents an important precursor to what would later become postcolonial studies. As a black colonial subject, Fanon, like Spivak, draws from his personal experiences as an Other to describe the psyche of the subjugated. We outline Fanon’s contributions in the next Significant Others box.

¹³The use of the term *non-West* itself points to the oversimplified “Othering” that we are discussing: the non-West refers to everything that is “not” West. On a parallel note, in discussing the notion of the “Other” and the role of identity construction, postcolonial scholars often draw on psychoanalysis, particularly the work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan.

Significant Others

Frantz Fanon (1925–1961): The Father of Postcolonial Studies

Frantz Fanon was born in Martinique, a French colony in the Caribbean. After serving in the French Army during World War II, he completed his degree in psychiatry at the University of Lyon. In 1953, he was appointed to head the psychiatry department in an Algerian hospital. The following year, however, the war for Algeria's independence from French colonial rule broke out. The horrors and torture associated with the struggle served to amplify Fanon's own personal experiences as a black, colonized subject growing up in a white, colonial world. Fanon formally left his hospital position (a move that signaled a symbolic renunciation of his French upbringing) in 1956 to join the Algerian liberation movement, and in 1960 the Algerian Provisional Government appointed him ambassador to Ghana. In addition to his diplomatic post, Fanon served the revolution through publishing a number of political essays supportive of its cause.

Although he was a trained psychiatrist, Fanon rose to prominence as a result of his political activism. He was a leading intellectual in the struggle to end colonial rule in Africa and throughout the world. In his now-classic works *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/2008) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961/2005), Fanon emphasized that colonization has both physical and psychological dimensions. That colonial rule is established on repressive legal and social codes that relegate indigenous populations to an inferior status is plain to anyone who looks. Yet, colonization also exacts a psychological toll on the colonized as the oppressed comes to know himself through the eyes of the oppressor. Thus, the identity of the subjugated is defined through the discourse, ideas, and theories of the subjugator, who alone is able to declare what it means to "be" the colonized *other*. As the colonized subject internalizes the "civilization" of the colonizer, he comes to know himself as half-human, inferior, and despicable—ideas sustained by the oppressor to legitimate the act of colonization.

In an attempt to distance himself from this psychologically destructive sense of being, the black subject adopts a "white mask." However, this serves only to further alienate himself from his own identity and consciousness. Moreover, wearing a white mask does not enable the colonized to escape the daily experience of racism, because while he may see himself as "white"—that is, equal—he is forever seen by the colonizer as both "less-than" and dangerous. The only sure path to exterminate this oppressive relationship is "absolute violence," a total revolution that destroys colonial rule and, with it, the categories or identities of black and white. This alone will achieve the necessary "collective catharsis" that will allow subjugated populations to purge themselves of the dehumanizing colonial culture that reduces them to the status of animals. While many find Fanon's insistence on violence to be unnecessary, if not abhorrent, he was nevertheless convinced that militant action was the only means to national and psychological liberation from colonial oppression.

While serving as a diplomat in Ghana, Fanon developed leukemia. He died less than a year later in a Bethesda, Maryland, hospital where he was being treated. He was 36 years old. Fanon's insights into the psychology of colonialism would inspire a generation of scholars, including Edward Said. Yet, Fanon's influence extends beyond the boundaries of postcolonial studies. For instance, Immanuel Wallerstein, whose world-systems analysis we discuss in chapter 16, also counts Fanon as an important influence on his intellectual development and his political sympathies with those engaged in anticolonial struggles.

However, we turn here to an example of the structural consequences of this "othering" by considering the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, in which hundreds of thousands of Tutsis were slaughtered by Hutus with the encouragement and assistance of the Rwandan government. The intense hatred for the Tutsis has its roots in Belgium's colonization of the country. The different ethnicities of these two groups were politicized

by the Belgians, who established a caste system in which the Hutus were defined as an inferior, lower-class people and the lighter-skinned Tutsis as an upper-class people worthy of colonial privileges such as an education, good jobs, and access to political positions. While the two groups had coexisted relatively peacefully for centuries prior to the colonization of the region, Hutu resentment and hatred toward the Tutsi mounted under Belgium's colonial rule and the system of discrimination it created. When Rwanda was granted its independence from Belgium in the early 1960s, the stage was set for a massive civil war. The Hutus gained control of the government, and decades of ensuing violence culminated in the atrocities committed during the early months of 1994. The ethnic genocide was the tragic consequence of a racially informed caste system installed by a colonial power whose own definitions of the relative worth of the two groups became the reality through which the groups came to define themselves.

That the Hutus would eventually come to govern Rwanda raises an important point. In Rwanda and elsewhere around the world, colonized and enslaved populations have always fought to resist or subvert the domination of their oppressors. Such resistance can take the form of "hybridization," in which the colonized combine or mix their native language and ways of understanding with those imposed by the colonizers, thus creating sites of potential challenge to the authority of their rulers. In expressing their ideas, interests, and desires in words and forms not sanctioned by the colonial powers, the colonized are able to create a sense of identity that is neither identical to their past nor wholly owned by the colonizers. Hybridization takes place not only through literary works written by authors subjected to colonial rule but also through cultural practices such as religion, in which native beliefs and rituals are combined with those imposed by colonialist Christian missionaries.

Having explored some of the broad themes that inform postcolonial studies, we now turn to a discussion of the work of Edward Said. It was Said's 1978 publication, *Orientalism*, that marked the birth of the field. In this book, Said details how Western scientists, philosophers, novelists, poets, and politicians created the reality of the "Orient" through their writings. Of course, to understand Said's position we first need to know what he means by the Orient. At its most inclusive, the Orient refers to the non-West. It is the Other to the West (or Occident) that encompasses the Near East (more commonly called the Middle East) and the Far East (Asia). That these regions are known or understood in relation to Europe is obvious enough from their names, "Near" and "Far," which take for granted that Europe serves as the central point from which the identities of other regions are designated. And it is Said's most basic contention that the Orient, "the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages," was in an important sense invented by the West through the process of **Orientalism** (Said 1978:1). Moreover, in inventing the Orient, Orientalism also helped Europe to define itself by creating a contrasting, inferior Other against which its own identity could be formed. In this light, Europe and the Orient (as well as the rest of the world) are less products of nature than they are products of social invention, or what Said terms **imaginative geography**.

Orientalism has three dimensions to it. First, it refers to all the scientific and academic disciplines whose purpose is to study Oriental cultures and customs. Thus, the Orientalist, whether he or she is a sociologist, an anthropologist, or a historian, is one whose expertise lies in teaching, researching, or writing about the Orient (ibid.:2). (For example, one might think of a scholar who focuses on the history and culture of Southwest Asia, China, or Egypt.) Such academic interests in the Orient began in earnest during the early 19th century as Britain and France entered into a competition for colonial expansion. It was around this time that Orientalism was institutionalized as a field of study within universities across these two countries. In translating Oriental texts, explaining the history of the Orient, and deciphering the culture of the Orient, academics were (are) producing a "manifest" form of Orientalism that, in speaking about the region, interpreted its otherwise obscure, inscrutable meaning. Not coincidentally, many academic experts on the Orient served as advisers to colonial governments, dispensing knowledge on how to best "handle" their subject populations. Today in the United States, specialists in "area studies" provide government officials with policy advice on international affairs through their association with a number of think tanks and research institutes such as the RAND Corporation, the American Enterprise Institute, the Brookings Institution, and the Heritage Foundation. For its part, the Middle East Institute (MEI), a

Washington, D.C.–based policy and research center, states that its mission is to “strive to increase knowledge of the Middle East among our own citizens and to promote understanding between the peoples of the Middle East and America.” Perhaps recognizing the ill effects that stem from a history of “orientalizing” the region and its people, the institute’s president notes, “Now more than ever, we must replace stereotyped and simplistic notions about the Middle East with detailed, objective understanding.”¹⁴ Yet, knowledge of the Orient has always been guided by scholars’ stated aims to produce a “detailed, objective understanding.” In the end, MEI’s critical self-reflection can only reproduce what has always been the essence of Orientalism: the Orient is “Orientalized” by the scholar whose judgments about his subject define the “true” Orient. Those living within the Orient are rendered silent, unable to contest the power and validity of the pronouncements made *about* them by the experts whose studies literally create them.

A second dimension refers to Orientalism in a more general sense as a “style of thought,” the “ideological suppositions, images, and fantasies about a region of the world called the Orient” (Said 2000:199). This dimension expresses a “latent” form of Orientalism, an “almost unconscious,” and thus taken-for-granted understanding of the Orient, its culture, and its people. The unchanging certainty that underlies latent Orientalism is derived from a racial/biological determinism that renders Orientals and their culture as singularly backward, degenerate, uncivilized, and morally corrupt. Oriental men were thus understood to be inferior, weak, and effeminate, while the women were portrayed as exotic, sensual, and willing to be dominated by European males. This dimension of Orientalism incorporates not only academic scholarship, but also all accounts of the Orient that are rooted in a fundamental distinction between it and the West. Here we find novels and poems, the letters and diplomacy of colonial administrators, and all manner of philosophical and political theories that in their accounts and explanations of the Orient and its people construct the very subject they describe.

The third dimension speaks of Orientalism as a source of power for “dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said 1978:3). As a mode of discourse that encompasses a specific vocabulary and set of images, Orientalism spoke the “truth” about the Orient and Orientals. This truth provided the justification for the West’s imperialist ambitions. Through the knowledge and descriptions it produced of its subject, Orientalism ruled both a place and its people while simultaneously shaping the identity of the West as a rightly dominant, benevolent ruler. Said sums up the “achievements” of Orientalism as follows:

The British and the French saw the Orient as a geographical—and cultural, political, demographical, sociological, and historical—entity over whose destiny they believed themselves to have traditional entitlement. The Orient to them was no sudden discovery, no mere historical accident, but an area to the east of Europe whose principal worth was uniformly defined in terms of Europe—European science, scholarship, understanding, and administration—the credit for having made the Orient what it was now. And this had been the achievement . . . of modern Orientalism. (ibid.:221)

To illustrate the three dimensions of Orientalism and its “achievement,” Said examined the discourse of a number of individuals including two distinguished English politicians and diplomats, Arthur James Balfour and Evelyn Baring, First Earl of Cromer. Among his many political posts, Balfour was a longtime member of the British Parliament and served as chief secretary to Ireland, secretary to Scotland, and prime minister of England. In 1910, Balfour, then leader of the Conservative (Tory) Party, addressed England’s House of Commons in an effort to justify his country’s continued occupation of Egypt in the face of weakening domestic support for the campaign and a growing Egyptian nationalist movement. Imploring his fellow parliamentarians to uphold their “duty” to govern backward, subject races, Balfour argued that “it is a good thing” for Egypt to be ruled by Britain because the Egyptians “have got under it far better government than in the whole history of the world they ever had before, and which not only is a benefit to them, but is undoubtedly a benefit to the whole of the civilised West” (quoted in ibid.:33).

¹⁴<http://www.mideasti.org/>.

Balfour rested his claim not on Britain's superior military or economic power but, rather, on his country's allegedly superior knowledge of Egypt and its people:

We know the civilization of Egypt better than we know the civilization of any other country. We know it further back; we know it more intimately; we know more about it. It goes far beyond the petty time span of the history of our race, which is lost in the prehistoric period at a time when the Egyptian civilization had already passed its prime. (quoted in *ibid.*:32)

For Balfour, what this superior knowledge confirms is that Egypt is incapable of “self-government.” Thus, the “civilized world [has] imposed” upon Britain, “the dominant race,” the “great task” of ruling over Egypt. And without the unwavering support of British politicians and the broader public, Balfour feared that the Egyptians would “lose all that sense of order which is the very basis of their civilization, just as our officers lose all that sense of power and authority, which is the very basis of everything they can do for the benefit of those among whom they have been sent” (*ibid.*:33).

Another influential figure who sought to maintain Britain's imperialist ambitions was Evelyn Baring, First Earl of Cromer. Lord Cromer served as a colonial administrator in India and in Egypt, where he held the position of British controller-general, which gave him control over Egypt's finances, before being appointed in 1883 to British consul-general, an office that effectively anointed him ruler of Egypt. Lord Cromer spent the next 24 years as consul-general. With decades of experience as a colonial ruler, and with all the accumulated knowledge gained through his position, Cromer, as much as anyone, could speak as an authoritative expert on all things Egyptian. Thus, in 1908, one year after resigning from his position, Lord Cromer published his two-volume work, *Modern Egypt*, in which, based on firsthand experience, he explained the need for continued British occupation:

The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician. . . . He is by nature sceptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand . . . is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description. Although the ancient Arabs acquired in a somewhat higher degree the science of dialectics, their descendants are singularly deficient in the logical faculty. They are often incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions from any simple premises of which they may admit the truth. Endeavor to elicit a plain statement of facts from any ordinary Egyptian. His explanation will generally be lengthy, and wanting in lucidity. He will probably contradict himself half-a-dozen times before he has finished his story. He will often break down under the mildest process of cross-examination. (quoted in *ibid.*:38)

In short, chief among their faults is “the fact that somehow or other the Oriental generally acts, speaks, and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European” (quoted in *ibid.*:39). Because Orientals are “deficient” in their “slipshod” reasoning and “devoid of energy and initiative,” England, compelled to act out of its immense beneficence and superior knowledge, must decide what “is best for the subject race.”

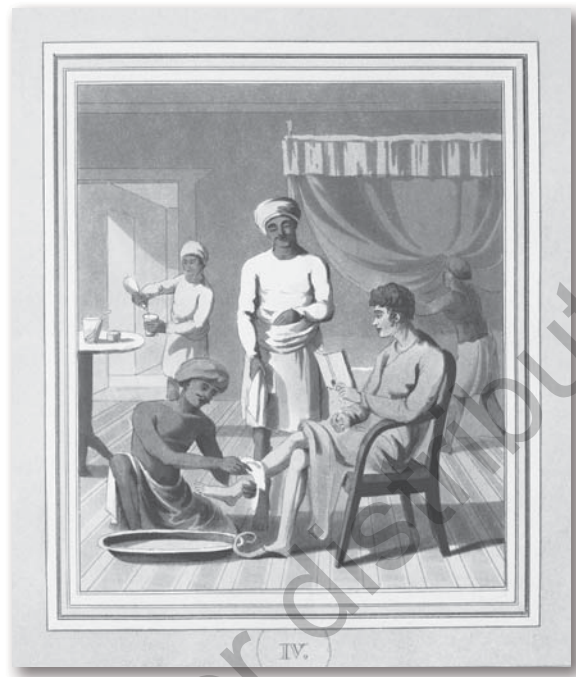
In emphasizing the connection between knowledge and power as it relates to imaginative geography, Said's indebtedness to the work of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault is particularly apparent.¹⁵ As we noted earlier, central to Gramsci's perspective is the concept of hegemony. Recall that hegemony refers to a mode of domination in which the rulers secure their dominance not through force, but through the “spontaneous consent” of the ruled. This consent is dependent on the subordinated classes adopting as their own the values, beliefs, and attitudes that serve the interests of the ruling class. As a result, the ideas propagated

¹⁵The range of Said's intellectual influences is vast. In addition to drawing from Gramsci and Foucault, his work is inspired by the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács (1885–1971), the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), the Marxian literary critic Raymond Williams (1921–1988), the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), the novelist Joseph Conrad (1857–1924), the Italian historian and philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), Theodor Adorno (see chapter 10), and Frantz Fanon (see Significant Others).

by the ruling class take on the appearance of universality and common sense. For Said, Orientalism is an instance of hegemony in which scholars, missionaries, colonial administrators, and literary authors offer a picture of the Orient and its people that prescribes for them an inferior position relative to the West. Europe's superiority over the "backward" Orient becomes a taken-for-granted truth that then justifies the colonial exploitation of the Other.

Said's discussion of Orientalism also draws on Foucault's notion of power/knowledge. For Foucault, power and knowledge are two sides of the same coin: power is exercised through knowledge, while knowledge is an exercise of power. Knowledge is constructed and communicated through discourse—words that declare a state of being while simultaneously declaring how things are not. For example, when a person says or writes that Palestinians are terrorists, he is constructing an identity that at the same time excludes other possible identities. Yet, Palestinians are no more any one "thing" than are Israelis, Americans, Germans, Mexicans, or Koreans. Nevertheless, such a claim often is offered as "knowledge," and to the extent that it gains credibility, it also becomes infused with the power to produce a reality that does not exist outside of the discourse that constitutes it. In this way, Orientalism is a "world of power and representations, a world that came into being as a series of decisions made by writers, politicians, philosophers to suggest or adumbrate one reality and at the same time efface others" (Said 2000:563). This approach to knowledge calls attention to the politics of Orientalism as an academic pursuit (and purportedly objective, impartial academic scholarship more generally), as the production of knowledge invariably involves "interests" on the part of the writer that reflect his or her life circumstances. It is impossible to entirely escape one's own beliefs, attitudes, or social position when researching and writing on a given subject. And in the case of Orientalism, this means, at its most basic level, that the scholar "comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. . . . [This] means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient" (Said 1978:11). In this way the Orient *exists* because of, and for, the West, not because of its own internal reality.

We end this section with a brief discussion of contemporary forms of Orientalism, particularly as they are expressed through American views of Arabs and Islam. The Middle East, home to much of the world's Arab population, has occupied a central position in regard to both government policy and popular culture since the 1950s. Much of the American involvement in, and understanding of, this region has been framed by the conflict between the Arabs and Israelis on which the government, corporate media, and academic establishment have adopted a pro-Israeli position—a position that casts Arabs as "evil, totalitarian, and terroristic." The attention focused on the Middle East and its people has only intensified in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001. Moreover, this intensity is itself in large measure a product of the immediacy with which information and images are disseminated through the electronic media. Well before the attacks on America, however, the media portrayed Arabs in simplistic, stereotypical terms. In television, films, and cartoons, the Arab was a nomadic camel-jockey, an oversexed savage, a treacherous if clever marauder, or an oil sheik who, despite his



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Illustration 14.1 Visual Orientalism

The inferiority of Orientals was depicted in pictures as well as in words. Above is an 1813 print entitled "A Gentleman Dressing, Attended by His Head Bearer and Other Servants." Drawn by Charles D'Oyly, it was published in *The European in India*. Such illustrations were commonplace throughout the nineteenth century.

obvious inferiority, is able to hold the West hostage by controlling the world's energy supply. As for the latter, because Arabs are believed to lack the intelligence and moral qualifications required for possessing such a valuable resource, it is only fitting and right that their oil fields be seized—if necessary, through American military force. This view has taken on renewed significance given the critics of President George W. Bush's administration, who claimed that the principal motive for invading Iraq in 2003 was to control that nation's oil supply. Likewise, Said's comments regarding the depiction of Arabs in the news ring as true today as they did 30 years ago, when he wrote,

In newsreels or newsphotos, the Arab is always shown in large numbers. No individuality, no personal characteristics or experiences. Most of the pictures represent mass rage and misery, or irrational (hence hopelessly eccentric) gestures. Lurking behind all of these images is the menace of *jihad* . Consequence: a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world. (ibid.:287)

It is important to point out, however, that tension between Islam and the West is by no means confined to the United States. Amid rising concerns over the preservation of their national identities, Swiss voters in 2009 supported a referendum to ban the building of minarets on mosques, while the French government in 2004 banned the wearing of head scarves in public schools. More recently, a French parliamentary panel recommended banning the wearing of Muslim *burqas* and *niqabs* (both are full-face coverings) in certain public facilities, including hospitals, post offices, and banks and on public transportation, and suggested that lawmakers should pass a resolution condemning the garments. Yet, according to the country's interior ministry, in a Muslim population estimated to be between 5 and 6 million—the largest such population in Western Europe—fewer than 2,000 women wear the *burqa* (Erlanger 2010).

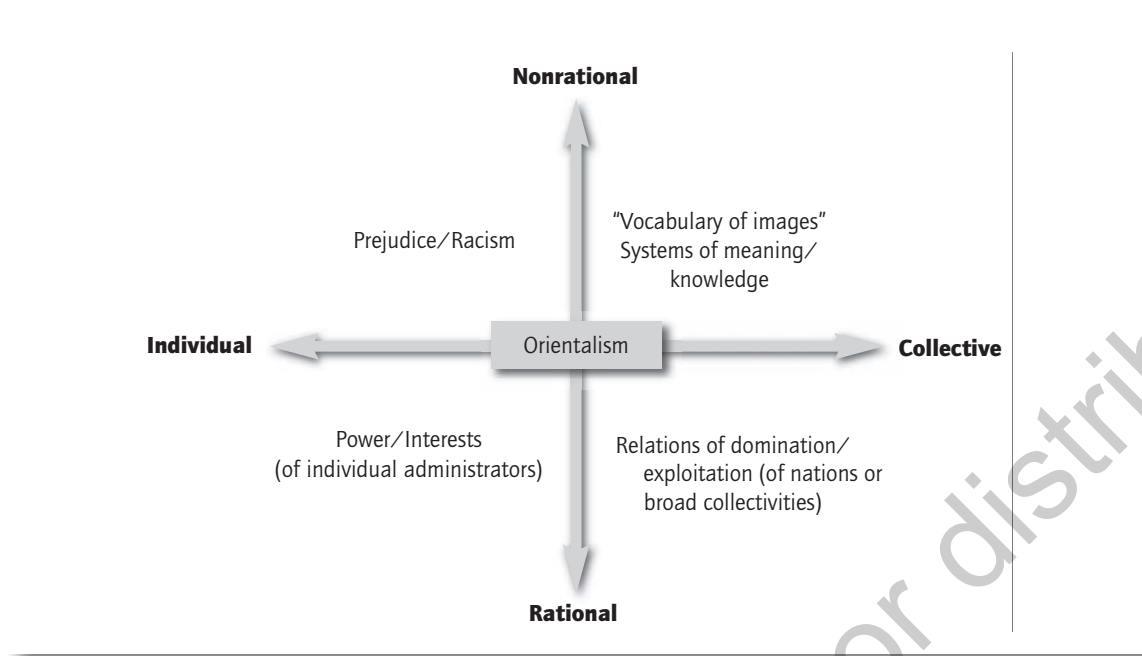
■ SAID'S THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Said's work is primarily devoted to exploring a single concept, Orientalism; yet, this is by no means a simple theoretical concept. On the contrary, "Orientalism" is a multidimensional concept that speaks to each of the quadrants in our action/framework, as shown in Figure 14.3. Because of its theoretical multidimensionality and flexibility, this concept can be used to shed light on a range of real-life issues. Consider first Orientalism's individualist/rational dimension. This dimension speaks to the work of specific scholars and colonial administrators who construct the meaning of the Orient in specific ways that serve their interests. This is the manifest form of Orientalism that calls our attention to the interconnection between knowledge and power and, in this case, how knowledge is used by individuals in their attempt to subjugate populations. For the Western Orientalist, the Orient serves "as a kind of culture and intellectual proletariat useful for [his] grander interpretative activity, necessary for his performance as a superior judge . . ." (Said 1978:208).

The collectivist/rational aspects of Orientalism become apparent when we move from a focus on individuals to one on groups. Thus, we find Said continually speaking of broad collectivities—East and West, or Orient and Occident—as well as nations. On this level, the interactions that occupy Said's analysis are those taking place between, for instance, Britain and India or between France and Egypt. The emphasis here is on the relations of domination and exploitation that exist between nations and regions of the globe, relations that are strategically sustained by those in power in order to secure their continued geopolitical and economic advantages.

Orientalism operates on a nonrational level as well. This is suggested by Said's notion of latent Orientalism discussed earlier. As a concept that captures the individual/nonrational dimension, Orientalism refers to an individual's racist attitudes and practices that construct an inferior Other. Thus, individuals use or "mobilize" the dogma of Orientalism in an "almost unconscious" way as they go about the business of describing the world. What an Orientalist (or any person, for that matter) writes and says can betray an underlying racist scheme that positions the Oriental as inherently, and thus undeniably, uncivilized.

Figure 14.3 Said's Basic Concepts and Theoretical Orientation



Turning to the collectivist/nonrational dimension, Orientalism is that which is mobilized. It is a set of background, taken-for-granted assumptions projected onto the Orient and its people—in short, a hegemonic dogma. Such assumptions are never tested against the reality of the empirical world; they simply exist as an unconscious lens through which the Orient is seen and understood. Orientalism provides a vocabulary of images that “represent or stand for a very large entity, otherwise impossibly diffuse, . . . [that] comes to exert a three-way force, on the Orient, on the Orientalist, and on the Western ‘consumer’ of Orientalism” (ibid.:66, 67). In this way, Orientalism possesses structural or collectivist properties that give it a life of its own, separate from those individuals who deploy it.

Reading

Introduction to *Orientalism*

In this work, Said begins by defining Orientalism as a field of academic study aimed at discovering and understanding all things “Oriental”—that is, Middle Eastern. Since the early 14th century, scholars within the field have produced knowledge covering a vast geographical territory and range of issues, including the languages, histories, religions, laws, and economic and political life of the Orient. However, the discourse and images used by academics to understand the Orient have led to the creation of lands and peoples entirely foreign and distinct—though “known”—to the West and Westerners. In other words, knowledge of the Orient and Orientals has produced an “Other” in opposition to which we are able to know and understand “us.” Through the writings of the Orientalists, the Orient represents the savage and the deprived. So identified, not only is the Orient understood, but in juxtaposition the noble and civilized

West is created at the same time. Yet, this is not solely an academic issue; it is an issue about truth. The Orient is “Orientalized” by the scholar whose judgments about his subject define the “true” Orient. Those living within the Orient are rendered silent, unable to contest the power and validity of the pronouncements made *about* them by the experts whose studies literally create them.

While the Orient refers most generally to the eastern half of the world, Said centers his analysis on the imaginative geography practiced by Orientalists in their attempt to uncover the truth about Islam. From the seventh century until today, Islam has been a geographic, cultural, military, and political provocation to the Christian West. For their part, Orientalists, in an effort to “handle” these provocations and fix the meaning of Islam for the West, have employed a vocabulary that depicts the Islamic world as “militant” and “heretical.” Islam is exposed as a “fraudulent” religion, and its prophet Mohammed is an “imposter” and “apostate” who represents the epitome of debauchery and lecherous evil. For Said, it is essential to recognize, however, that such representations

are to the actual Orient, or Islam, . . . as stylized costumes are to characters in a play. . . . In other words, we need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate as because it is not even trying to be accurate. What it is trying to do . . . is at one and the same time characterize the Orient as alien and incorporate it schematically on a theatrical stage whose audience, manager, and actors are *for* Europe, and only for Europe. (1978:184–85; emphasis in the original)

In the second portion of this selection, Said turns his attention to Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798. The invasion marked the beginning of the modern era of Orientalism in which the academic expertise offered by Orientalists was an integral part of the larger project to control the Muslim world, less so by military means than by scientific texts. Through knowledge and accessibility, the Orient would be incorporated into the West, transforming it from an obscure and hostile place and people into a submissive “partner.” Although Said’s analysis here pertains to events that occurred more than 200 years ago, we suggest that, regardless of one’s political persuasion, it should provide the reader with reason for pause to consider the parallels between the period he discusses and the contemporary project of democracy building in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and throughout the Arab Middle East.

Orientalism (1978)ⁱ

Edward Said

I. IMAGINATIVE GEOGRAPHY AND ITS REPRESENTATIONS: ORIENTALIZING THE ORIENTAL

Strictly speaking, Orientalism is a field of learned study. In the Christian West Orientalism is considered to have begun its formal existence with the decision of the Church Council of Vienne in 1312 to establish a

series of chairs, as R. W. Southern notes, in “Arabic, Greek, Hebrew and Syraic at Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Avignon, and Salamanca.” Yet any account of Orientalism would have to consider not only the professional Orientalist and his work, but also the very notion of a *field* of study based on a geographical, cultural, linguistic and ethnic unit called the Orient.

SOURCE: Excerpts from *Orientalism* by Edward Said. Used by permission of Pantheon Books, an imprint of Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved.

ⁱWhereas “Orientalism” usually refers to the study of the whole Orient (including the civilizations of China, Japan, India and the Muslims), it is used in this essay mainly to refer to the Near Orient, that is, the lands of Islam, or the Arabs, or both. Until the eighteenth century the “Orient” was considered in Europe to be Islam, or Turkey, or the lands of the Saracens. After the discovery of large new portions of Asia during the second half of the eighteenth century, the “Orient” expanded accordingly, but in order to retain the coherence of the traditional idea of the Orient, “Orientalism” is treated here as Western attention to the Near East, an attention that includes academic study, imaginative literature, commerce, and attempts at geo-political domination.

Fields, of course, are made. They acquire coherence and integrity in time because scholars devote themselves in different ways to what seems to be a commonly agreed-upon subject matter. Yet it goes without saying that a field of study is rarely as simply defined as even its most committed partisans—usually scholars, professors, experts, and the like—claim it is. Besides, a field can change so entirely, in even the most traditional disciplines like philology, history or theology, as to make an all-purpose definition of subject matter almost impossible. This is certainly true of Orientalism for some interesting reasons.

To speak of scholarly specialization as a geographical “field” is, in the case of Orientalism, fairly revealing, since no one is likely to imagine a field symmetrical to it called Occidentalism. Already the special, perhaps even eccentric, attitude of Orientalism becomes apparent. For although many learned disciplines imply a position taken towards, say, *human* material (a historian deals with the human past from a special vantage point in the present), there is no real analogy for taking a fixed, more or less total geographical position towards a wide variety of social, linguistic, political, and historical realities. A classicist, a Romance specialist, even an Americanist focuses on a relatively modest portion of the world, not on a full half of it. But Orientalism is a field with considerable geographical ambition. And since Orientalists have traditionally occupied themselves with things Oriental (a specialist in Islamic law, no less than experts in Chinese dialects and Indian religions, is considered to be an Orientalist by people who call themselves Orientalists), we must learn to accept enormous, indiscriminate size plus an almost infinite capacity for subdivision as one of the chief things about Orientalism—one of the chief things about its confusing amalgam of imperial vagueness and precise detail.

All of this describes Orientalism as an academic discipline. The “ism” in Orientalism serves to insist on the distinction of this discipline from every other kind. The rule in its historical development as an academic discipline has been its increasing scope, not its greater selectiveness. . . .

Such eclecticism had its blind spots nevertheless. Academic Orientalists for the most part were interested in the classical periods of whatever language or society it was that they studied. Not until quite late in the [19th] century, with the single major exception of Napoleon’s Institut d’Egypte, was there much attention given to the academic study of the modern, or actual, Orient. Moreover, the “Orient” studied was a textual universe

by and large; the impact of the Orient was made through books and manuscripts, not, as in the impress of Greece on the Renaissance, through plastic artifacts like sculpture and pottery. Even the rapport between an Orientalist and the Orient was textual, so much so that it is reported of some of the early nineteenth-century German Orientalists that their first view of an eight-armed Indian statue cured them completely of their Orientalist taste. When a learned Orientalist traveled in the country of his specialization it was always with abstract unshakable maxims about the “civilization” which he had studied; rarely were Orientalists interested in anything except proving the validity of these musty “truths” by applying them without great success to uncomprehending, hence degenerate, natives. Finally, the very power and scope of Orientalism produced not only a fair amount of exact positive knowledge about the Orient, but also a kind of second-order knowledge—lurking in such places as the “Oriental” tale, the mythology of the mysterious East, notions of Asian inscrutability—with a life of its own, what V. G. Kiernan has aptly called “Europe’s collective day-dream of the Orient.” . . .

Today an Orientalist is less likely to call himself an Orientalist than he was at almost any time up to the Second World War. Yet the designation is still useful as when universities maintain programs or departments in Oriental languages or Oriental civilizations. There is an Oriental “faculty” at Oxford and a Department of Oriental Studies at Princeton. As recently as 1959, the British Government empowered a commission “to review developments in the Universities in the fields of Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African studies . . . and to consider, and advise on, proposals for future development.” The Hayter report, as it was called when it appeared in 1961, seemed untroubled by the broad designation of the word “Oriental” which it found serviceably employed in American universities as well. For even the greatest name in modern Anglo-American Islamic studies, H. A. R. Gibb, preferred to call himself an Orientalist rather than an Arabist. Gibb himself, classicist that he was, could use the ugly neologism “area study” for Orientalism as a way of showing that area studies and Orientalism after all were interchangeable geographical titles. But this, I think, ingenuously belies a much more interesting relationship between knowledge and geography than is really the case. I should like to consider that relationship briefly.

Despite the distraction of a great many vague desires, impulses, and images, the mind seems persistently to formulate what Lévi-Strauss has called a logic

of the concrete. A primitive tribe, for example, assigns a definite place, function and significance to every leafy species in its immediate environment; many of these herbs and flowers have no practical use; but the point Lévi-Strauss makes is that mind requires order, and order is achieved by discriminating and taking note of everything, placing everything of which the mind is aware in a secure, re-findable place, therefore giving things some role to play in the economy of objects and identities that make up an environment. This kind of rudimentary classification has a logic to it, but the rules of the logic by which a green fern in one society is a symbol of grace and in another is considered maleficent are neither predictably rational nor universal. There is always a measure of the purely arbitrary in the way the distinctions between things are seen. And with these distinctions go values whose history, if one could unearth it completely, would probably show the same measure of arbitrariness. This is evident enough in the case of fashion. Why do wigs, lace collars and high buckled shoes appear, then disappear, over a period of decades? Part of the answer has to do with utility, and part with the inherent beauty of the fashion. But if we agree that all things in history, like history itself, are made by men, then we will appreciate how possible it is for objects, or places, or times, to be assigned roles and given meanings that acquire objective validity only *after* the assignments are made. This is especially true of relatively uncommon things, like foreigners, mutants, or “abnormal” behavior.

Obviously, some distinctive objects are made by the mind, and these objects, while appearing to exist objectively, have only a fictional reality. A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings on the one hand, and on the other, a land beyond theirs which they call “the land of the barbarians.” In other words, this universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar space which is “ours” and an unfamiliar space beyond “ours,” which is “theirs,” is a way of making geographical distinctions that *can be* entirely arbitrary. I use the word arbitrary here because imaginative geography of the “our land/ barbarian land” variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is enough for “us” to set up these boundaries in our own minds; “they” become “they” accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality is designated as different from “ours.” To a certain extent modern and primitive societies seem thus to derive a sense of their identities negatively. A fifth-century Athenian was very

likely to feel himself in a negative sense to be a non-barbarian as much as in a positive sense he felt himself to be Athenian. The geographic boundaries I have been discussing accompany the social, ethnic, and cultural ones in expected ways. Yet very often the sense in which someone feels himself to be not-foreign is based on a very unrigorous idea of what is “out there,” beyond one’s own territory. All kinds of suppositions, associations, fictions appear to crowd the unfamiliar and strange space outside one’s place. . . .

Almost from earliest times in Europe the Orient was something more than what was empirically known about it. At least until the early eighteenth century, as R. W. Southern has so elegantly shown, European understanding of one kind of Oriental culture, the Islamic, was ignorant, but complex. For certain associations—not quite ignorant, not quite informed—always seem to have gathered around the notion of an Orient. . . .

Consider how the Orient, and in particular the near Orient, which is the main focus of this essay, became known in the West, since antiquity, as its great complementary opposite. There were the Bible and the rise of Christianity; there were travellers like Marco Polo who charted the trade routes and patterned a regulated system of commercial exchange, and after him Ludovico and Pietro della Valle; there were fabulists like Mandeville; there were the redoubtable conquering Eastern movements, principally Islam of course; there were the militant pilgrims, chiefly the Crusades. Altogether an internally structured archive is built up from the literature that belongs to these experiences. Out of this comes a restricted number of typical encapsulations: the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemical confrontation. These are the lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape the language, perception, and form of the encounter between East and West. What gives the immense number of encounters some unity, however, is the vacillation I was speaking about earlier. Something patently foreign and distant acquires, for one reason or another, a status more rather than less familiar. One tends to stop judging things either as completely novel or as completely well-known; a new median category emerges, a category that allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing. In essence such a category is not only a way of receiving new information, it is also a method for controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things. If, for example, the mind must suddenly deal with what it takes to be a radically new

form of life—as Islam appeared to Europe in the early Middle Ages—the response on the whole is conservative and defensive. Islam is judged to be a fraudulent new version of some previous experience, in this case Christianity. The threat is muted, familiar values impose themselves, and in the end the mind reduces the pressure upon it by accommodating things to itself as either “original” or “repetitious.” Islam thereafter is “handled.” Its novelty and its suggestiveness are brought under control so that relatively nuanced discriminations, that would have been impossible to make had the raw novelty of Islam been left unattended, are now made. The Orient at large, therefore, vacillates between the West’s familiarity of contempt and its shivers of novel delight (or fear).

There is nothing especially controversial or reprehensible about such domestications of the exotic; they take place between all cultures certainly, and between all men. My point, however, is to emphasize the truth that the Orientalist, as much as any one in the European West who thought about or experienced the Orient, performed the kind of mental operation I have been discussing. But what is more important still is the limited vocabulary and imagery which imposes itself as a consequence. The reception of Islam in the West is a perfect case in point, and has been admirably studied by Norman Daniel. One constraint acting upon Christian thinkers who tried to understand Islam was an analogical one; since Christ is the basis of Christian faith, it was assumed—quite incorrectly—that Mohammed was to Islam as Christ was to Christianity. Hence, among other results, the polemic name *Mohammedanism* given to Islam, and the automatic epithet “imposter” applied to Mohammed. Out of such and many other misconceptions, as Daniel remarks, “there formed a circle which was never broken by imaginative exteriorisation. . . . The Christian concept of Islam was integral and self-sufficient.” Islam became an *image*—the word is Daniel’s but it seems to have remarkable implications for Orientalism in general—whose function was not so much to represent Islam as it was in itself, as to represent Islam *for* the medieval Christian.

The invariable tendency to neglect what the Qur’an meant, or what Muslims thought it meant, or what Muslims thought or did in any given circumstances, necessarily implies that Qur’anic and other Islamic doctrine was presented in a form that would convince Christians; and more and more extravagant forms would stand a chance of acceptance as the distance of the writers and public from the Islamic border increased.

It was with very great reluctance that what Muslims said Muslims believed was accepted as what they did believe. There was a Christian picture in which the details (even under the pressure of facts) were abandoned as little as possible, and in which the general outline was never abandoned. There were shades of difference, but only with a common framework. All the corrections that were made in the interests of an increasing accuracy were only a defence of what had newly been realised to be vulnerable, a shoring up of a weakened structure. Christian opinion was an erection which could not be demolished, even to be rebuilt.

This rigorous Christian picture of Islam was intensified in innumerable ways, including—during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance—a large variety of poetry, learned controversy, and popular superstition. By this time the Near Orient had been all but included in the common world-picture of Latin Christianity. . . . By the middle of the fifteenth century, as R. W. Southern has brilliantly shown, it became apparent to serious European thinkers “that something would have to be done about Islam,” which had turned the situation around somewhat by itself having militarily arrived in eastern Europe. Southern recounts a dramatic episode between 1450 and 1460 when four learned men, John of Segovia, Nicholas of Cusa, Jean Germain, and Aeneas Silvius (Pius II), attempted between them to deal with Islam through *contraferentia*, or “conference.” The idea was John of Segovia’s: it was to have been a staged conference with Islam with Christians attempting the wholesale conversion of Muslims. “He saw the conference as an instrument with a political as well as a strictly religious function, and in words which will strike a chord in modern breasts he exclaimed that even if it were to last ten years it would be less expensive and less damaging than war.” There was no agreement between the four men, but the episode is crucial for having been a fairly sophisticated attempt—part of a general European attempt from Bede to Luther—to put a representative Orient in front of Europe, to *stage* the Orient and Europe together in some coherent way, the idea being for Christians to make it clear to Muslims that Islam was just a misguided version of Christianity. Southern concludes,

Most conspicuous to us is the inability of any of these systems of thought [European Christian] to provide a fully satisfying explanation of the phenomenon they had set out to explain [Islam]—still less to influence the course of practical events in a decisive way. At a practical level, events never turned out either so well or

so ill as the most intelligent observers predicted; and it is perhaps worth noticing that they never turned out better than when the best judges confidently expected a happy ending. Was there any progress [in Christian knowledge of Islam]? I must express my conviction that there was. Even if the solution of the problem remained obstinately hidden from sight, the statement of the problem became more complex, more rational, and more related to experience. . . . The scholars who labored at the problem of Islam in the Middle Ages failed to find the solution they sought and desired; but they developed habits of mind and powers of comprehension which, in other men and in other fields, may yet deserve success.

The best part of Southern's analysis, here and elsewhere in his brief history of Western views of Islam, is how he takes it as not surprising that it is finally Western ignorance that becomes more refined and complex, not some body of positive Western knowledge which increases in size and accuracy. For fictions have their own logic, and their own dialectic of growth or decline. Thus, onto the character of Mohammed in the Middle Ages was heaped a number of attributes, as Daniel has shown, that corresponded to the "character of the [twelfth century] prophets of the 'Free Spirit' who did actually arise in Europe, and claim credence and collect followers." Similarly, since Mohammed was viewed as the disseminator of a false Revelation, he became as well the epitome of lechery, debauchery, sodomy, and a whole battery of assorted treacheries, all of which derived "logically" from his doctrinal impostures. Thus the Orient acquired representatives, so to speak, and representations—each one more concrete, more internally congruent with some Western exigency, than the ones that preceded it. It is as if, having once settled on the Orient as a locale suitable for incarnating the infinite in a finite shape, Europe could not stop the practice; the Orient and the Oriental, Arab, Islamic, Indian, Chinese or whatever, become repetitious pseudo-incarnations of some great Original (Christ, Europe, the West) that they were supposed to be imitating. Only the source of these rather narcissistic Western ideas about the Orient changed in time, not their character. Thus it was commonly believed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that Arabia was, as Daniel says, "on the fringe of the Christian world, a natural asylum for heretical outlaws" and that Mohammed was a cunning

apostate, whereas in the twentieth century an Orientalist scholar, an erudite man, has pointed out how Islam is really no more than second-order Arian heresy.ⁱⁱ

Our initial description of Orientalism as a learned field now acquires a new concreteness. A field is often an enclosed space. The idea of representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. An Orientalist is but the particular specialist of a knowledge for which Europe at large is responsible, in the way that an audience is historically and culturally responsible for (and responsive to) dramas technically put together by the dramatist (the Orientalist). In the depths of this Oriental stage stands a prodigious cultural repertoire: the Sphinx, Cleopatra, Eden, Troy, Sodom and Gomorrah, Astarte, Isis and Osiris, Sheba, Babylon, the Geni, the Magi, Nineveh, Prester John, Mahomet, and dozens more—settings, in some cases names only, half-imagined, half-known, monsters, devils, heroes, terrors, pleasures, desires. The European imagination was nourished extensively from this repertoire: between the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century such major authors as Ariosto, Chaucer, Milton, Marlowe, Tasso, Shakespeare, Cervantes, the authors of the *Chanson de Roland*, and the *Poema del Cid* drew on the Orient's riches for their productions, in ways that sharpened the outlines of imagery, ideas, and figures populating it. In addition a great deal of what was considered learned Orientalist scholarship in Europe pressed ideological myths into service, even as knowledge seemed genuinely to be advancing. . . .

The Orientalist stage, as I have been calling it, becomes a system of moral and epistemological rigor. As a discipline representing institutionalized Western knowledge of the Orient, Orientalism thus comes to exert a three-way force, on the Orient, on the Orientalist, and on the Western "consumer" of Orientalism. It would be wrong, I think, to underestimate the strength of the three-way relationship thus established. For the Orient ("out there" towards the East) is corrected, even penalized, for lying outside the boundaries of European society, "our" world; the Orient is thus *Orientalized*, a process that not only marks the Orient as the province

ⁱⁱD. B. MacDonald, "Whither Islam," *Muslim World*, XXIII (January 1933), 2.

of the Orientalist, but also forces the uninitiated Western reader to accept Orientalist codifications. . . as the *true* Orient. Truth, in short, becomes a function of learned judgment, not of the material itself which in time seems to owe even its existence to the Orientalist. . . .

This whole didactic process is neither difficult to understand nor difficult to explain. One ought to remember that all cultures impose corrections upon raw reality, changing it from free-floating objects into units of knowledge. The problem is not that conversion takes place. It is perfectly natural for the human mind to resist the assault on it of untreated strangeness, so that cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures, receiving them not as they are but as, for the benefit of the receiver, they ought to be. To the Westerner, however, the Oriental was always *like* some aspect of the West. . . . Yet the Orientalist makes it his work to be always converting the Orient from something into something else: he does this for himself, for the sake of his culture, in some cases for what he believes is the sake of the Oriental. As I have been suggesting, this process of conversion is a disciplined one—it is taught, it has its own societies, periodicals, traditions, vocabulary, rhetoric, all in basic ways connected to and supplied by the prevailing cultural and political norms of the West. And, as I shall demonstrate, it tends to become more, rather than less, total in what it tries to do, so much so that as one surveys Orientalism in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries the over-riding impression is of Orientalism's insensitive schematization of the entire Orient. . . .

Imaginative geography, . . . legitimates a vocabulary, a universe of representative discourse peculiar to the discussion and understanding of Islam and of the Orient. What this discourse considers to be a fact, that Mohammed is an imposter, for example, is a component of the discourse, a statement which the discourse compels one to make whenever the name Mohammed occurs. Underlying all the different units of Orientalist discourse—by which I mean simply the vocabulary employed whenever the Orient is spoken or written about—is a set of representative figures, or tropes. These figures are to the actual Orient, or Islam which is my main concern here, as stylized costumes are to characters in a play; they are like, for example, the cross that Everyman will carry, or the Harlequin costume worn by Pierrot in a *comedia dell'arte* play, and so forth. In other words we need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate as

because it is not even trying to be accurate. What it is trying to do. . . is at one and the same time characterize the Orient as alien and incorporate it schematically on a theatrical stage whose audience, manager, and actors are *for* Europe, and only for Europe. Hence the vacillation between the familiar and the alien: Mohammed is always the imposter (familiar: because he pretends to be like the Jesus we know) and always the Oriental (alien: because although he is in some ways “like” Jesus he is after all not like him).

Rather than listing all the figures of speech associated with the Orient—its strangeness, its exotic sensuousness, etc.—we can generalize about them as they were handed down through the Renaissance. They are all declarative and self-evident; the tense they employ is the timeless eternal; they convey an impression of repetition and strength; they are always symmetrical to, and yet opposed and inferior to, a European equivalent, which is sometimes specified, sometimes not. For all these functions it is frequently enough to use the simple copula “is.” Thus, Mohammed *is* an imposter, the very phrase canonized in d’Herbelot’s *Bibliothèque*, and dramatized in a sense by Dante. No background need be given; the evidence necessary to convict Mohammed is contained in the “is.” One does not qualify the phrase, neither does it seem necessary to say that Mohammed *was* an imposter, nor need one consider for a moment that it may not be necessary to repeat the statement. It *is* repeated, he *is* an imposter, and each time one says it, he becomes more of an imposter and the author of the statement gains a little more authority in having declared it. Thus, Humphrey Prideaux’s famous seventeenth-century biography of Mohammed is entitled *The True Nature of Imposture*. Finally, such categories as imposter (or Oriental for that matter) imply, indeed, require an opposite, which is neither fraudulently something else nor endlessly in need of explicit identification. And that opposite is “Occidental” or in Mohammed’s case, Jesus.

Philosophically, then, the kind of language, thought, and vision that I have been calling Orientalism very generally is a form of radical realism; anyone employing Orientalism, which is the habit for dealing with questions, objects, qualities and regions deemed Oriental, will designate, point to, fix what he is talking or thinking about, with a word or phrase, which then is considered either to have acquired, or more simply to be, reality. Rhetorically speaking, Orientalism is absolutely anatomical and enumerative: to use its vocabulary is to engage in the particularizing and dividing of things Oriental into

manageable parts. Psychologically, Orientalism is a form of paranoia, knowledge of another kind, say, from ordinary historical knowledge. These are a few of the results, I think, of imaginative geography and of the dramatic boundaries it draws. There are some specifically modern transmutations of these Orientalized results, however, to which I must now turn.

II. PROJECTS

It is necessary to examine the more flamboyant operational successes of Orientalism if only to judge how totally opposite to the truth was the grandly menacing idea expressed by Michelet, that “the Orient advances, invincible, fatal to the gods of light by the charm of its dreams, by the magic of its *chiaroscuro*.” Cultural, material, and intellectual relations between Europe and the Orient have gone through innumerable phases, even though the line between East and West has made a certain constant impression upon Europe. Yet in general it was the West that moved upon the East, not vice versa. Orientalism is the generic term that I have been employing to describe the Western approach to the Orient; Orientalism is the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice. But in addition I have been using the word “Orientalism” to designate that collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies East of the dividing line. These two aspects of Orientalism are not incongruent, since by use of them Europe could advance securely and unmetaphorically upon the Orient. Here I should like principally to consider material evidence of this advance.

Islam excepted, the Orient for Europe was until the nineteenth century a domain with a continuous history of unchallenged Western dominance. This is patently true of the British experience in India, the Portuguese experience in the East Indies, China, and Japan, and the French and Italian experiences in miscellaneous regions of the Orient. There were occasional instances of native intransigence to disturb the idyll, as when in 1638–39 a group of Japanese Christians expelled the Portuguese. By and large, however, only the Arab and Islamic Orient presented Europe with an unresolved challenge on the political, intellectual, and, for a time, economic levels. For much of its history, then, Orientalism carries within it the stamp of a problematic European attitude towards

Islam, and it is this acutely sensitive aspect of Orientalism around which my interest in this study turns.

Doubtless Islam was a real provocation in many ways. It lay uneasily close to Christianity, geographically and culturally. It drew on the Judeo-Hellenic traditions, it borrowed creatively from Christianity, it could boast of unrivalled military and political successes. Nor was this all. The Islamic sacred lands are adjacent to and even overlap the Biblical lands. Moreover, the heart of the Islamic domain has always been the region of the Orient closest to Europe. Arabic and Hebrew are Semitic languages and together they dispose and re-dispose of material that is vitally important to Christianity. From the end of the seventh century until the battle of Lepanto in 1571 Islam, in either its Arab, Ottoman or North African and Spanish forms, dominated or effectively threatened European Christianity. That Islam out-stripped Rome cannot have been overlooked by any European past or present, and even Gibbon was no exception, as is evident in the following passage from the *Decline and Fall*:

In the victorious days of the Roman republic it had been the aim of the senate to confine their councils and legions to a single war, and completely to suppress a first enemy before they provoked the hostilities of a second. These timid maxims of policy were disdained by the magnanimity or enthusiasm of the Arabian caliphs. With the same vigour and success they invaded the successors of Augustus and Artaxerxes; and the rival monarchies at the same instant became the prey of an enemy whom they had so long been accustomed to despise. In the ten years of the administration of Omar, the Saracens reduced to his obedience thirty-six thousand cities or castles, destroyed four thousand churches or temples of the unbelievers, and edified fourteen hundred moschs for the exercise of the religion of Mohammed. One hundred years after his flight from Mecca the arms and reign of his successors extended from India to the Atlantic Ocean, over the various and distant provinces. . . .

When the term Orient was not simply a synonym for the Asiatic East taken as a whole, and taken as generally denoting the distant and exotic, it was most rigorously understood as applying to the Islamic Orient. This “militant” Orient came to stand for what Henri Baudet has called “the Asiatic tidal wave.” Certainly this is the case in Europe through the middle of the eighteenth century, the point at which repositories of “Oriental” knowledge like d’Herbelot’s *Bibliothèque Orientale* stop meaning primarily Islam, the Arabs, or the Ottomans. Until that

time cultural memory gave understandable prominence to such relatively distant events as the fall of Constantinople, the Crusades, and the conquest of Sicily and Spain, but if these signified the menacing Orient they did not at the same time efface what remained of Asia. . . .

Access to Indian (Oriental) riches had always to be made by first crossing the Islamic provinces and by withstanding the dangerous effect of Islam as a system of quasi-Arian belief. And at least for the largest part of the eighteenth century, Britain and France were successful. The Ottoman Empire had long since settled into a (for Europe) comfortable senescence, to be inscribed in the nineteenth century as the “Eastern Question.” Britain and France fought each other in India between 1744 and 1748 and again between 1756 and 1763 until, in 1769, the British emerged in practical economic and political control of the sub-continent. What was more inevitable than that Napoleon should choose to harass Britain’s Oriental empire by first intercepting its Islamic throughway, Egypt? . . .

[F]or Napoleon, Egypt was a project that acquired reality in his mind, and later in his preparations for its conquest, by experiences that belong to the realm of ideas and myths culled from texts, not from empirical reality. His plans for Egypt therefore became the first in a long series of European encounters with the Orient in which the Orientalist’s special expertise was put directly to functional colonial use, for at the crucial instant when an Orientalist had to decide whether his loyalties and sympathies lay either with the Orient or with the conquering West he always chose the latter, from Napoleon’s time on. As for the Emperor himself, he only saw the Orient as it had been encoded first by classical texts and then by Orientalist experts whose vision based on classical texts seemed a useful substitute for any actual encounter with the real Orient.

Napoleon’s . . . idea was to build a sort of living archive for the Expedition, in the form of studies conducted on all topics by the members of the Institut d’Egypte, which he founded. What is perhaps less well known is Napoleon’s prior reliance upon the work of the Comte de Volney, a French traveller whose *Voyage en Egypte et en Syrie* appeared in two volumes in 1787. . . . Volney evidently considered himself as a scientist, whose job it was always to record the “état” of something he saw. The climax of the *Voyage* occurs in the second volume, the account of the religious aspect of Islam. Volney’s views about Islam were canonically hostile to it as a religion and as a system of political

institutions. Nevertheless, Napoleon found this and Volney’s *Considérations sur la guerre actuel de Turcs* (1788) of particular importance. For Volney, after all, was a canny Frenchman, and—like Chateaubriand and Lamartine a quarter century after him—eyed the Near Orient as a likely place for the realization of French colonial ambition. What Napoleon profited from in Volney was the enumeration, in ascending order of difficulty, of the obstacles to be faced in the Orient by any French expeditionary force.

Napoleon refers explicitly to Volney in his reflections on the Egyptian expedition, the *Campagnes d’Egypte et de Syrie 1798–1799: Memoires pour servir à l’histoire de Napoleon*, which were dictated by Bonaparte to General Bertrand at Saint-Helena. Volney, he said, considered that there were three barriers to French hegemony in the Orient and that any French force would therefore have to fight three wars. One against England, a second against the Ottoman Porte, and the most difficult against the Muslims. Volney’s assessment was both shrewd and hard to fault since it was clear to Napoleon, as it would be to anyone who read Volney, that the *Voyage* and the *Considérations* were in effect texts to be used by any European wishing to win in the Orient. Volney’s work comprised a handbook for attenuating the human shock a European might feel as he directly experienced the Orient: read the books, seems to have been Volney’s thesis, and far from being disoriented by the Orient, you will subject it to you.

Napoleon took Volney almost literally, but in a characteristically subtle way. From the first moment that the Armée d’Egypte appeared on the Egyptian horizon, every effort was made to convince the Muslims that “nous sommes les vrais musulmans,” as Bonaparte’s Proclamation of July 2, 1798, put it to the people of Alexandria. Equipped with a team of Orientalists (and on board a flagship called *Orient*), Napoleon used Egyptian enmity to the Mamelukes and appeals to the revolutionary idea of equal opportunity for all in order to wage a uniquely benign and selective war against Islam. What impressed the first Arab chronicler of the Expedition, ‘Abd-al-rahman al-Jabarti, more than anything else was Napoleon’s use of scholars to manage his contacts with the natives, that and the impact of watching a modern European intellectual establishment at close quarters. Instead of seeming to fight Islam, Napoleon tried everywhere to prove that he was fighting *for* Islam. Everything he said was translated into Koranic Arabic, and the French Army was urged by its command to remember the Islamic sensibility.

When it became obvious to Napoleon that his force was too small to impose itself on the Egyptians, he then tried to make the local Imams, Cadis, Muftis and Ulema interpret the Koran in favor of the Grande Armée. To this end, then, the sixty ulemas who taught at the Azhar were invited to Napoleon's quarters, given full military honors, and then allowed to be flattered by Napoleon's admiration for Islam and Mohammed, and by his obvious veneration for the Koran, with which he seemed perfectly familiar. This worked, and soon the population of Cairo seemed to lose its distrust of the occupiers.ⁱⁱⁱ Napoleon later gave his deputy Kléber strict instructions after he left always to administer Egypt through the Orientalists and the Islamic religious leaders whom they could win over. Any other politics was too expensive and foolish. . . .

Such a triumph could only have been prepared *before* a military expedition, perhaps only by someone who had no prior experience of the Orient except what books and scholars provided. The idea of taking along a full-scale academy is very much an aspect of this textual attitude to the Orient. And this attitude in turn was bolstered by specific Revolutionary decrees (particularly the one of 10 Germinal An III, March 30, 1793, establishing an *École publique* in the Bibliothèque Nationale to teach Arabic, Turkish, and Persian), whose object was the rationalist goal of dispelling mystery and institutionalizing even the most recondite knowledge: Thus, many of Napoleon's Orientalist translators were students of Sylvestre de Sacy who, beginning in June of 1796, was the first and only teacher of Arabic at the *École publique des langues orientales*. Later, in fact, Sacy became the teacher of nearly every major Orientalist in Europe, where his students dominated the field for about three quarters of a century. Many of them were politically useful, in the way that several were to Napoleon in Egypt.

But dealings with the Muslims were only a part of Napoleon's project to dominate Egypt. The other part was to render it completely open, to make it totally accessible to European scrutiny. From being a land of obscurity and a part of the Orient hitherto known at second hand through the exploits of earlier travelers, scholars, and conquerors, Egypt was to become a department of French learning. Here too the textual and schematic attitudes are evident. The Institut, with its teams of chemists, historians, biologists, archeologists,

surgeons, antiquarians, was the learned division of the Army. Its job was no less aggressive—to put Egypt into modern French; and, unlike the Abbé le Mascrier's 1735 *Déscription de l'Égypte*, Napoleon's descriptive translation was to be a universal undertaking. Almost from the first moments of the occupation Napoleon saw to it that the Institut began its meetings, its experiments, its fact-finding mission, as we would call it today. Most important, everything said, seen, studied, was to be recorded in that great collective appropriation of one country by another, the *Déscription de l'Égypte*, published in 23 enormous volumes between 1809 and 1828.

The *Déscription's* uniqueness is not only its size and the intelligence of its contributors but its attitude to its subject matter, and it is this attitude that makes it of great interest for the study of modern Orientalist projects. . . .

Because Egypt is saturated with meaning for the arts, sciences, and government, it is to be the stage on which actions of world-historical importance will take place. By taking Egypt, then, a modern power would naturally demonstrate its strength and justify history; Egypt's own destiny is to be annexed, to Europe preferably. In addition, this power would enter a history stocked with figures no less great than Homer, Alexander, Caesar, Plato, Solon, and Pythagoras, who graced the Orient with their presence. The Orient, in short, existed as a set of values attached not to its modern realities but to a series of valorized contacts it had had with a distant European past. This is an example of the textual, schematic attitude I have been referring to. . . .

To restore a region from its present barbarism to its former classical greatness; to instruct (for its own benefit) the Orient in the ways of the modern West; to subordinate or underplay military intervention in order to aggrandize the project of acquiring priceless knowledge in the process of political domination of the Orient; to formulate the Orient, to give it shape, identity, definition with full recognition of its place in memory, its importance to imperial strategy, and its "natural" role as an appendage of Europe; to dignify all the knowledge collected during colonial occupation with the title "contribution to modern learning" when the natives had neither been consulted nor treated as anything except pre-texts for a text, whose usefulness is not to the natives; to feel oneself, as a European, in command, almost at will, of Oriental history, time, and geography; to institute new areas of specialization; to establish new

ⁱⁱⁱYet Napoleon was not just being cynical. It is reported of him that he discussed Voltaire's *Mahomet* with Goethe and defended Islam.

disciplines; to divide, deploy, schematize, tabulate, index, and record everything in sight (and out of sight); to make out of every observable detail a generalization and out of every generalization an immutable law about the Oriental nature, temperament, mentality, custom, or type; and, above all, to transmute living reality into the stuff of texts, to possess (or think one possesses) actuality mainly because as a European nothing in the Orient seems to resist one's powers: these are the features of Orientalist projection fully realized in the *Déscription de l'Égypte*, itself enabled and reinforced by Napoleon's wholly Orientalist engulfment of Egypt by the instruments of Western knowledge and power. . . .

The *Déscription* thereby displaces Egyptian or Oriental history as a record possessing its own coherence, identity, and sense. Instead, history as recorded in the *Déscription* supplants Egyptian or Oriental history by identifying itself directly and immediately with world history, a euphemism for European history. To save an event from oblivion is in the Orientalist's mind the equivalent of turning the Orient into a theater for his representations of the Orient. Moreover, the sheer power of having described the Orient in modern Occidental terms lifts the Orient from the realm of silent obscurity where it has lain neglected (except for the inchoate murmurings of a vast but undefined sense of its own past) into the clarity of modern European science. . . .

Yet the military failure of Napoleon's occupation of Egypt did not destroy the fertility of its over-all projections for Egypt or the rest of the Orient. Quite literally,

the occupation gave birth to the entire modern experience of the Orient as interpreted from within the universe of discourse founded by Napoleon in Egypt, whose agencies of domination and dissemination included the Institut and the *Déscription*. The idea, as it has been characterized by Charles-Roux, was that Egypt, "restored to prosperity, regenerated by wise and enlightened administration . . . would shed its civilizing rays upon all its Oriental neighbors." True, the other European powers would seek to compete in this mission, none more so than England. But what would also happen as a continuing legacy of the common Occidental mission to the Orient—despite intra-European squabbling, indecent competition, and outright war—would be the creation of new projects, new visions, new enterprises combining additional parts of the old Orient with the conquering European spirit. After Napoleon the very language of Orientalism changes radically. Its descriptive realism is upgraded and becomes not merely a style of representation, but a language, indeed a means of *creation*. . . . [T]he Orient is reconstructed, reassembled, indeed, *born* out of the Orientalists' efforts. The *Déscription* became the archetype of all further efforts to bring the Orient closer to Europe, thereafter to absorb it entirely and cancel, or at least subdue and reduce, its strangeness and, in the case of Islam, its hostility. For where the Islamic Orient was concerned, Islam would henceforth appear as a category denoting the Orientalists' power and not the Islamic people as humans nor their history as history. . . .

Discussion Questions

1. Compare and contrast critical theories/the Frankfurt School (see chapter 10), and poststructuralism, paying particular attention to the themes of standardization, rationality, power, and the impact of discourse in contemporary social life. How are their respective theoretical orientations reflected in their similarities and differences?

2. Discuss Foucault's genealogy of punishment with an emphasis on contemporary society. Do you think that the continued existence of torture in contemporary societies (e.g., the Abu Ghraib scandal) undermines Foucault's historical trajectory of discipline and punishment? Or do you think that the contemporary prohibitions against torture and the moral attitude toward it confirm his position? To what extent do you think that Foucault's notion of a disciplinary society rings true? Using concrete examples, discuss the effect of surveillance in your own life and in contemporary society as a whole.

3. Bourdieu notes how class relations shape the habitus such that "the dominated perceive the dominant through the categories that the relation of domination has produced and which are thus identical to the interests of the dominant" (Bourdieu 1994/1998:121). In addition to economic classes,

how might relations of domination based on gender or race shape the categories of perception that induce the dominated to reproduce their own subordinate position?

4. In his discussion of "Orientalism," Said examines how academic knowledge and discourse, as well as popular vocabularies and images, legitimize colonial rule and the subjugation of the colonized. While he focuses on events occurring roughly a century ago, do you think similar processes of Orientalism are taking place today? Do magazines, books, television shows, and movies "orientalize" non-Westerners, or do they typically offer unbiased portrayals? While journalists may claim to be objective in their reporting, does the news orientalize non-Western populations? Provide examples to support your view.

5. Foucault, Bourdieu and Said all emphasize academic knowledge and discourse and their relation to power. What are the theoretical similarities and differences in each approach?

6. Compare and contrast phenomenology (chapter 13) and poststructuralism as to the properties and dynamics of knowledge and language. Use concrete examples to explain the strengths of each approach.