

SOCIAL SPACE AND PHYSICAL SPACE: PIERRE BOURDIEU'S
FIELD THEORY AS A MODEL FOR THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Title: Social Space and Physical Space: Pierre Bourdieu's Field Theory as a Model for the
Social Dynamics of the Built Environment

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The notion of social space or field is a central but under-studied category in the philosopher and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice. The present study of social space is introduced with a contextual account of spatial models in the social sciences prior to Bourdieu that highlights the aptitude for relational spatial models to capture complex social phenomena. It then demonstrates how social space, as an empirically robust and epistemologically intuitive social-scientific model, facilitates the objective representation as well as the subjective understanding of social phenomena. The central thesis is that Bourdieu's reflexive sociology operates in large part by a multiform engagement with the (intuitive or conceptual, but always constructed) apprehension of space, an interpretation that suggests the integration of both physical and social spaces in a unified explanatory framework. A dialectical understanding of the relations between social space and physical space, drawn from the logic of Bourdieu's social theory, is argued for. This philosophical extension of Bourdieu's work is then applied to phenomena in which the reproduction of structures in social space is carried out in and through physical space, and vice versa. Two case studies, the first of office tower districts

in contemporary cities and the second of deconstructionist architecture, reveal interactions between social organization and the built environment. The case studies, taken together, also demonstrate the virtue, inherent to a Bourdieuan approach, of explaining both the trends of relative stability and the instances of radical change that are observed in social phenomena.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COPYRIGHT PAGE.....	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: SPATIAL MODELS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES TOWARD BOURDIEU	1
CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL TOPOLOGY	58
CHAPTER 3: THE STRUCTURES OF PHYSICAL SPACE	109
CHAPTER 4: THE DIALECTIC OF SOCIAL SPACE AND PHYSICAL SPACE	164
CHAPTER 5: CREATIVE DESTRUCTION IN THE URBAN CORE.....	220
CHAPTER 6: DECONSTRUCTIONIST ARCHITECTURE AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION	262
CONCLUSION	305
BIBLIOGRAPHY	309

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: SPATIAL THOUGHT IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

TOWARD BOURDIEU

Philosophical Preliminaries

I begin by tracing several of the philosophical and social-scientific influences on Bourdieu's theory of social space. A good number of the relevant figures influenced one another as well as Bourdieu and together constitute a spatial tradition in social theory. This tradition, along with a number of influences that cannot be said to belong to it, is investigated with an eye to Bourdieu's appropriation or adaptation of its ideas. Thematically, the scientific legitimacy of spatial schemata is seen to vary in accordance with their use by various theorists. The extremes between which these schemata vary are the merely illustrative status of a metaphor and the fully scientific status of a model. There is no evidence of a regular increase in the legitimacy of spatial schemata in social theory leading up to Bourdieu, but the tradition can accurately be characterized as taking a more or less hesitant attitude towards them. Bourdieu's fully ontologized social field theory represents the complete rejection of this hesitation. Most of the thinkers under discussion here are social scientists dating from the early or middle parts of the twentieth century. To put the matter in epistemological perspective, however, it is helpful to begin by touching base with Kant and Nietzsche.

It was Kant who first surmised that space (as well as time) is an available, and indeed an actual, framework for all knowledge and experience. Space functions,

according to Kant, as an organon of thought. It is for this reason that space is so useful as an instrument of scientific theory. As early as 1768 Kant was convinced that space played a fundamental role as a condition for the possibility, not only of objects in space, but also the experience and knowledge we have of them. This conviction holds throughout Kant's corpus, although its significance changes greatly following his transcendental turn. In his essay "On the First Ground of the Distinction of Regions in Space," Kant presents the claim "*that absolute space has a reality of its own, independent of the existence of all matter, and indeed as the first ground of the possibility of the compositeness of matter.*"¹ The claim that space has a subject-independent ontological status runs counter to his mature view. Space nonetheless functions even here as a necessary framework for our apprehension of the world. For the early Kant, our intuitions of space are grounded in the oppositional symmetries and sense of orthogonality that is immediately evident to us from the structure of our bodies:

In physical space, on account of its three dimensions, we can conceive three planes which intersect one another at right angles. Since through the senses we know what is outside us only in so far as it stands in relation to ourselves, it is not surprising that we find in the relation of these intersecting planes to our body the first ground from which to derive the concept of regions in space.²

The relation that Kant refers to is expressed through the oppositional structure of our bodies between above and below, right and left, and before and behind. This does not mean that space itself is a purely subjective condition of possibility, however, because our bodies are essentially physical objects and the spatial evidence they manifest implies

¹ Kant, "Inaugural Dissertation and Early Writings on Space," 20. Italics original.

² Ibid., 21-22.

the objective existence of physical space. Kant's point here is instead that our spatial *knowledge* is grounded in our bodies, not that the existence of space depends on or originates in us. Our bodies, which through their structure provide us with intuitions of space, do accomplish a great deal from an epistemological point of view:

Even our judgments about the cosmic regions are subordinated to the concept we have of regions in general, in so far as they are determined in relation to the sides of the body. All other relations that we may recognize, in heaven and on earth, independently of this fundamental conception, are only positions of objects relatively to one another. However well I know the order of the cardinal points, I can determine regions according to that order only in so far as I know towards which hand this order proceeds; and the most complete chart of the heavens, however perfectly I might carry the plan in my mind, would not teach me, from a known region, North say, on which side to look for sunrise, unless, in addition to the positions of the stars in relation to one another, this region were also determined through the position of the plan relatively to my hands. Similarly, our geographical knowledge, and even our commonest knowledge of the position of places, would be of no aid to us if we could not, by reference to the sides of our bodies, assign to regions the things so ordered and the whole system of mutually relative positions.³

The significance of this insight is monumental for the theory of knowledge. All spatial representations, whether in the various sciences or in everyday life, depend on the intuition of space, which we receive from space itself via the medium of our bodies.

Just two years later, Kant retracted his position on the objective reality of absolute space, defending in his inaugural *Dissertation on the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World* (1770) an early version of his critical philosophy, according to which space and time are entirely *subjective* conditions for the possibility of experience and knowledge. In that work, Kant defends the view that space is, “not something objective and real,” but rather “subjective and ideal,”⁴ a “pure intuition,” grounded in the

³ Ibid., 22-23.

⁴ Ibid., 61.

subject itself. Despite this profound metaphysical shift, space maintains its ubiquitous role in organizing experience and knowledge. In his mature view, as expressed in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, space and time, along with the concepts of the understanding, jointly constitute the conditions for the possibility of knowledge and experience, and are therefore present in every occurrence of sensation and cognition. They serve as the necessary background against which it is possible for experience and knowledge to appear. Although it is not usually presented as a significant theoretical move for Kant's philosophy, the elevation of space to a primary position in the account of scientific knowledge is of the utmost significance, as it gave ontologically robust theoretical expression to an idea that ordinarily remains metaphorical, namely that space is, along with time, the ubiquitous framework of all human apprehension.

Kant's claims as to the necessity and universality of the conditions for knowledge and experience later came under attack. He imposed too rigid an epistemic framework to account for the historical changes that systems of knowledge manifestly undergo. Nietzsche, for example, argued that rather than being ontologically grounded at all, knowledge is *essentially* metaphorical. Gaining a new piece of knowledge is simply to explain the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar.⁵ New beliefs are not discovered and assimilated: rather, belief systems are creatively stretched to accommodate nonconforming pieces of evidence. Going beyond Nietzsche, I suggest that metaphor is a necessary element in the process of scientific theorizing, but that once a metaphor has established itself as sufficiently valuable for the explanation of phenomena as well as the

⁵ See Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 300, as well as "On Truth and Falsity in their Extramoral Sense."

systematic linking of divergent theories, metaphors give way to scientific models: what begin as merely illustrative or pedagogical images become ontologized and are thenceforth regarded as accurate representations of reality. Of course, one need not suppose that scientists always regard their constructions as objectively real in a strict metaphysical sense, but only that they regard them as real for the purposes of scientific practice. My claim is that as science tends toward a systematic structure, its metaphors are adapted, extended, and function in the end as nonfigurative representations of phenomena.

Take, for example, field theory as it appears in physics. Today the theory of fields, conceived as the spaces of influence of particles and forces, is an increasingly complex science that analyzes physical systems with a systematic complement of geometrical terms, from lines of force to boundary conditions and basins of attraction. In other words, it is a fully systematic model of physical phenomena. This was not always the case, however. The history of the field concept in physics, a model used to explain physical interactions in electricity, magnetism and gravitation, is a typical story of metaphor giving way to model.⁶ In the early seventeenth century, Kepler suggested that natural philosophy include a concept of action at a distance in order to explain the movements of celestial bodies.⁷ Descartes and Galileo refused this suggestion, opting instead for a rigidly mechanistic view requiring direct physical contact between interacting bodies. Any principle of action at a distance, since it did not fall within a

⁶ I do not mean to suggest that a direct progression from metaphor to model is a constant feature of scientific development. The situation is certainly much more complex than that. The view of scientific metaphor that I advocate is commensurable, for example, with Thomas Kuhn's theory of scientific paradigms, although the focus there is on the spontaneous shifts in systematic metaphors rather than their gradual integration.

⁷ I am following McMullin and Cao in relating this narrative.

purely mechanistic paradigm, could at best be regarded as an illustrative metaphor, but not a true scientific explanation. Newton later successfully extended the language of natural philosophy to include ideas of “attraction” and “propensity” with respect to gravitation, but insisted that these ideas represented only “mathematical” as opposed to physical truths. In the late eighteenth century, Kant provided a philosophical defense of action at a distance, arguing that there are obvious cases in which it occurs (the moon’s effect on the tides, for example) and no antecedent reasons for denying its existence. Approaches were made toward a more literal field theory into the nineteenth century, although most of these still relied on the existence of a hypothetical intermediary ether to transmit action from one body to another. According to Tian Yu Cao, “The concept of the electromagnetic field as a new type of continuous medium was first derived from the analogies with fluid flow and, in particular, with elastic media,” which amounted to a “mechanical ether field theory.”⁸ Finally, a systematic field theory was developed by a number of theorists in the nineteenth century, including Faraday, Maxwell and Lorentz, which finally granted physically real powers to space itself. Their conception of fields of force involved treating space as though it contained lots of tiny invisible lines that described the possible influence of the magnet. And although these lines themselves are never empirically verified, the explanatory power of the conception and fact that it integrates the theories of electricity and magnetism warrants its status as a genuine scientific model. According to Kuhn, after Maxwell “Scientists no longer thought it unscientific to speak of an electrical “displacement” without specifying what was being

⁸ Cao, 31.

displaced.”⁹ The transit of the physical field concept along this course appears much more evenly progressive than that of its social-scientific counterpart, but this is likely the effect of a selective and revisionist history of science.

A more subtle elaboration of this history would reveal a great variety in the degree to which granting ontological status to fields was met with hesitation.¹⁰ Moreover, there is no consensus on exactly when fields graduated from metaphorical status. Landau and Lifshitz, for example, identify the conception of the field as genuinely physical only with the advent of the theory of relativity:

In classical mechanics, the field is merely a mode of description of the physical phenomenon—the interaction of particles. In the theory of relativity, because of the finite velocity of propagation of interactions, the situation is changed fundamentally. The forces acting on a particle at a given moment are not determined by the positions at that same moment. A change in the position of one of the particles influences other particles only after the lapse of a certain time interval. This means that the field itself acquires physical reality.¹¹

The case of the field concept in physics illustrates not only the way that metaphors extend our knowledge, but also that the distinction between metaphor and model is never a difference of kind, but only of degree. Metaphors that acquire a threshold degree of explanatory power and integration with existing theory acquire the status of models.

Metaphors are not only ubiquitous in scientific contexts. On the contrary, a great deal of our everyday thinking and behavior is conducted with the aid of schemas that, on examination, reveal themselves as metaphors. Think, for instance, about the language that is ordinarily employed when describing the practice of theorizing. Theory is very often

⁹ Kuhn, 108.

¹⁰ See Cao, 10-23.

¹¹ Landau and Lifshitz, *The Classical Theory of Fields*, 47.

treated as a building: it has foundations, supports, it is constructed, buttressed, it can collapse, and so on.¹² Or think of how size words are used to convey significance—big ideas, huge life changes, tiny details, etc.¹³ Spatial metaphors are certainly among the most ubiquitous in both theoretical and practical use. Lakoff and Johnson catalogue several oppositions that are commonly organized in terms of the spatial opposition up/down. These include happy/sad, conscious/unconscious, health/sickness, life/death, more/less, good/bad, rational/emotional, and many others as well. Even time is itself very often understood spatially.¹⁴ In the abstract, time is often represented as a timeline, on which moments and durations are related to one another by separation in space. The passing of time (already a spatial metaphor) is represented as movement along the line. In everyday life, too, time is spatialized in our tendency to think of the future as ahead of us and the past as behind us.¹⁵ And although the particulars of the metaphorical spatialization of time are variable—there exist cultures in which the opposition is reversed—the fact that the relevant metaphors are spatial ones remains remarkably constant. Lakoff and Johnson’s view is that our conceptual system is metaphorically grounded. This view could be construed as a vindication of Kant’s insight as to the basic and pervasive function of our intuition of space, and suggests that it is metaphor that links the intuitions with the concepts of the understanding. Such a seemingly flexible and contingent link would not, of course, have appealed to Kant. In Lakoff and Johnson we find something approaching an epistemological synthesis of Kant and Nietzsche insofar

¹² Lakoff and Johnson, 46.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁴ see Casey, *Getting Back into Place and Tuan, Space and Place.*

¹⁵ Lakoff and Johnson, 16.

as they hold that certain basic intuitions, space among them, function as conditions for conceptual thought, while also claiming that they manage to do so by virtue of our ability to extend our intuitions metaphorically to cognize a wide range of phenomena.

How exactly does the metaphorical construction of our concepts take place? This is a question that, I believe, Bourdieu's theory of practice can begin to answer. For now the important point is that spatial metaphors are fundamental to the organization of our theoretical and practical life.

Kant was correct that space is pervasive in, and even constitutive of, our thought and experience. And Kant and Nietzsche are not so far from one another on this point as we might imagine. If we suspend judgment for a moment on Kant's assertion that the categories are fixed, universal and necessary, and focus only on the insight, enormous in itself, that space is a condition for the possibility of knowledge, it is clear that space so construed is infused in thought and experience in a fundamental way. Novel experiences can be grasped precisely because we have already familiar to our experience in terms of which we can understand the foreign element. And this is, of course, the essence of metaphor.

The philosophical status of metaphor continues to be a subject of debate. Notice, however, that the value of metaphor to epistemology is relative to one's antecedent valuation of human cognition in general. Kant held reason in high regard, and so a process that is essentially metaphorical—the subsumption of an image under a concept—is elevated to a noble role in the production scientific knowledge. Nietzsche, on the other hand, believed that customary estimations of human rationality were hideously over-inflated, and the claim that knowledge is metaphor becomes, in his hands, a weapon for

the mockery of an arrogant scientific elite. Nietzsche's view also contains, however, the liberating consequence that the fundamental way we have of apprehending the world around us, as well as the very meaning of our lives, has the flexibility of metaphor. Science has a better chance of success if it embraces a poetic spirit.

The Origins of the Idea of Social Space

It would be presumptuous to assume that all spatial roads lead to Bourdieu, however, and therefore some caution must be taken in ascertaining what is certainly and what is only probably influential on Bourdieu in the spatial metaphors and models of the theorists discussed. While Bourdieu explicitly mentions a fair number of the figures and schools that played a role in his development of the theory of fields,¹⁶ I have yet to encounter a text in which he relates in detail just what it is he accepts or rejects about their views. Therefore the following discussion can aim only to be a catalogue of prior gestures towards the idea of social space, some of which allow the notion to linger in the domain of metaphor, and some of which commit themselves to the systematic spatial modeling of the social world.

Interestingly, the spatial thinking that will become so important for Bourdieu does not originate in the classical sociology of Durkheim and Mauss, whose metaphors tend to be derived from biology—the metaphor of organic growth, for example—and whose models tend to take the form of non-spatial hierarchical lists. The scientific goals of the classical approach instead provide a negative background against which Bourdieu will be

¹⁶ Bourdieu, “The Genesis of the Concepts of Habitus and of Field.”

able to formulate a new set of rules for sociological method. For his positive view he draws instead on the highly spatial work of Saussure, Cassirer, Lewin, Levi-Strauss, Althusser, and Goldmann, as well as on certain ideas in Bachelard and Weber.

Saussure

From 1906 to 1911, Ferdinand de Saussure gave a lecture course on linguistics that greatly influenced both linguistics and the social sciences as a whole. On Saussure's account, linguistic units or signs are regarded as arbitrary, which is to say that there is nothing about the way they look or sound that could not have been otherwise. Use of the locution 'mən-ē (money) in spoken English to refer to money does not depend on anything external to the language itself, as is evidenced by the fact that the same concept is conveyed by *gelt* (*Geld*) in German and by *ar.ʒɑ̃* (*argent*) in French. Because phonetic or graphical units do not stand in any necessary relation to extra-linguistic facts (for example, the objects they refer to), linguistic meaning is purely a function of intra-linguistic differentiation. As Saussure says, "*In the language itself, there are only differences.*"¹⁷ For Saussure language consists of two continua that are co-differentiated. There is, on the one hand, the range of all sounds in a language (the signifiers), and, on the other hand, the range of all ideas corresponding to those sounds (the signifieds). The division of these continua produces meaning since each signifier is assigned to a particular signified *and not to others*.

¹⁷ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 120. Italics original.

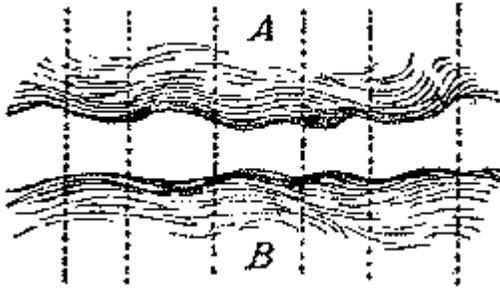


Figure 1. Saussure's diagram illustrating the co-differentiation of the continua of signifiers (phonemes or graphemes, represented by stream A) and signifieds (concepts or thought-images, represented by stream B). Source: Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 112. The purpose of the images in this chapter is to provide a sense of the ways that the respective theorists visualize the spatial models that they present.

According to Saussure, “[the linguistic unit] is a slice of sound which to the exclusion of everything that precedes and follows it in the spoken chain is the signifier of a certain concept.”¹⁸ For example, although 'mən-ē (money) and 'mən-dē (Monday) occupy adjoining segments of the phonetic chain, their meanings are distinct because a phonetic difference, the d sound, marks them off from one another as *not the same*. According to Saussure, all linguistic meanings are produced the differentiation of each particular sign for all other signs in the linguistic totality.

Saussure’s linguistic theory became the model for the application of structuralist techniques in the social sciences. In Bourdieu’s case, the idea of the arbitrary nature of signs, transposed to a cultural rather than a linguistic system, means that the totality of social relations can be studied independently of the social facts taken in isolation. This enables a relational understanding of social phenomena and implies a methodology that is at odds with Durkheim’s precept that the social scientist should “consider social facts as

¹⁸ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 104.

things.”¹⁹ Moreover, the significance of social facts, their meaning and function, is only revealed through an understanding of their relationality, in particular the way social entities are differentiated from one another. Thus in *The Logic of Practice* Bourdieu asserts, recalling Saussure, that in social space “[a social fact] only receives its full determination from its relationship to the set of other features, i.e. as a difference in a system of differences.”²⁰ In Bourdieuan social space all manner of social groupings, including class groupings, are understood as giving meaning to one another through their *distinctness* from one another. This logic of social meaning implies a spatial mode of representation, since, as Bourdieu says,

The idea of difference, or a gap, is at the basis of the very notion of *space*, that is, a set of distinct and coexisting positions which are exterior to one another and which are defined in relation to one another through their *mutual exteriority* and their relative proximity, vicinity, or distance, as well as through relations of order, such as above, below and *between*.²¹

For Bourdieu the spatial framework is absolutely irreplaceable since, in addition to the notion of difference or distinction, Bourdieu draws relevance from other relational concepts such as position, distance and trajectory.

One of Saussure’s basic methodological beliefs was that structural analysis demanded a bifurcation of linguistics into a portion that studied the static structure of languages, synchronic linguistics, and a portion that studied their development over time, diachronic linguistics. The reason for this, according to Saussure, is that “the multiplicity

¹⁹ Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method*, 14.

²⁰ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 7.

²¹ Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, 6.

of signs... makes it absolutely impossible to study simultaneously relations in time and relations within the system.”²² Bourdieu both accepted and rejected this methodological view. He accepted it insofar as he recognized that the synchronic mapping of social space had to be performed without giving thought to changes in the system in order for it to be possible to draw a picture of the social space on paper. Once this is accomplished, however, Bourdieu immediately brings diachronic factors back into view. This is because of Bourdieu’s fundamental conviction that, through the collective action of a multiplicity of individual habitus (structured sets of perceptions and dispositions to act that are acquired through prolonged exposure to specific social conditions), the differentiated entities that occupy social space are constantly functioning to continue the process of differentiation, most commonly by actively reproducing the very differentiations that gave rise to them in the first place. Thus, unlike Saussure’s largely linguistic structures, Bourdieu’s structures are active in the ongoing process of their own creation. This is of great relevance to the social sciences because it provides a method of representing and understanding the dynamics of class structures as well as other structures composed of power relations. Thus Willem Schinkel and Jacques Tacq note in their study of Saussure’s influence on Bourdieu that “the three-dimensional social space is then a struggle for dominant schemes of classification and thus a struggle for better objective social conditions of existence.”²³ These authors go on to point out that the title of Bourdieu’s book *Distinction* is a clear double entendre, connoting both the hierarchies of social status and Saussure’s theory of meaning.

²² Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 81.

²³ Schinkel and Tacq, 65.

Cassirer

In the early part of the twentieth century an intellectual trend arose that emphasized the scientific and philosophical importance of considering the relations between things in addition to the things themselves. It denied, in other words, the priority of things over relations. Not accidentally, the theorists associated with this trend formed their views around the same time that Einstein was completing his theory of relativity. They also recognized that the analysis of systems of relations implied a break with the traditional scientific habit of working only with fixed, thing-like concepts, since the relations between entities reveal themselves most accurately in their dynamic functioning. The proponents of these views did not constitute any kind of formal group, but gave voice separately and simultaneously to a new paradigm in theoretical science. Major voices in this movement were Henri Bergson, Gaston Bachelard and Martin Heidegger. A key member of this intellectual trend was Ernst Cassirer, without whom Bourdieu's spatial thinking, not to mention that of an entire tradition of social theorists related to Bourdieu, would be impossible. And while Cassirer does not himself employ spatial models as such, he is nonetheless responsible for a specific insight that would prove to be very important to Bourdieu's conception of social space, namely that scientific theory is drawn toward the relational and the systematic. In *Substance and Function* (1910), Cassirer traces the development of many concepts in the natural sciences, from their early substantialist versions to their mature relational formulations. A

central example is the shift from absolute, Newtonian space and time to relativistic space and time.

Cassirer discusses a great number of scientific concepts the relativization of which is, however, more subtle. Take the case of the atom. The scientific interrogation of atoms began, according to Cassirer, with the attempt to discover their “*magnitude and form.*”²⁴ For the most part this meant trying to discover the individual atomic weights. This goal emphasized the thing-character of the atom. Attention was paid to figuring out which attributes could be assigned to the individual elements. As chemical evidence accumulated as to the way the atomic weights were related to one another, as well as the way they contributed to the formation of molecules, however, the substantialist conception of the atom gave way to a more sophisticated relational concept:

If we take the atomic weight of hydrogen as a unit of comparison, then we can, without contradicting the known facts of composition, determine that of oxygen by the value $O = 8$ instead of $O = 16$, whereby we would have to double the number of atoms of oxygen in all our formulae; we could successively take the values $S = 8, 16, 32\dots$ as the atomic weight of sulfur, in so far as we formed the chemical formulae in agreement with one of these assumptions, and thus, for example, characterize sulfide of hydrogen according to our choice by the expression HS_2 or HS or H_2S . The decision between all these possible determinations is made of the basis of several criteria, which are only gradually worked out in the history of chemistry. One of the most important criteria is the rule of Avogadro, according to which similar quantities of molecules of different combinations occupy the same volume as perfect gases under the same conditions of pressure and temperature. Along with the determination of atomic weights from the density of vapors, which is hereby made possible, there is their determination from heat capacity, which rests on the law of Dulong-Petit; and also the determination on the basis of isomorphism, resting on the law of Mitscherlich, that the same crystal form having different combinations, indicates an equal number of atoms connected in the same way. It is only the totality of all these different points of view, mutually confirming and correcting each other, that finally after many experiments gives a unitary table of atomic weights, and thus lays the basis of a definite system of chemical formulae.²⁵

²⁴ Cassirer, *Substance and Function*, 159.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 207.

The idea of the atom that results is thus wholly relational and systematic—it has relevance only within the context of a system of elements and a theory of their interaction. Cassirer gives a similar treatment to such concepts as space, energy, number and so on. Mature relational concepts are seen as a progressive improvement in scientific thinking and a sign of sophisticated theoretical practice.

Bourdieu agrees with Cassirer that the systematic and habitual use of relational concepts, or as he says, “the relational mode of thinking”²⁶ is “the hallmark of modern science”²⁷ and must therefore function as a central principle in the representation of social systems. He goes so far as to coin a slogan, modified from Hegel: “*the real is the relational.*”²⁸ The key feature of relational thinking is that it regards relations between entities as primary, rather than the entities themselves. These relations are necessarily hidden from the scientific observer when he or she considers the phenomena as mere aggregates of entities. There is something of a gestalt shift that must occur, in order to assign importance to relations. Bourdieu’s social space can be thought of as an attempt to formalize the shift to a relational mode of thought, and to capture in concrete terms the distances, hierarchies and distributions obtaining among social things.

Let’s return for a moment to the example of the atom. Notice that once the atom has been understood relationally within the context of a system, namely the range of elements for which it is the theoretical substrate and the chemical combinations in which it plays a part, the original substantialist concept effectively disappears. As Cassirer says, “The atom... signifies nothing but the member of a systematic manifold in general. All

²⁶ Bourdieu, “Genesis of the Concepts of Habitus and of Field,” 16.

²⁷ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 97.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

content, that can be ascribed to it, springs from the relation of which it is the intellectual center.”²⁹ Cassirer’s valorization of systematicity and relationality in science was zealously appropriated by the structuralist tradition, and nowhere more so than in the case of Bourdieu himself. Cassirer’s accounts of the developments in scientific thought are not themselves spatial models of the kind that will be inspired in his followers. His language, however, overflows with spatial metaphors, which I interpret to be a natural result not only of his neo-Kantianism, but also of his attempt to deal seriously with the notions of relation and system. The concept of the atom is described as transforming from a notion with content—that is, a *container*—to the notion of an organizational, but insubstantial, *center*. This transition, which is characteristic of the shift from substantial to relational imagery, implies a reversal of conceptual orientation. What was previously an inward-facing notion becomes an outward-facing one—one that has significance only by virtue of its power to inform neighboring concepts in the system or, more simply, by virtue of its *position*. And once one begins to think of concepts as having positions, one has already implied the existence of a field in which these positions reside. This is, if not the principle way, at least a very widespread and commonsense way of understanding the systematic totality of a given science. Making this understanding explicit can, as it does in Bourdieu’s case, shed light on the practice of scientific theory by translating abstract conceptual maneuvers into concrete spatial relations.

Lewin

²⁹ Cassirer, *Substance and Function*, 159.

Kurt Lewin, a student of Cassirer, developed a systematic topological theory of behavior, according to which an individual's behavior is said to follow from the structure of the individual's "life space" at the moment of action. In the 1930s and 40s Lewin, borrowing from physics and mathematics, systematized a group of concepts that together constitute a psychological field theory—one that aims to explain and predict the behavior of social agents from data about what he calls their psychological situation. An agent's psychological situation is a complex amalgam of relevant information, including information about the physical environment in which the individual acts, the social groups to which the individual belongs, the goals, aims and desires that the individual holds, and so on, all of which are represented simultaneously in an encompassing spatial construct. What information is relevant to the topological representation of the psychological situation is determined by whether or not a piece of information has the sort of behavior effects that interest the psychologist in the context of a given study. The representations of life space are thus bound by the practical interests of the agent in question, as well as by the scientific interests of the psychologist.

Upon reviewing the formal characteristics of Lewin's spatial models, which he calls fields or life spaces, it is obvious that Bourdieu is deeply indebted to Lewin's work. Lewin and Bourdieu's models share many important features, largely for the same methodological reasons. Lewin, for instance, importantly encourages the simultaneous co-representation of varying types of data, which had normally been strictly separated by traditional psychological theory:

The variety of facts which social psychology has to treat might really seem frightening to even a bold scientific mind. They include "values" (such as religious and moral values),

“ideologies” (such as conservatism or communism), “the style of living and thinking,” and other so-called “cultural” facts. They include sociological problems, i.e., problems of group and group structure, their degree of hierarchy and type of organization; or such problems as the difference between a rural and an urban community, their rigidity and fluidity, degree of differentiation, etc. They also include so-called “psychological” problems, such as the intelligence of a person, his goals and fears, and his personality. They include such “physiological” facts as the person’s being healthy or sick, strong or weak, the color of his hair and his complexion. They include, finally, such “physical” facts as the size of the physical area in which the person or a group is located.³⁰

Spatial modeling enables the theorist to represent such a wide variety of evidence simultaneously by treating each category of variable—psychological, social, physiological, physical—as defining a certain spatial structure. Ideologies can become directions for the social scientist, desires can become distances, physical handicaps can become boundaries, and so on. Lewin’s full compliment of spatial concepts includes position, region, boundary, center, periphery, separation, connection, direction, orientation, locomotion, force, tendency, vector, differentiation, integration, restructuring, fluidity, elasticity and plasticity.

³⁰ Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science*, 133.

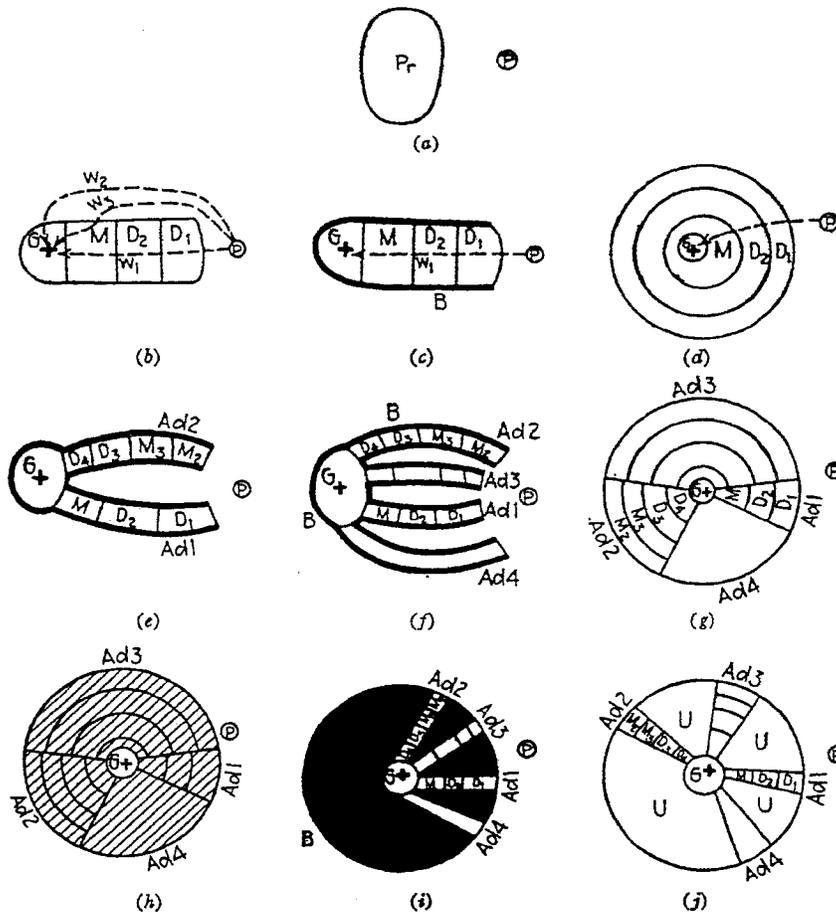


Figure 2. An example of one of Lewin's topological diagrams. This one presents multiple topological representations of a problem-solving situation in mathematics (the sub-regions are labelled for different mathematical operations or reasoning steps). The diagrams give a sense of which strategies are possible for the problem-solver, given an initial way of conceiving the problem as a whole. Source: Lewin, *Principles of Topological Psychology*, 151.

Lewin also stresses that his models are intended to capture the interdependence among the variables, rather than solely provide a classificatory scheme based on description. This is the difference between what he calls, following Cassirer, an Aristotelian versus a Galilean approach to science; the Aristotelian approach is the effort to catalogue and describe the phenomena, whereas the Galilean approach seeks out the ways in which the various components, once identified, are interrelated. This view of Lewin's that the social sciences are entering a Galilean period is a direct inheritance of

Cassirer's view that science progresses from a substance-centric to a relation-centric structure.

In addition to these general characteristics of spatial models, Lewin's life spaces also prefigure the agent-field structure of Bourdieuan social space. Lewin's spaces almost always concern an individual or group of individuals situated in and subject to the forces determined by a more or less differentiated space. It is sometimes the case in Lewin's models that the individuals themselves admit of internal structural differentiation and are not represented merely as unstructured points. Indeed, one of the central motives of life space modeling is to capture the interrelations between the environment (physical as well as social) that the individual finds him or herself in and the individual's internal psychological structure.

Lewin has not ignored the temporal aspect of social systems—along with the shift to relational thinking comes a shift to process thinking, since relations are frequently visible only in the temporal functioning of a social system. He emphasizes, much like Bourdieu does, that his spaces are spaces of possibilities: “A dynamic psychology has to represent the personality and the state of a person as the total of possible and not-possible ways of behaving.”³¹ That is, the structure of the space and the structure of the individuals within the space together determine which behaviors are possible and which are impossible for the agent at a given time. The individual's physical, social and psychological movements are constrained and enabled by physical limitations, psychological barriers, tensions established by group membership or exclusion, and so on. Passages from one state to another are represented as wide or narrow, barriers as

³¹ Lewin, *Principles of Topological Psychology*, 15.

permeable or impermeable, and therefore capture the likelihood or unlikelihood of a given change.

Finally, and in the context of this analysis most importantly, Lewin insists, as Bourdieu himself would later, that the spaces of social scientific field theory and the spaces of physics share an equal ontological status:

The popular prejudice that the physical space is the only empirical space has made sociologists regard their spatial concepts as merely an analogy. Better insight into the meaning of space in mathematics and physics should readily lead to the understanding that the social field is actually an empirical space, which is as “real” as a physical one.³²

The argument here is that space concepts, as they are employed in both physics and the social sciences, are theoretical constructions. The common sense view that space is more or less Euclidean—that is, it is homogenous and preserves the parallel lines postulate—is no longer regarded as accurate. “Real” space is now regarded by most physicists to be subject to curvature in response to physical forces like gravity. Once common sense no longer counts as a reason for ontological doubt, any claim for the reality of life spaces in psychology is initially as justified as the parallel claim for the reality of curved space in physics. They are equally valid theoretical constructions, provided that they produce useful scientific results. While Lewin and Bourdieu share the view that physical and social scientific spaces are equally real, their reasons for holding it are not the same. Lewin is concerned first and foremost with avoiding the charge of physicalism. Spaces in the social sciences are not merely derivative of more genuine spaces in physics. Instead,

³² Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science*, 151.

Lewin argues that both types of space are ultimately “mathematical-logical concepts,”³³ and it is their mathematical-logical status from whence they derive the justification for their scientific employment.

And yet, despite these shared assumptions, Lewin’s and Bourdieu’s theoretical spaces end up looking very different. This has to do not only with the fact that they are concerned with very different subjects, but also with a fundamental methodological difference, namely that Bourdieu’s spaces are always, at least on paper, representations of objective structures independent of any particular point of view, whereas Lewin’s represent subjective mental or psychological structures only.³⁴ They are always bound by the limits and distortions of a particular subjective point of view. And while Bourdieu’s theory does accommodate something like these life spaces as an integral component of the total picture, their representation is omitted in favor of an ostensibly objective space.

Lewin’s models contain no information about magnitudes of size, distance and direction, which are only infrequently possible to obtain in the social sciences. The problem of how to assign magnitudes to psychological variables in the absence of fixed cardinal values, like the degree to which a goal is desired or the confidence with which a child manipulates his environment, does not need to be addressed by Lewin’s system because these values are less important than *changes* in size, distance and direction. Lewin’s life spaces are thus constructed with a focus on the size of regions with respect to the whole (life spaces are finite), as well as comparative distances and orientations. This, Lewin feels, is the particular benefit of modeling social systems in terms of

³³ Lewin, *Principles of Topological Psychology*, 57.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

topological space rather than Euclidean space. Bourdieu's decision to structure social space in terms of the volume and structure of capital can be viewed as a kind of compromise between the two, since it commits itself to the arbitrary assignment of cardinal values (based on the part-whole relationships of possessed capital to total capital and type of capital to the full range of types of capital), but unlike in Lewin's life spaces, the illusion of cardinality is not erased from the final construction. Thus, whereas Lewin's spaces are represented as complex shapes preserving information about relative shapes, movements and orientations, Bourdieu's spaces maintain a somewhat deceptive orthogonal appearance.

Levi-Strauss

The structuralists adopted Cassirer's ideas about relationality and systematicity. Central among them, of course, was Claude Levi-Strauss, who heavily influenced French social science and philosophy during the formative period of Bourdieu's career and whose lectures Bourdieu attended at the *College de France* in 1960.³⁵ Cassirer's idea that a well-developed science is relational and systematic is constantly at work in Levi-Strauss' empirical work. The influence of Saussure was perhaps more direct, however, as Levi-Strauss' major contribution to the social sciences was to show that the principles that Saussure discovered in linguistics apply in fact to symbolic systems in general, including those of culture. Levi-Strauss' major theoretical work *Structural Anthropology* (1958) thus contains elements of both Cassirer and Saussure. In that work Levi-Strauss

³⁵ Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu*, 15.

draws on the insights of Saussurean structural linguists to formulate a relational science of social structures, citing Nikolay Troubetzkoy's four methodological and theoretical objectives for structural linguistics as valid for the whole of social science:

First, structural linguistics shifts from the study of *conscious* linguistic phenomena to study of their *unconscious* infrastructure; second, it does not treat *terms* as independent entities, taking instead as its basis of analysis the *relations* between terms; third, it introduces the concept of *system*—"Modern phonemics does not merely proclaim that phonemes are always part of a system; it *shows* concrete phonemic systems and elucidates their structure"—; finally, structural linguistics aims at discovering *general laws*, either by induction "or... by logical deduction, which would give them an absolute character."³⁶

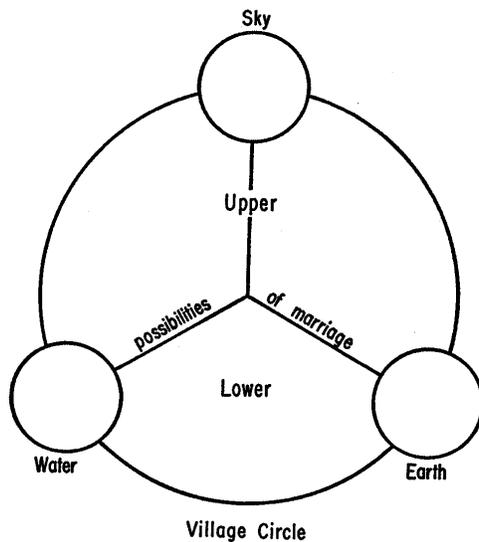
It is the second and third of these objectives—the centrality of the concepts of relation and system—are the ones that most directly recommend the employment of spatial models. These are also the two objectives that end up being accepted outright by subsequent generations of structuralists, including Bourdieu himself who describes his early work as that of a "happy structuralist."³⁷ The first objective, to take unconscious rather than conscious phenomena as the objects of study is, of course, addressed by Bourdieu's theory of bodily knowledge and the habitus. The fourth is more or less outright rejected by Bourdieu, since what interests him are the concrete conditions of social domination, not the general laws of its action.

It is clear from Levi-Strauss' use of the notion of structure, as well as his specific comments on it, that structures in the social sciences should be thought of as spatial models. His analysis of the structures of kinship, as well as his account of social structure in dual organizations, (simultaneous but divergent representations of social organization

³⁶ Troubetzkoy quoted in Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 33.

³⁷ Quoted in Brubaker, 43.

within a society) bear this out. The figure below, taken from his study of the Winnebago village, is exemplary for the way it blends information about the social distribution of the village's inhabitants with information about their physical distribution.



3. Levi-Strauss' diagram of the social structure of a Winnebago village. Source: Levi-Strauss, 155.

Levi-Strauss describes his structuralism as spatial modeling:

The object of social-structure studies is to understand social relations with the aid of models. Now it is impossible to conceive of social relations outside a common framework. Space and time are the two frames of reference we use to situate social relations, either alone or together. These space and time dimensions are not the same as the analogous ones used by other disciplines but consist of a "social" space and of a "social" time, meaning that they have no properties outside those which derive from the properties of the social phenomena which "furnish" them. According to their social structure, human societies have elaborated many types of such "continuums," and there should be no undue concern on the part of the anthropologist that, in the course of his studies, he might temporarily have to borrow types widely different from the existing patterns and eventually to evolve new ones.³⁸

³⁸ Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 289.

This is a clear recommendation of the use of space (and time) as theoretical schemata. The justification given, that they provide a “common framework” for conceiving social relations, should be understood in the sense that a given conception of space or time need be employed consistently within the scope of a given study. The suggestion is not that space and time are universals that can be appealed to by all researchers. This is clear given what he says at the end of the passage. The phrase “common framework” can appear ambiguous on first reading, however, and suggests a problem that will become a central point of contention for Bourdieu—the reflexivity of social theory. The problem, as Bourdieu would see it, is that one cannot expect to arrive at an objective account of social relations by adopting the organizational concepts of the society under study. To do so presupposes that one has got them right in the first place, prior to attempting to understand them. Moreover, one cannot simply decide to set aside one’s own preexisting understanding of space. This is not an ability that human beings—even anthropologists—are equipped with. Bourdieu’s solution is to employ an over-arching, self-reflexive spatial schema—one that can be used by the theorist even while the theorist is potentially accounted for within it.

Bourdieu would end up rejecting a good number of Levi-Strauss’ methodological suppositions. In terms of spatial modeling, however, the most important of these is his rejection of the static character of Levi-Strauss’ models. Levi-Strauss eschews dynamical models as too problematic from a methodological point of view: “Since synchronic studies raise fewer problems than diachronic ones (the data being more homogeneous in the first case), the simplest morphological studies are those having to do with the qualitative, non-measurable properties of social space, that is, the manner in which social

phenomena can be situated on a map and the regularities exhibited in their configurations.”³⁹ François Dosse suggests that Levi-Strauss, inspired by Proust, held an ideal of “man liberated from the temporal order.”⁴⁰ According to Dosse such a static view of structure was characteristic of early structuralism. As he says, “the will to given [*sic*] precedence to oppositions in a relation set in the present led to a valorization of spatial, topological determinations at the expense of other considerations.”⁴¹ Bourdieu’s social spaces, on the other hand, rely heavily on statistical analysis to map social space. The models he produces contain both synchronic and diachronic data (data about positions as well as dispositions), and the static representations of them are always regarded as only partial, momentary views of a dynamic, praxical whole. This conviction is evidenced by Bourdieu’s preference for the work of the Russian structuralist Yuri Tynianov, who propounded a “systemo-functional” brand of literary formalism in which dynamics play a central role.⁴²

Althusser

It was not the structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss but the structural Marxism of Althusser and Goldmann that exerted the most significant influence on Bourdieu. Bourdieu attended Louis Althusser’s lectures while a student at the *École Normale Supérieure* in the early fifties. Althusser’s objective at the time was to rescue Marxism

³⁹ Ibid., 291.

⁴⁰ Proust quoted in Dosse, *History of Structuralism*, vol. 1, 262.

⁴¹ Dosse, *History of Structuralism* vol. 2, 70.

⁴² See Steiner, *Russian Formalism: A Metapoetics*, 99-137.

(Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao) from the oversimplifications of its interpreters (those who would reduce it to economism). Althusser's overarching strategy is to show that many of the theoretical misunderstandings and political misapplications of Marxism have read the Marxist tradition as preserving features of the Hegelian dialectic that do not have meaningful analogues in a material context. Althusser takes issue principally with the oft-quoted passage from Marx in which it appears that Marx suggests that the materialist dialectic be conceived as an inversion of the Hegelian dialectic. Althusser wants to show, on the contrary, that Marx cannot have meant this literally since the tradition of Marxist discourse reveals a materialist dialectic that shares few if any theoretical features with that of Hegel. Although it is questionable to what extent Althusser's reconstruction of the Marxist tradition accurately reflect the conceptions of his sources, it nonetheless is the occasion for Althusser to supply an account of Marxist historical development, and his central way of doing so is to spatialize it. That is, Althusser reads a spatial conception of historical materialism back into the Marxist tradition. It is largely for this reason that he has been labeled a structural Marxist.⁴³

Althusser's spatialization of the Marxist dialectic reflects a greater awareness of social complexity than is usually found in Marxist accounts. A standard reading of Marx (Althusser would say a Hegelian reading) suggests that class struggle can be analyzed as the contradiction between two simple unities—the labor of the proletariat and their alienation from its products at the hands of the capitalist bourgeoisie. This conflict, according to the standard interpretation, amounts to a simple, direct contradiction and implies the inevitability of revolutionary action. Althusser counters with the view that

⁴³ See e.g., Benton, Smith.

concrete social situations never correspond neatly to such abstract logical constructs—especially linear ones. Theoretical Marxism must instead produce constructions that better capture the complexity of social relations. As Althusser puts it, “...where reality is concerned, we are never dealing with the pure existence of simplicity, be it essence or category, but with the existence of ‘concretes’ of complex and structured beings and processes.”⁴⁴ This view demands that linear concepts of contradiction and negation be replaced with complex processes (such as “displacement,” “condensation” and “dissolution”) that operate on an “ever-pre-given complex structured whole.” The unities that come into conflict in the materialist dialectic are thus complex unities, admitting of a wealth of internal structure, which forces the theorist to identify a multiplicity of contradictions, each of which can be said to be more or less dominant at a given time. One contradiction, Althusser tells us, is always in dominance at a given time, but which one it is does not remain constant and is dependent on the dynamics between itself and the structure of the whole social system. In order for the complexity of real social systems to be accounted for by Marxist theory, therefore, the simple unity posited by Hegelian dialectics must be replaced with “the unity of a structure articulated in dominance,”⁴⁵ that is, by unified totalities that admit of a complex kind of internal differentiations of political power. Whereas Althusser never gives us a detailed picture of these internal differentiations, Bourdieu’s sociological studies can be seen as an attempt to articulate Althusser’s insights with scientific rigor.

⁴⁴ Althusser, *For Marx*, 197.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 202.

The complexifying of simple contradiction also allows Althusser to eliminate the discrete stages of the Hegelian dialectic. Real social systems simply do not change in such a way that discrete periods can be neatly identified and labeled (e.g., “the negation,” “the negation of the negation”...). Instead, social history is a continuous development. The Marxist conception of contradiction must be one in which there is no moment in which contradiction is not at work.⁴⁶ This is why, according to Althusser, the complex structured wholes that model social relations are “ever-pre-given”—there is no moment at which they are not already determined by its structure in the prior moment and determining the structure that it will take in the successive moment. The notion of a structure is defined for Althusser, in a manner that strikes one initially as a temporal paradox, in terms of its effects: “...*the whole existence of the structure consists in its effects, in short... the structure, which is merely a specific combination of its particular elements, is nothing outside its effects.*”⁴⁷ Althusser thus conceptualizes social change in a way that does not reduce cause and effect relations to simple, linear approximations, while emphasizing the continuity between each successive stage of the structured whole. This commitment to continuity, which arises out of a refusal to falsify social relations by enslaving them to an artificial division into stages, will become a characteristic feature of Bourdieuan social space. This is what allows social structures to function at all times as “structured structuring structures,” that is to say reflexive structures, simultaneously determined and determinative. Temporal continuity and a complexly structured space are preconditions, both for Althusser and Bourdieu, for the theoretical modeling of real

⁴⁶ Ibid., 216. Althusser attributes this view to Lenin.

⁴⁷ Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 189.

political struggles, which, in the light of more than a century of frustrated revolutionary practice, must be recognized as stubbornly self-stabilizing processes.

It should be noted that Althusser's spatial metaphors are drawn not only from structuralism but also from elements of Marx's own language. The notions of base and superstructure are of course already present in Marx, but instead of adopting these, Althusser attaches himself to Marx's use of the metaphors of vision and terrain. Classical political economy, according to Marx, "changed the terrain" by substituting its own theoretical conception of the value of labor, which it derived from the monetary cost of labor, for the real value of labor as it emerged in the practice of the laborer. This practice became invisible, according to Marx (via Althusser) because it was excluded from the space of the theory. Nonetheless, its theoretical exclusion had real political effects due to the fact that what is excluded are still present in the theory in a negative form. The value of labor power was thus not recognized by the proletariat and not available as a catalyst to political action partially because of its exclusion from classical theory. Althusser reasons that since theoretical spaces are finite, and since what is included in theory is visible (and therefore available for political practice), what is excluded in theory is invisible, but it is invisible in a constrained way due to the finitude of the theoretical space. Althusser captures this line of thought paradoxically by saying that "it carrie[s] its outside inside it."⁴⁸ What is invisible to theory is nonetheless present in its form, suggested by the adjoining contours of the visible structures, and capable of affecting the subsequent structure of political practice. This is what Althusser calls "the transformation

⁴⁸ Ibid., 27.

of the object by its oversight.”⁴⁹ Althusser’s insight is that science “can only pose problems on the terrain and within the horizon of a definite theoretical structure, its problematic, which constitutes its absolute and definite condition of possibility, and hence the absolute determination of the forms in which all problems must be posed, at any given moment in the science.”⁵⁰ Thus the task of the theorist is to develop and utilize discourses that make visible the politically relevant facts by bringing them into a framework suited for that specific task. For Althusser this means talking about structures in dominance and the displacement of contradictions, whereas for Bourdieu it means distributing social agents and practices in a finite, variable field.

Althusser’s spatial reading of Marx opposes the simple, linear concepts of classical political economy with Marx’s own conceptions which, according to Althusser, are thoroughly complex, systematic and spatial. Classical theory worked within a “planar space governed by a transitive mechanical causality.”⁵¹ That is to say, when one is working only with a linear concept of causality, the only requirement is for a two-dimensional, homogenous theoretical space. About Marx’s theoretical space, however, Althusser has this to say:

Because he defined the economic *by its concept*, Marx does not present economic phenomena—to illustrate his thought temporarily with a spatial metaphor—in the infinity of a homogenous planar space, but rather in *a region* determined by a regional structure and itself inscribed in a site defined by a global structure: therefore as a complex and deep space, itself inscribed in another complex and deep space. But let us abandon this spatial metaphor, since this first opposition exhausts its virtues: everything depends, in fact, on the nature of this depth, or, more strictly speaking, of this *complexity*. To define economic phenomena by their concept is to define them by the concept of this

⁴⁹ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 25.

⁵¹ Ibid., 182.

complexity, i.e., by the concept of the (global) *structure* of the mode of production, insofar as it determines the (regional) *structure* which constitutes as economic objects and determines the phenomena of this defined region, located in a defined site in the structure of the whole.⁵²

What Althusser fails to realize here, and what Bourdieu and others have realized, is that the way to understand “the nature of this depth” is not to abandon the spatial metaphor, but to strengthen it, to systematize it, and to make it concrete and visible. Althusser does not, contrary to his own injunction, abandon the spatial metaphor at this point, but continues to exploit it for the remainder of his analysis, indicating that the spatial metaphor is really at the core of the argument. The case could not be made without recourse to spatial concepts.

Bourdieu’s spatial model of the social world is motivated by the same desire to avoid oversimplified linearity that Althusser associates with a naïve reading of Marxism:

...the construction of the model of the social space... presupposes a definite break with the one-dimensional and one-directional representation of the social world underlying the dualist vision in which the universe of the oppositions constituting the social structure is reduced to the opposition between those who own the means of production and those who sell their labour-power.⁵³

Seeing the social world in terms of such an opposition is central to precisely the conception of a simple contradiction Althusser warns against. Althusser’s complex structured whole consisting of a multitude of contradictions is what Bourdieu has in mind when he refers to the “universe of oppositions” and tailors his spatial model to account for it.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 244.

Spatial schemas are, for Althusser, always cast as metaphors. This is almost certainly due to his hesitancy to ontologize theory, since, like Bourdieu, he is adamant that theory ought always to be understood as theoretical practice. There is no theory independent of the theorizing, that is, independent of a certain mode of theoretical production, and theorizing must always remain faithful to the concrete social realities that it tries to explain. This is Althusser's primary motive for making the move to spatial metaphors—to preserve the complexity of real social structures. In Althusser's hands, however, spatial concepts promise more than they deliver. Althusser may speak of the “unity of the productive forces and the relations of production” as a structure, but one is left wondering just what kind of a structure it is. How exactly is this structure internally differentiated, and how does it engage with structures that surround it, for example modes of consumption and exchange? Talk of structures, displacements, and so on is a helpful way to avoid the linearization of the Marxist project, but once complex structures are recognized as the interesting and important features of social dynamics, it becomes important to discover rigorous and reliable ways to model them. Metaphor will only take us so far, but models can be diagrammed, mapped and manipulated. This is the extra step that Bourdieu takes, and which propels him from the domain of political philosophy to that of empirical social research.

Goldmann

The scope of Goldmann's general influence on Bourdieu is astonishing. Prefigurations of nearly all of Bourdieu's central convictions can be found in Goldmann's

work, from the dialectical reconception of dualities such as subject/object and theory/practice, to the necessarily reflexive methodology of social science,⁵⁴ and even something approaching the idea of habitus.⁵⁵ While dedicated study of Bourdieu's overall indebtedness to Goldmann is long overdue, I must restrict myself here to Goldmann's impact on the shape of Bourdieuan social space.

Throughout the sixties and seventies, Goldmann developed a subtle and insightful theory of social science methodology, yet his formulations tend to be either tortuously complex or frustratingly vague. One may say that Goldmann did for literary sociology what Althusser did for political economy, namely provide it with a dynamically structural theoretical framework. Throughout his theoretical works, Goldmann's language is strongly spatial, and he develops some key notions that would reappear in Bourdieu, sometimes in radically altered form, sometimes almost verbatim. Most notably among these are Goldman's ideas about structural complexity, the temporal aspect of social structures, and the reproduction of homologous structures.

Goldmann produced a broadly inclusive model that treats individuals and groups as well as cultural works as mutually structuring. It would prove crucial for Bourdieu's social space that it be able to accommodate a similarly broad array of social phenomena. Models that presuppose a rigorous separation among these categories tend to cover up rather than reveal their interrelations. Goldmann's specific goal is to "relate cultural works with social groups *qua* creative subjects."⁵⁶ The individual, while not strictly erased from theory, is reconceived as a subject whose identity and creative functionality

⁵⁴ Goldmann, *Essays on Method in the Sociology of Literature*, 55.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁵⁶ Goldmann, *Towards a Sociology of the Novel*, 158.

are determined by his or her position in a social structure, primarily by his or her membership in various social groups, including most importantly class groups (both Goldmann's and Bourdieu's ideas about class are influenced by Georg Lukacs' theory of class consciousness). This "transindividual subject" creates cultural works that are structured according to his or her "world view"—a psychological structure resulting from his or her social constitution.

What I have called a 'world vision' is a convenient term for the whole complex of ideas, aspirations and feelings which links together the members of a social group (a group which, in most cases, assumes the existence of a social class) and which opposes them to members of other social groups.⁵⁷

This passage reveals that social groups, and by extension transindividual subjects, are defined by their position within a structure, that is, by their coherence with a cluster of similarly situated and oriented individuals, as well as by their opposition to surrounding groups with which they do not identify. In Bourdieu, this will become the principle of the constitution of social space by mutually exterior positions.

For Goldmann, cultural works are articulated and have meaning only as expressions of the dialectic between individual and group, both of which are regarded as structurally complex. This complexity is necessary in order to avoid a theory of culture in which cultural works are merely direct expressions of an individual consciousness or an unstructured collective unconscious—for example, theories that analyze the content of the work purely in terms of the psychology of the author or the general character of the

⁵⁷ Quoted in Leenhardt, "Towards a Sociological Aesthetic," 95.

social milieu in which it was produced. Moreover, such a theory requires that subject, class and cultural work be structurally, that is, spatially, conceived.

Goldman's structuralism, much like that of Althusser, is designed to preserve the complexity of social systems, rather than eliminate it through the construction of simplified models. He also shares with Althusser the emphasis on part-whole relations, and the need to provide detailed pictures of the structures of the relevant wholes. According to Goldmann, the sorts of simplifying abstractions that provide the natural sciences with linear relationships of correlation are not helpful in the social sciences. Such procedures usually involve separating the "essential" from the "accidental" properties of the phenomena, and doing so would cover up the structural features that are necessary for understanding the functional significance of social facts:

The second precept of the Cartesian method—'to divide each of the difficulties... into as many parts as possible, and as might be required for an easier solution'—valid up to a certain point in mathematics and the physico-chemical sciences, is virtually useless in the human sciences. Here the progress of knowledge proceeds, not from the simple to the complex, but from the abstract to the concrete through a continual oscillation between the whole and its parts.⁵⁸

In addition to his commitment to structural complexity, Goldmann also emphasizes the need to preserve the temporal aspect of social systems, since the behavior of complex structures can only be understood by modeling them in action. Goldmann consistently refers to his theory (and retroactively to those of a whole series of

⁵⁸ Quoted from William W. Mayrl's *Introduction to Goldmann, Cultural Creation in Modern Society*, 3. The passage is taken from *The Human Sciences and Philosophy*, 85-86.

philosophers and social scientists back to Hegel) as “genetic” structuralism.⁵⁹ According to genetic structuralism,

structures are not invariable and permanent but constitute the outcome of a genetic process. One can understand the meaningful character of a structure only from an aggregate of actual situations in which the subject, already structured by its previous development, tries to change old structures in order to answer problems posed by these situations. Eventually, these efforts of the subject will gradually modify its actual structure to the degree that external influences, or even the behavior of the subject and its action upon the surrounding world, will have a transforming effect and pose new problems.⁶⁰

Goldmann takes pains to articulate his analyses not only in terms of the static organization of social structures, but also in terms of their dynamic development and transformation. From a methodological point of view, both synchronic and diachronic analyses of structure are necessary, though not individually sufficient, elements of sociological research.⁶¹ The diachronic component takes as its object the processes by which structures reproduce and transform one another.

A continual process of destabilizing and restabilizing structuration is at work in the social world. According to Goldmann, “human realities are presented as two-sided processes: *destruction* of old structurations and *structuration* of new totalities capable of creating equilibria capable of satisfying the new demands of the social groups that are elaborating them.”⁶² The idea that social systems tend toward equilibria is a structuralist formulation of a problem general to late Marxism, namely why dominant social structures persist even in the face of direct opposition and attempts at revolutionary

⁵⁹ Interestingly, Althusser is denied this title.

⁶⁰ Goldmann, *Essays on Method in the Sociology of Literature*, 93.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Goldmann, *Towards a Sociology of the Novel*, 156.

political action. To Goldman the appeal of structuralism is its emphasis on the form rather than the content of cultural works; while a work may be radical in content, it will inevitably reproduce the dominant structure of the society in which it was created, thereby unintentionally subverting its own explicit aim. The structural analysis of social systems appears, then, as a way of accounting not only for social change, but for social stability as well. This will be a central motivation for Bourdieu's sociological program.

For Goldmann, one way of identifying the reproduction of social structures is to look for homologies between structures on different levels, for example between social class and the novel. This is a promising strategy, since "the collective character of literary creation derives from the fact that the *structures* of the world of the work are homologous with the mental structures of certain social groups or is in intelligible relation with them."⁶³ It is tempting to read Bourdieu's understanding of homology as structural isomorphism back into Goldmann, but this would be an unwarranted speculation. Goldmann's notion of homology remains vague for the duration of his theoretical output. Boelhower remarks that, "In *Le Litterature et le social*, perplexity over this concept is nearly unanimous. These critics suggest that perhaps homology means parallelism, superimposition, juxtaposition, emanation, converging action, reciprocity or analogy."⁶⁴ I suggest that Goldmann means, minimally, something like structural similarity. He himself suggests that where true homologies are not forthcoming, suggesting likenesses may suffice. Whatever Goldmann himself has in mind, however, it is evident that the idea

⁶³ Ibid., 159.

⁶⁴ Boelhower, "Introduction," 31.

was of crucial significance for Bourdieu, as it becomes central to his method of analyzing social space.

The notion of insertion may be a more promising case, although this is not a concept that has a clear analogue in Bourdieu. According to Goldmann, “The progress of a piece of genetic-structuralist research consists in the fact of delimiting groups of empirical data that constitute structures, relative totalities, in which they can later be inserted as elements in other, larger, but similar structures, and so on.”⁶⁵ This is another way of saying that structural wholes can always be reconstrued as structural parts, lending part-whole analysis a universal applicability, which, for Goldmann, is prescriptive for social science. Take Goldmann’s example:

... to elucidate the tragic structure of Pascal’s *Pensees* and Racine’s tragedies is a process of comprehension; to insert them into extremist Jansenism by uncovering the structure of this school of thought is a process of comprehension in relation to the latter, but a process of explanation in relation to the writings of Pascal and Racine; to insert extremist Jansenism into the over-all history of Jansenism is to explain the first and to understand the second. To insert Jansenism, as a movement of ideological expression, into the history of the seventeenth-century *noblesse de robe* is to explain Jansenism and to understand the *noblesse de robe*. To insert the history of the *noblesse de robe* into the over-all history of French society is to explain it by understanding the latter, and so on. Explanation and understanding are not therefore *two* different intellectual processes, but one and the same process applied to two frames of reference.⁶⁶

Goldmann seems to be asserting an overarching, singular spatial construct that allows him to treat works, individuals, groups, social movements, and broad historical conditions. Any social structure can be explained in terms of its part-whole relations to a larger structure of which it is a part or to the smaller structures that comprise it. The implication here is of a single continuous space with no theoretical breaks or “levels.” As

⁶⁵ Goldmann, *Towards a Sociology of the Novel*, 162.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 162-163.

Goldmann says, "...the relations between the truly important work and the social group, which—through the medium of the creator—is, *in the last resort, the true subject of creation*, are of the same order as relations between the elements of the work and the work as a whole."⁶⁷ On such a model, all relations are in a strict sense of the same type—they can all be modeled as distances and positions in the same space.

It is equally reasonable to read Goldmann as advocating a contrary view, however, and asserting a direct causal relationship between the inserted and the "englobing"⁶⁸ structure. This would imply a discontinuous theoretical space constructed of hierarchically organized levels. The concept of insertion would here be a directional one where lower-order structures can be theoretically inserted into, and therefore causally explain, higher-order ones. Goldmann often refers to theoretical "planes" and "levels." There is reason to believe, however, that the ambiguity here is intentional, and that Goldmann's official view might be that there is no strict distinction between continuous and discontinuous spaces, just as there is none between continuous and discontinuous historical processes. Instead, Goldmann might invite us, as he does in the case of historical processes, to discover continuity *in* discontinuity, to see each member of the pair as functioning as the condition for the possibility of the other. This is speculative of course, but it is not difficult to imagine Bourdieu reading Goldmann's work and seeing in it the way forward to a conception of social space in which discontinuities of representation (subjective and objective moments of social space require a shift in point

⁶⁷ Ibid., 158.

⁶⁸ This is William Mayrl's term.

of view) enable continuities of causality (subjective and objective moments of social space produce one another in their structure).

Bachelard

So far my account of the spatial metaphors and models that influenced Bourdieu has focused on the tradition following Cassirer, and for good reason: it is Cassirer's insistence on the relationality and systematicity of scientific models that inevitably leads to the development of spatial models. But notice should also be taken of the impact of the philosophy of science of Gaston Bachelard, under whom Bourdieu studied at the École Normale Supérieure. Bourdieu adopted, or rather adapted, Bachelard's epistemology of natural science for his own sociological epistemology.⁶⁹ Bachelard's account of the scientific attitude as the "realization of the rational"⁷⁰—the movement from the abstract and theoretical to the concrete and experiential—explains in part why Bourdieu's conceptualization of social space has the status of a model as opposed to a mere metaphor. Within the domain of scientific practice, general epistemic constructivism and scientific constructivism may be treated as co-extensive. The epistemic stance of the scientist therefore presupposes that its models can be treated as if they were "as real as" the structures of the natural (or social) world. Moreover, the systematic character of the genuine model—the fact that it has a complex structure and is integrated with models of

⁶⁹ See Vandenberghe, "The Real is Relational: "An Epistemological Analysis of Pierre Bourdieu's Generative Structuralism."

⁷⁰ Bachelard, *The New Scientific Spirit*.

related phenomena—provides bridging explanations between disparate areas of study and suggests new lines of research.

Bachelard addresses the scientific status of spatial models in the opening pages of his 1938 work, *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*. There Bachelard suggests that spatial modeling is a good indication of successful scientific thought, but that it must be regarded only as an intermediary stage, and does not represent the culmination of scientific explanation. Scientific thought begins with a naïve realist view of the geometrical structure of nature. This view is characterized, for Bachelard, by the metrical analysis of phenomena, as exemplified by Cartesian and Newtonian mechanics. The understanding of nature that results from such theorizing is inadequate and more abstract methods are inevitably sought out:

We gradually feel the need to work *beneath* space, so to speak, at the level of those essential relations upholding both space and phenomena. Scientific thought is thus drawn towards ‘constructions’ that are more metaphorical than real, towards ‘configuration spaces’ of which perceptible space is, after all, only one poor example.⁷¹

And although these constructions are “more metaphorical than real,” they nonetheless *become* real, for the epistemic vision of systematic scientific modeling. The proper progression of scientific thought is thus as follows (this is formulated in reference to the natural sciences):

First, there is *the concrete stage* in which the mind delights in the phenomenon’s first images and draws on a philosophical literature glorifying nature and celebrating rather curiously both the world’s unity and its rich diversity.

Second, there is *the concrete-abstract stage* in which the mind adds geometrical schemata to physical experience and draws on a philosophy of simplicity. The mind is

⁷¹ Bachelard, *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*, 17.

once again in a paradoxical situation: the more clearly is its abstraction represented by sensory intuition, the surer it is of this abstraction.

Third, there is *the abstract stage* in which the mind sets to work on information deliberately abstracted from the intuition of real space, deliberately detached from immediate experience and even engaged in an open polemic with primary reality, which is always impure and formless.⁷²

Bourdieu's social space can be thought of as a third-stage model in Bachelard's terms. The space it postulates is removed from "real" space by several orders of abstraction. This "configuration space" is regarded, however, as having experientially concrete analogues embodied in the habitus of the individual agents that the space models. The concrete phenomenology is that of "knowing one's place" or having a "feel for the game". But these analogues are not structurally identical to the "objective" scientific model that Bourdieu constructs. They are instead always regarded as distorted by the practical interests of the agent, which are themselves products of his or her position in social space. Thus, Bourdieu's understanding of social space goes beyond the letter of Bachelard's epistemology in taking into account both the falsifications of abstraction as well as the falsifications of concreteness. Bourdieu the scientist is aware, in other words, that the distortions of vision implicit in the holding of a particular position, apply to himself as well as to the agents that are the objects of his research. The falsifications of concreteness apply even when the concrete practice being performed is one of scientific theorizing. Wacquant explains Bourdieu's position this way: "...to admit the priority of theory entails no contradiction here, since Bourdieu's understanding of theory itself is not logocentric but practical: for him, theory inheres not in discursive propositions but in the

⁷² Ibid, 20.

generative dispositions of the scientific habitus.”⁷³ Thus instead of purely moving towards scientific abstraction, Bourdieuean social space manages to be simultaneously, or, if you prefer, alternately, abstract *and* concrete.

Weber

According to Bourdieu, the occasion for the initial formulation of his theory of social space was his reading of the section on the sociology of religion in Max Weber’s *Economy and Society*.⁷⁴ Weber’s theory itself does not employ any sort of spatial framework, but it evidently comes close enough that Bourdieu needed only to read “between the lines” to uncover the “interactionist”—and therefore field theoretic—view that it implied. Weber attempts to establish a typology of religious figures, the most important of these being prophets, priests and magicians. In cataloguing the characteristics of each type, however, Weber is forced to admit that the reality is rife with exceptions and that the categories actually blend into one another rather than obey any strictly rational system of differentiation:

Applied to reality, this contrast is fluid, as are almost all sociological phenomena. Even the theoretical differentiae of these types are not unequivocally determinable... this distinction, which is clear enough conceptually, is fluid in actuality... Rather the distinction must be established qualitatively.⁷⁵

⁷³ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 35.

⁷⁴ See Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion*, 72-78, and Bourdieu, “Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field” and “Legitimation and Structured Interests in Weber’s Sociology of Religion.”

⁷⁵ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 425 quoted in Bourdieu, “Legitimation and Structured Interests in Weber’s Sociology of Religion,” 120.

According to Weber, the way the defining characteristics are distributed among the types always depends on their interactions with one another and with the interests and expectations of the laity. In other words, the type of religious leader that successfully establishes himself in a position of authority in a given society, and the type of message that this leader comes to represent, is the outcome of a match between the particular set of characteristics that the religious figure possesses (which can be quite complex) and the particular religious needs of their prospective congregation. The development of religious structures exemplifies Bourdieu's way of seeing reality, namely, as "a particular case of the possible."

The model that is strongly implied by Weber's account—that of a market—is interpreted by Bourdieu as being on the right track, but insufficiently complex to account for the range of data. One of Weber's objectives in his sociology of religion is to understand the ways that religious and economic phenomena interact. His analysis therefore focuses on instances of overlap between market forces and religious organization, for example the economic dependence of monks on the production of beer and wine, or the absence of a "capitalist spirit" among devout Buddhists. The view that Weber arrives at is that the religious sphere constitutes a kind of market, albeit a somewhat deficient one. According to him, "A market can be said to exist wherever there is competition, even in only unilateral, for opportunities of exchange among a plurality of potential parties."⁷⁶ Social formations like religion meet this basic requirement in that a variety of religious figures with a diffuse array of religious "goods" compete for legitimacy and must successfully market themselves to a laity with a particular range of

⁷⁶ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 635.

religious needs. Religions fall short of recommending a full-blown market model, however, since they “rationaliz[e] their social action only in part,” whereas the money economy represents “the archetype of all rational social action.”⁷⁷ Unlike the monetary economy, which is “rationally organized,” “continuous” and “closed,” the economy of religion is frequently “amorphous,” “intermittent” and “open.”⁷⁸

Bourdieu’s contribution here is that he recognizes the appropriateness of the concept of field to organize the disparate data that Weber is struggling with. The conception of the religious field that Bourdieu arrives at is that of an encompassing space in which religious leaders compete *through the strategic occupation of positions*, which are associated with various types of religious capital, for example charisma, doctrinal knowledge, intellectualism, guild membership, and so on. Religious dynamics are thus reconceived as playing out in a symbolic space that circumscribes the possibilities for religious organization. The players—the various types of religious figures and the laity—are understood as occupying positions relative to one another by means of the assignment of differing types and amounts of religious capital. Moreover, each player has his or her own subjective representation of the field, distorted to emphasize his or her specific interests. The laity expects its prospective religious leaders to possess a combination of the forms of religious capital favorably suited to their specific (religious as well as economic) needs. As for the religious figures themselves, “what is at stake is the monopoly of the legitimate exercise of power to modify, in a deep and lasting fashion,

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

the practice and world-view of lay-people.”⁷⁹ Bourdieu thus transforms Weber’s concept of religious interest into a concept of the strategically minded subjective representation of the objective structure of the religious field. Moreover, since this objective field is constantly being transformed by the actions of a multitude of agents, each of which acts according to a subjective and strategically-minded representation of it, the dynamics of the religious field amount to a complex dialectical process. This dialectical process, however, is always the result of the totality of all subject-object interactions.

In this way Bourdieu effectively spatializes Weber’s economic model while at the same time clarifying his original intent. As Bourdieu says, “I constructed the notion of field both *against* Weber and *with* Weber.”⁸⁰ Bourdieu’s view is that Weber saw the situation in its full complexity, but failed to make the requisite shift to an appropriately relational and systematic model:

It is only by constructing the religious field as the set of all the objective relations between positions that we can arrive at the principle which explains the direct interactions between social agents and the strategies they may employ against each other. Only such a construction can rescue us from the characteristically Aristotelian logic of *typological* thought, which, being founded upon the primacy accorded to elements over relations and the bracketing out of the historical singularity of the different configurations of the religious field—and therefore of the objective relations between the protagonists competing in the religious domain—can capture the diversity of variant forms only by producing an endless list of exceptions to the realist definitions with which it operates.⁸¹

The notion of field creates the possibility of modeling the inherent interestedness of the individuals and groups that participate in the struggle for religious power. In Bourdieu’s view, “every field is the site of a more or less openly declared struggle for the definition

⁷⁹ Bourdieu, “Legitimation and Structured Interests in Weber’s Sociology of Religion,” 126.

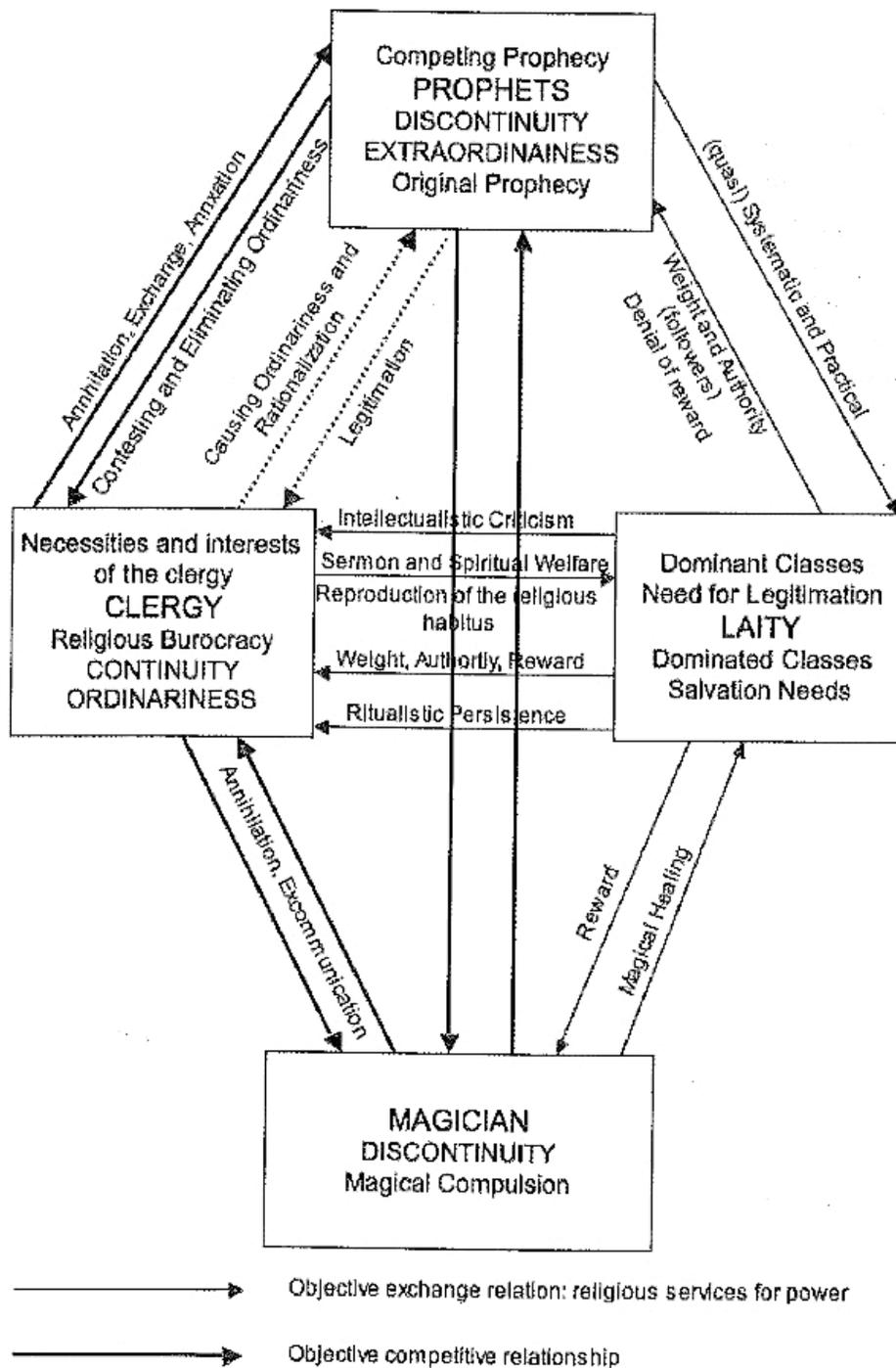
⁸⁰ Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, 49.

⁸¹ Bourdieu, “Legitimation and Structured Interests in Weber’s Sociology of Religion,” 122.

of the legitimate principles of division of the field.”⁸² The spatial model is versatile enough to capture both the “objective” dynamics of the situation as well as the strategically distorted views that each group of agents has of it. Conceiving of social space as a field of force allows the theorist to account for the fact that one of the central strategies of social struggle is the effort to impose a particular view of the situation as the only legitimate one. As Bourdieu says, “What is at stake in the struggles about the meaning of the social world is power over the classificatory schemes and systems which are the basis of the representations of the groups and therefore of their mobilization and demobilization.”⁸³ Social space is capable of capturing in a unified way both the classificatory schemes that are at stake and the arena of struggle itself, since both are conceived as *spaces* in which groups and agents are distributed and act to redistribute themselves.

⁸² Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 242.

⁸³ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 479.



4. Bourdieu's diagram of the structure of the religious field. Source: Schultheis, "Salvation Goods and Domination," 50.

Conclusion: Bourdieuan Social Space as Model

By way of closing this discussion, I would like to return to the discussion of metaphors and models with which I began. Max Black explains that scientific models are metaphors that function additionally as “speculative instruments” in that they “bring about a wedding of disparate subjects by a distinctive operation of transfer of the *implications* of relatively well-organized cognitive fields”⁸⁴ and thus help us to “*see new connections.*” Whereas metaphors are simply “heuristic fictions,” images that help us visualize an abstract concept, models carry with them an interpretive framework that allows the scientist to relate disparate phenomena and thus to formulate explanations and hypotheses.

It is because models allow for the analogical extension of systems of scientific concepts that they tend to become ontologized. Models solidify in the scientific imagination. As Mary Hesse notes, they usually start out as simple, non-systematic metaphors. As they acquire technical meaning and are linked systematically with existing theoretical constructs, they gradually become divorced from their original contexts and take on a more or less autonomous significance: “thus ‘particle’ in physics may come out to mean not ‘hard, coloured, spherical object which...’, but ‘singularity in the electromagnetic field which...’ or ‘wave-packet which...’”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 237.

⁸⁵ Hesse, *Forces and Fields*, 25.

Scientific theoretical systems tend to be complex amalgams of mixed metaphors. Bourdieu's system is no different. In addition to spatial models, he also makes extensive use of the models of the economy and of games, and it is only by blending these disparate frameworks together that the full sense of his view can be expressed. The blending of models in complex theoretical systems is indistinguishable from the ontologizing of the specific models that contribute to them. It is perhaps because science as a whole is generally regarded as the true description of reality that its more entrenched components themselves tend to become regarded as real. The more systematically a model is linked with neighboring concepts (which need not themselves be derived from the model's metaphorical sources), the deeper it extends its explanatory fingers into the theoretical discourse that surrounds it, the more likely it is to be taken for granted in the thoughts and practices of the scientific community that has adopted it.⁸⁶

Bourdieu's social space is best understood as a fully articulated and functioning model in the scientific sense, and not simply an illustrative or heuristic metaphor. As Bourdieu himself says in reference to the concept of field, "we must not remain on the level of what is merely a convenient image."⁸⁷ Not only are the individual fields discussed by Bourdieu related to one another by structural homologies, but the model of social space itself is fully integrated into a larger system of concepts, including the central ones of capital and habitus, so much so that it cannot be completely understood

⁸⁶ It may be argued that the tendency for scientific models to become ontologized is an epistemic precondition for the accumulation of facts under what Kuhn calls "normal science." This ontologization remains a tendency, and not a *fait accompli*, however, since scientists may always label models, even pervasive and solidified ones, as tentative, potentially improvable or defeasible. Properly speaking, ontology remains open, whether or not agents engaged in the process of ontologization recognize it as such. For clarification on this topic, see the discussion of objectivist and subjectivist points of view in Chapter 4.

⁸⁷ Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, 140.

without them, nor they without it. Bourdieu consistently characterizes social space in terms of the axes of capital that define its form, and the positions and dispositions (habitus) that comprise its content. It is impossible to operate with the notion of capital in a Bourdieuan context without understanding that capital is understood to vary along dimensions of structure and volume, as well as the temporal dimension. Likewise, it is impossible to employ the notion of habitus without conceiving it as a set of dispositions whose structure is the exact compliment of that of the social space, since the two are constantly in the process of restructuring one another in their own image. Spatial concepts thus run through the entire Bourdieuan theoretical idiom in a way that connects and unifies its different parts. The fact that Bourdieu always sought collaborative application of his methods by involving teams of associated researchers, in addition to the growing number of studies that have chosen to adopt his theoretical framework, imply something akin to the communitarian understanding indicative of a Kuhnian paradigm. It was Bourdieu's goal, after all, to overturn the prevailing Durkheimian model of social science. Perhaps his overdue formalization of the spatial framework of social science is the model that will finally accomplish it.

Bourdieu's social space should thus be regarded as a model of social phenomena and not merely as a metaphor. The model's systematic internal coherence, integration with the rest of Bourdieu's metatheory, and numerical elaboration, each of which contributes to its status as such, will be drawn out in the excursus of Bourdieu's field theory that comprises the following chapter. The foregoing genealogy, however, supplies evidence that the graduation of space to the status of a model in Bourdieu is prefigured by the gradual and

partial movements that it made in that direction in the work of prior social theorists. If the notion of social space became explicit for Bourdieu in his study of Weber's sociology of religion, it is because Weber's account of prophets and religious goods presented the need for a spatial model, but did not itself move beyond metaphorical reasoning. In interpreting Weber's account, however, Bourdieu could draw on his predecessors' attempts at spatial modeling, especially Goldmann and Althusser, to supply the theory that Weber's data seemed to demand. Bourdieu's social space model is the result of a complicated but remarkably unified lineage of previous conceptualizations of space, spatial analogies, and spatial models for social phenomena. It is already evident that the model is, due to the influence of Cassirer, Althusser and others, an objective, structural and relational whole. Moreover, it is also evident that in addition to this, social space is also a pseudo-Kantian condition for the possibility of intuitively and conceptually grasping social relations. I will explore this dual nature of social space in detail in Chapter 4.

Plan of the Present Work

In what follows, Chapters 2 and 3 represent an excursus of the relevant material from a wide range of sources in Bourdieu's *oeuvre*, and are conceived as mutually complimentary. In Chapter 2 I synthesize his theory of social space, focusing primarily on its characteristics as an objective model, while in Chapter 3 I draw out Bourdieu's understanding of the role of physical space in the process of social reproduction. In

Chapter 4, which is the philosophical core of the work, I demonstrate how, as an empirically robust and epistemologically intuitive social-scientific model, social space facilitates the objective representation as well as the subjective understanding of social phenomena. There I argue for a dialectical understanding of the relations between social space and physical space. This is my own extension of Bourdieu's work, but it remains rooted in the logic of his theory. Chapters 5 and 6, another complimentary pair, apply this extension of Bourdieu's work to phenomena in which the reproduction of structures in social space is carried out in and through physical space, and vice versa. Chapter 5 is a case study of office tower districts in contemporary cities and Chapter 6 is a study of deconstructionist architecture. In both cases the intent is to explain interactions between social organization and the built environment in terms of the framework developed in the previous chapters.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL TOPOLOGY

Introduction

When Pierre Bourdieu died in 2002, he had not yet completed a book on the general theory of fields, which he had been planning since he gave a lecture course on that topic in the mid-eighties. The conception of social space, which first appeared in Bourdieu's essay on Weber's sociology of religion in 1971, brought about an immediate change in Bourdieu's theoretical output, enabling the sweeping immensity of his 1975 analysis of French culture in *Distinction*. The success of this work secured for that framework a central position in his sociological thought that it would retain for the remainder of his career. The conception of social space or field (Bourdieu uses the terms interchangeably) is so integral with and indispensable to Bourdieu's theory of social practice that, for him, "sociology presents itself as *social topology*."⁸⁸ As such, it is applied in the same systematic and rigorous way that the concept of field has been applied in physics. In other words, social space functions as a scientific model of the social world, one that is systematically integrated with the whole of Bourdieu's theory and is regarded as objectively accurate. It describes and explains the reproduction of social relations by tracing the determinations between (1) the objective structure of those relations as witnessed by the sociologist and (2) the myriad subjective versions of that system of relations as constructed and practiced by interested social agents. Please note

⁸⁸ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 229. Italics original.

that the seemingly problematic use of such terms as “objective,” “subjective,” and “constructed,” here follow Bourdieu’s usage. I will address and hopefully resolve objections to this usage in Chapter 4.

In this chapter I will present the basic features of social space in the abstract, with an eye toward its integration with Bourdieu’s overall theory of practice. My aim is to illuminate the conceptual features that recommend Bourdieuan social space over alternative spatial schemas employed in the social sciences. I will begin with a discussion of the static features of social space in its diagrammatic form and proceed from there to its practical and dynamic properties. I will then consider social space in relation to two alternative spatial schemas used in sociology, namely Pitirim Sorokin’s theory of sociocultural space and the contemporary trend toward social network analysis.

First, however, the ontological status of social space should be clarified. Bourdieu tells us that social space is “just as real as geographical space.”⁸⁹ The significance of this assertion is twofold. First, social space is not to be regarded as a merely rhetorical or metaphorical device to illustrate sociological concepts. It refers to the arena of structured relations and representations that exist in the social world. Second, social space is real because, like all real things, it is a social construction. Bourdieu thus presupposes a social constructivist ontology according to which social space, geographical space, as well as the conception of space advanced by contemporary physics, are all produced by historical processes of construction. Moreover, these processes of construction are inextricably dependant on one another, so that it is unreasonable to posit an original space from which the others are derived. Even

⁸⁹ Ibid, 232.

phenomenological considerations (see Chapter 3) can be regarded as primary only in a perceptual, but not an ontological, sense.

A Field of Force

Bourdieu represents social space diagrammatically as a coordinate plane, the axes of which define a Cartesian space of two dimensions, while a third dimension—time—is assumed but not pictured. The definitive axes measure the volume and structure of capital, the variables according which social agents, along with organizations, institutions, cultural artifacts and practices, are distributed. The idea of the volume of capital is familiar enough, but the idea of a variable structure of capital requires some explanation. Bourdieu breaks with traditional Marxism in that he operates with an expanded notion of capital. For Bourdieu, capital takes variety of different forms, not merely economic, but also social and cultural, as well as a number of “subtypes” of capital, including religious, academic, political, and so on. Social capital, for example, is “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition,”⁹⁰ whereas cultural capital refers to the accumulated cultural competencies that an individual acquires, by his or her selection and/or mastery of particular cultural practices, bearings, tastes, refinements and so on, and which bestow upon their holder a determinate rank, prestige or authority. Cultural capital, which, along with economic capital, is the form most relevant to the analysis in *Distinction*, can reveal itself in ways as obvious as the individual’s occupation, hobbies

⁹⁰ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 119.

and style of dress, and as subtle as his vocabulary, posture, pronunciation and sense of humor. All manner of cultural phenomena can be ranked according to the share of cultural capital they impart.

The choice to define social space in terms of capital is motivated by the goal of illuminating *power* relations in particular, meaning that social space always admits of division into dominant and subordinate regions. It also means, as we shall see, that social space is a space both of domination and, less frequently, of resistance to domination. Due to this notion of power, which can be thought of as the context of tensions arising from the uneven distribution and structural effects of the volume and structure of capital, social space functions as a “field of forces.”⁹¹ This phrasing is intended to suggest a conceptual affinity with the electro-magnetic fields of physics, namely that the effects of particles and aggregates, identified in social space with individuals and groups, are explained in terms of their production of forces, which act on the space as a whole and exert a determinate influence on the other inhabitants of the space. The concept of action at a distance, a necessary one for both physics and sociology, presupposes a space of active forces—a force field. In such a field, “the agents... create, through their relationships, the very space that determines them, although it only exists through the agents placed in it, who, to use the language of physics, ‘distort the space in their neighborhood,’ conferring a certain structure upon it.”⁹²

In a typical diagram of social space (see fig. 5), the horizontal axis represents the structure of capital, that is, the proportion of one’s capital that is either cultural or

⁹¹ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 230.

⁹² Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity*, 33.

economic, whereas the vertical axis measures the overall volume of capital that the individual possesses, both cultural and economic. The distribution of agents in social space with respect to these axes is what Bourdieu refers to as their *location*. For example, artistic producers and secondary teachers occupy a location in the upper left quadrant of social space, since they have a large amount of total capital that is mostly cultural, whereas private sector executives and engineers are located in the upper central portion since their total capital is weighted more toward the economic. The location of individuals in social space is contrasted with their *position*. Whereas location is fixed by reference to the axes, position refers to the distribution of individuals with respect to one another. It is the concept of position that is more important to Bourdieu's sociology because the structure of social space is essentially a relational structure. The spatial representation of society facilitates the relational mode of thought, which focuses on relations between individuals and groups rather than on the individuals and groups themselves. This relationality results from what Bourdieu, following Peter F. Strawson,⁹³ sees as the essential feature of space itself, namely, the mutual exteriority of positions. It is the notion that positions are, by definition, different and distinct from one another that motivates his use of a spatial model:

This idea of difference is the basis of the very notion of space, that is, a set of distinct and coexisting positions which are exterior to one another and which are defined in relation to one another through relations of proximity, vicinity, or distance, as well as through order relations, such as above, below, and between...⁹⁴

⁹³ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*

⁹⁴ Bourdieu, "Physical Space, Social Space and Habitus," 11.

For example, industrialists are positioned near commercial employers, to the right of members of the professions, and far above small shopkeepers and farm laborers. Positions in this sense are essentially oppositions, which define each individual or group by contrasting it with the individuals or groups that it is not, in terms of its distance from and directional orientation towards them. Social space thus preserves the differentiation among individuals and groups that exists in the social world.

Social space is not merely a framework for relating individuals to one another, however. Because of its organization in terms of Bourdieu's expanded notion of capital, it also accommodates all manner of cultural phenomena. Activities and artifacts associated with varying configurations of economic and cultural capital are depicted in social space too. Styles of dress, types of furniture, works of art and music, occupations and hobbies are all included in order to account for their role in the differentiation of social groups. Take tennis, for instance, which is associated with members of the professions and private-sector executives, but not with office workers or craftsmen, or the avant-garde composer Xenakis, who is closely linked to artistic producers and almost no one else. This variety of the content of social space is enabled by the generality of the defining variables, as well as by the association of cultural goods with the individuals and groups that explicitly chose them. This indicates a crucial motivation behind the dual structuring of social space in terms of location and position, namely that it combines the relations between explicitly sanctioned but "disinterested" tastes with seldom acknowledged but highly interested hierarchies of social power. Bourdieu's central conclusion in *Distinction* is that aesthetic taste, which, according to traditional Kantian aesthetics presupposes a disinterested stance, is in fact profoundly *interested*. The spatial

co-representation of these social metrics is what enables Bourdieu to make his case. Cultural choices, tastes and preferences are essential to the differentiation of classes, since, functioning as emblems, they make class differences visible, allow social agents to adjust their choices and behaviors in such a way to produce the desired differentiation of social space:

...the social relations objectified in familiar objects, in their luxury or poverty, their 'distinction' or 'vulgarity', their 'beauty' or 'ugliness', impress themselves through bodily experiences which may be as profoundly unconscious as the quiet caress of beige carpets or the thin clamminess of tattered, garish linoleum, the harsh smell of bleach or perfumes as imperceptible as a negative scent.⁹⁵

Finitude and Structure

It is important that social space is conceived of as a finite space, its finitude allowing for the meaningful assignation of values to its various regions of differentiation. A position can be high or low with respect to the abstract ticks on an axis, but this lacks social meaning, since it is not with respect to an abstract standard that real social agents measure themselves. A *social* position can only be high or low with respect to other social positions. Social space is thus limited to positions that are actually occupied, merely "possible" spaces outside of it being meaningless because they have no analogue in the social world. Within this limited space, each position constitutes a meaningful condition—an agent's own condition—in which he or she is naturally interested. In spatial terms, social positions are meaningful not only because of where they are but

⁹⁵ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 77.

because of where they are not. Positions are meaningful, in other words, because they are *distinct* from one another.

Certain characteristically structuralist features are evident in this conception of social space. Bourdieu elaborates on an essentially structuralist insight when he notes that the finitude of the space enforces the “relational mode of thought.” Positions in social space are close-packed: there is a place for everything and everything is in its place. The notion of a gap or an empty space does not apply. This is because “every position... depends for its very existence and for the determinations it imposes on its occupants, on the other positions constituting the field.”⁹⁶ Thus social space is, along each of its dimensions, a continuum, and the divisions between particular positions and regions should be thought of first and foremost as differentiations (or “distinctions”). In this sense, social space is a structure in the sense meant by traditional structuralism. Oppositions arise only by their being differentiated out of a continuous range similar to, say, the range of phonemes. For structural linguistics, meaning arose from the mapping of one set of distinctions on another—the distinctions between signifiers and the distinctions between signifieds. No such one-to-one correspondence is assumed here, but significance is still assigned to the distinctions produced along the various continua. Here, however, the complexity of the social world is preserved by the inclusion of the generous array of continua mentioned above. The questionnaire and observation schedule that Bourdieu used to collect the data for *Distinction* are concerned with no fewer than fifty different variables, and representatives from each of these continua appear in his diagrams of social space.

⁹⁶ Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production,” 30.

It is the relations between positions in social space that constitute meaningful social divisions such as class: “the closer the agents, groups or institutions which are situated in this space, the more common properties they have; and the more distant, the fewer.”⁹⁷ The inclusion not only of agents, but also institutions, occupations, genres of artwork, and so on in the same space, evaluated in terms of the structure and volume of their associated capital, but juxtaposed now with one another, allows for the visualization of affinities, oppositions and hierarchies among these items.

⁹⁷ Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” 16.

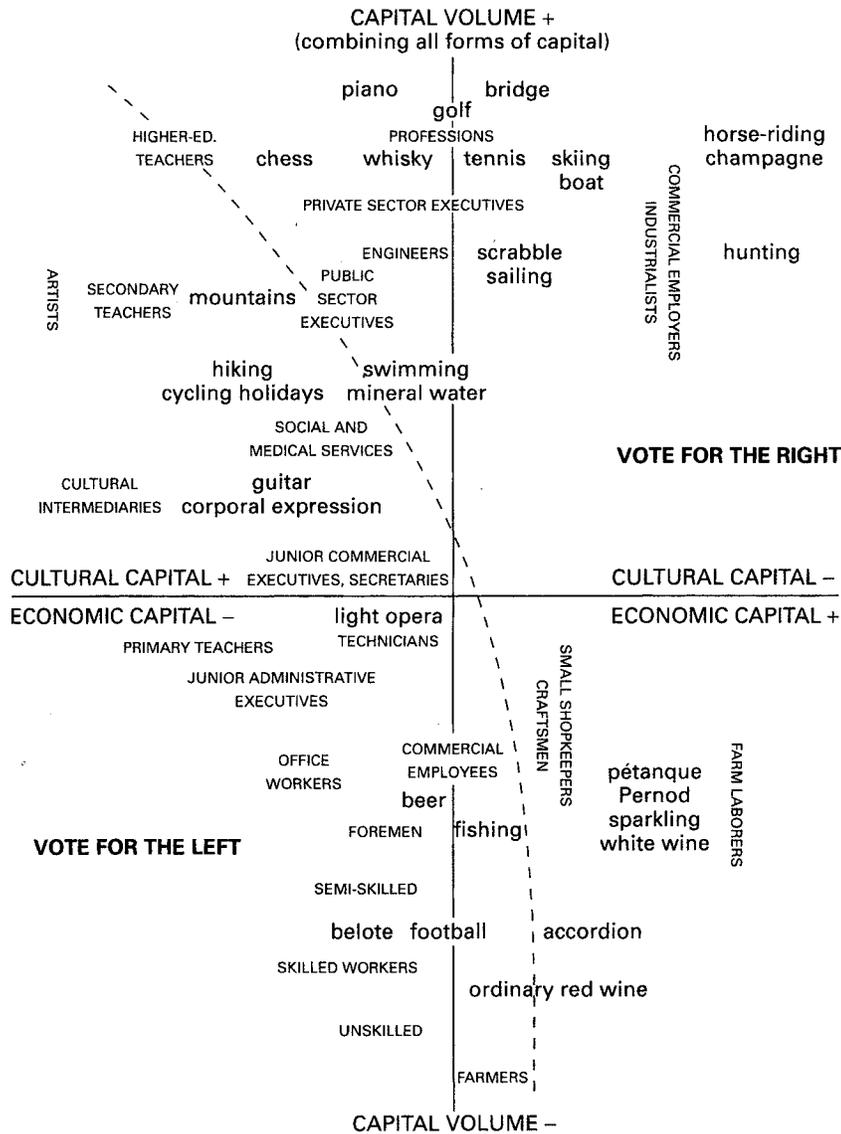


Figure 5. A greatly simplified diagram of the social space of French culture. Source: Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, 5

All the features of social space must be considered as a structured whole: its form and content, as well as its different species of content. The form of and content of social space—the space itself and its contents—are defined in terms of one another and together form a closed system. At the level of form, social space can be viewed in two complementary ways: as a space of locations, ordered by a single independent standard

(the pure magnitudes associated with the variables of structure and volume of capital), or as a space of positions, organized by mutual exclusion. Neither of these options is logically or ontologically primary. At the level of content, the particular located and positioned agents, practices, artworks, occupations and so on, each contribute to the overall articulation of the space, and therefore contribute collectively to the bounded identity of every other item in the space. In this way, “the agents... determine the structure of the field that determines them.”⁹⁸

A Field of Struggle

In addition to location and position, social space as a structural whole also includes the *dispositions*, and finally the actions, the *position-takings*, of the agents that occupy it. The discussion of dispositions and actions requires us to introduce the third axis of social space—time.

If one simply glances at the diagrams of social space that Bourdieu presents, one misses the all-important role that time plays in his model. One must differentiate, however, between two relevant senses of time. First, time can be thought of in the ordinary way as the measured succession of the objective states of the system. More important to the conception of social space, however, are the multitude of subjective, practical senses of time possessed by each of the social agents represented. The notion of the time of social practice takes the model beyond its origin in the concept of an electromagnetic field: “social fields are force-fields but also fields of struggle to transform or

⁹⁸ Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity*, 33.

preserve these force fields.”⁹⁹ Because social space is a field of struggle, the phenomenological time of the agents engaged in strategic practice is as important as objective time. The metaphors of a battle or game that Bourdieu is fond of alluding to reveal that temporality is at the core of the constant practice of social agents, since they are always engaged in a more or less conscious routine of *position-taking*. Agents not only find themselves in a given position, but they also seek to rise above inferior positions, hold favorable ones, and give the impression of occupying positions more favorable than the ones they actually hold. Groups in dominant positions also influence other agents’ perception of the field in order to impose their view of it as the single legitimate one. All of this involves a highly developed ability not only to represent social space but also to anticipate its changes. Actual position-takings in social space have to be understood in terms practical time as well. It is a practical concern, for example, to organize a closely positioned set of agents into a politically mobilized group or to convert one’s cultural capital into economic capital (or vice versa) in order to produce the desired movement. Thus the “synoptic diagram” presented above, unless properly understood as a mere fragment of the overall model of social space, obscures the crucial fact that practical, and therefore temporal, considerations always apply. As Bergson says, “Images can never be anything but things, and thought is a movement.”¹⁰⁰ Bourdieu would add, so is social and cultural behavior.

According to Bourdieu, the positioning engaged in by social agents is facilitated by the incorporation of a set of *dispositions*, collectively referred to as the habitus, which

⁹⁹ Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, 194.

¹⁰⁰ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 125.

constrain the social behavior of agents and determine to large extent the way they are perceived by other agents. Habitus are defined as

...systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.¹⁰¹

This definition of habitus emphasizes two important features. First, since the practices and representations that the habitus produces are understood to determine the structure of social space, habitus functions as a “structured structuring structure” in relation to social space. Habitus and field comprise a dynamic unity that can only be grasped in its entirety with the introduction of the temporal dimension in which the process occurs. Second, habitus allows for the smooth functioning of the agents’ engagement with the social world by *predisposing* the agent to perceive and act within that world in a routine way. Its effect is thus to provide the illusion that cultural practices and preferences are natural and innate, whereas they are in fact the product of education and enculturation, both of which result from the social position that the agent is born into. The result is that the cultural capital associated with an individual or group seems independent of class hierarchies, but is in fact complicit in the reproduction of those hierarchies.

This highly structured space, which is continuously restructured by the action of habitus, thus appears as a “space of possibles,” where each agent is faced with a certain constrained set of possibilities for position taking. Since the habitus is structured by this space, it enables agents to discover the positions that fit them best, which are subjectively

¹⁰¹ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 53.

the most comfortable and objectively the most probable. If we consider social space as a game, then “the habitus as the feel for the game is the social game embodied and turned into a second nature.”¹⁰² The habitus is literally incorporated by long exposure to a given region of social space. The body itself is disposed to feeling at ease in certain social contexts as opposed to others. One is most likely to be at ease while engaging with members of groups from close regions in social space, which are also likely to be one’s friends, neighbors, coworkers, and so on. As Bourdieu says, “habitus being the social embodied, it is “at home” in the field it inhabits...”¹⁰³ The total situation corresponding to the occupation of a given position in social space, which commonly spelled out in terms of education, upbringing and “socialization” determines the habitus’ creation and development. If one’s father was a skilled worker, it is more likely that one will be comfortable in a conversation about football than opera. This probability has little significance in and of itself, however, because the father’s occupation as well as the cultural practice of conversing on football or opera is merely an indicator of a position in social space, which is a function of the totality of relations and which has determinate effects on the totality of relations. Particular position-takings, like those that might go on in the discourse in question, can at most be regarded as statistical truths. The bodily inclination to approach a certain type of conversation partner, the sense of assurance with which one speaks on a given topic, and the physiological response of discomfort when trapped in a conversation on a topic that arouses no interest, are all tendencies of the habitus.

¹⁰² Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, 63.

¹⁰³ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 128.

Since the habitus determines position—or, properly speaking, determines a range of possible positions of varying probability—and is itself a product of exposure to a position, the relationship between the two should be thought of as dialectical. Bourdieu uses the phrase “dialectic of positions and dispositions”¹⁰⁴ to capture the co-structuration of habitus and field. The structure of social space is determined by a habitus originally formed in response to that very social space. This explains the surprising stability exhibited by social structures. The situation is not one of simple reproduction, however. Instead, the structure of social space at a given phase depends on the collective action of the habitus of every social agent, who generally seeks to maintain or improve his or her position. Thus, the structure of social space cannot be explained by reference to simple causal processes, even the biological action of the habitus. Since each habitus is in effect an incorporated version of the social space, structure must be explained in terms of the structuring tendencies of the total system. Social space thus does not admit of causal processes in the traditional sense, but of what Bourdieu, following Althusser, calls “over-determination”: “through each of the factors is exerted the efficacy of all the others...”¹⁰⁵ The transformation of social space is thus a complex, nonlinear process in which the structure of the space in each phase depends on its total structure in the previous phase.

As internalized social space, habitus functions as one’s “sense of one’s place,”¹⁰⁶ i.e., of one’s position. As such, it can be thought of as a particular “vision” of social space, distorted by one’s own imperative to position oneself strategically. Thus, the social space is constituted by a multitude of mutually exclusive positions, each of which is

¹⁰⁴ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 155.

¹⁰⁵ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 107.

¹⁰⁶ Bourdieu borrows this phrase from Irving Goffman.

associated with a complex set of dispositions, which is determined by the arrangement of positions in the previous iteration of the system, and which determines the next iteration. What keeps the system from simply reproducing itself exactly over and over again is the fact that social agents are imperfect at mobilizing the capital they possess. The habitus is not an infallible guide to action, nor is one's conscious awareness of social position always accurate. Agents who can impose their own view of the structure of social space on others have an upper hand in the struggle to maintain their position. Thus, Bourdieu often says that what is at stake in social space is the vision of that space itself: "Every field is the site of a more or less openly declared struggle for the definition of the legitimate principles of division of that field."¹⁰⁷ This implies a dialectical dynamic between the objective structure of social space and the plurality of subjective versions of it. I will have more to say about the role of this dialectic in Bourdieu's thought in Chapter IV. For now, it will suffice to note that Bourdieu's theory is inclusive of both the objective and subjective views of social space, and indeed that one cannot be understood without the other.

It is therefore important not to lose sight of the overarching significance of social space as a whole, in spite of the fact that the sociologist is frequently forced to operate with fragmentary, partial versions of it:

The mere fact that the social space described here can be presented as a diagram indicates that it is an abstract representation, deliberately constructed, like a map, to give a bird's-eye-view, a point of view on the whole set of points from which ordinary agents (including the sociologist and his reader, in their ordinary behavior) see the social world. Bringing together in simultaneity, in the scope of a single glance—this is its heuristic value—positions which the agents can never apprehend in their totality and in their

¹⁰⁷ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 242.

multiple relationships, social space is to the practice of everyday life, with its distances which are kept or signalled, and neighbors who may be more remote than strangers, what geometrical space is to the 'travelling space' (*espace hodologique*) of ordinary experience, with its gaps and discontinuities.¹⁰⁸

The social space constructed and manipulated by the sociologist is thus akin to a map drawn by a cartographer. And like such a map, it is both more and less accurate than the sense of place and movement experienced by the occupant of the terrain it represents. As the site of interested political struggle, it is not surprising that social space is perceived and distorted uniquely by each agent, consumed by the particular demands of defending his or her own bit of territory. The sociologist is thus a cartographer of political struggle, describing the scene as a whole, discerning its factions and patterns, and uniquely able to pick out interactions at the global scale. The benefit of such an objectivist vision of the social world comes at a cost to the sociologist, however:

He thus secures the means of apprehending the logic of the system which a partial or discrete view would miss; but by the same token, there is every likelihood that he will overlook the change in status to which he is subjecting practice and its products, and consequently that he will insist on trying to answer questions which are not and cannot be questions for practice, instead of asking himself whether the essential characteristic of practice is not precisely the fact that it excludes such questions.¹⁰⁹

The interest of agents in dominating the economy of symbolic goods and the fact that one must play the game from the standpoint of a given position results in each agent having a uniquely distorted view of social space. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu's aim is to model social agents in their "pursuit of distinction," that is, the process by which they define themselves by means of their cultural choices and also seek thereby to preserve or

¹⁰⁸ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 169.

¹⁰⁹ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 106.

improve their position in the field of power. Modeling these dynamics in social space is an improvement on traditional conceptions of social mobility, since it differentiates between types of capital that such conceptions ordinarily conflate. Thus, approaches that fail to distinguish between cultural and economic capital miss the “reconversion strategies” that agents use to secure their social positions. From the point of view of the agent, social space presents itself as a “field of possibles,”¹¹⁰ a space of cultural goods, each of which can be chosen or not chosen, affirmed or denied. Each act of cultural consumption is an “affirmation of difference,”¹¹¹ in other words, an affirmation of position. And, since position is associated with a certain volume and constitution of capital, each act of consumption is also an affirmation of *value* and of *power*. As an economy of symbolic goods, social space can be thought of as the arena in which dominant and subordinate groups constitute themselves and one another:

Because the appropriation of cultural products presupposes dispositions and competences which are not distributed universally (although they have the appearance of innateness), these products are subject to exclusive appropriation, material or symbolic, and, functioning as cultural capital (objectified or internalized), they yield a profit in distinction, proportionate to the rarity of the means required to appropriate them, and a profit in legitimacy, the profit par excellence, which consists in the fact of feeling justified in being (what one is), being what it is right to be.¹¹²

It is clear from this passage that the sociologist’s objectification of social space has a basis in the phenomenological reality of the social agent, although the space perceived by the social agent is always myopic in that (1) it is conditioned to see the agent’s position as legitimate and (2) it treats any inequality arising as a result of the agent’s own position

¹¹⁰ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 227.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid, 228.

as invisible. The sociologist's reconstruction of an objective social space thus corrects for the distortions inevitable in each of its interested, subjective versions. This does not mean that a stable objective point of view has been achieved, however. Bourdieu is adamant about the reflexivity of social space, meaning that it should always be understood to include the sociologist himself among the agents it represents. According to Bourdieu, the sociologist must account for the effects of his own particular and interested social position in producing his "objective" model. I will discuss this aspect of Bourdieu's view in more detail in Chapter 4.

Trajectory

The *trajectory* of agents or groups refers to their change in position and location over time. Since the habitus favors the development of certain behaviors rather than others, resulting in tendencies to embark on certain paths instead of others, an agent's trajectory is constrained by the structure of social space. Social space always has the temporal structure of a "space of possibles" in that, for each position or region, movement of agents or groups can be described as more or less likely from a statistical point of view. From the point of view of the social agent, one career path may appear as a *fait accompli*, whereas another will not even present itself for consideration. The relative attraction of different possibilities are affected by the social space in which the agent already finds him or herself, which is pre-structured by his or her family background, including the occupations of the parents, their income, social ties, and so on. These factors have an influence not only on the level of education the individual is likely to

receive and the lines of work that he or she is likely to pursue, but also on the individual's speech, body language, manners and tastes, all of which have a significant influence on the individual's trajectory.

Bourdieu describes a number of specific "trajectory effects," that describe observable trends in class and individual trajectories. The most general trajectory effect is simply the most likely position to be attained, given a particular initial position and an initial amount and distribution of capital. In addition to this median trajectory, there exist also a number of less likely deviations:

To a given band of inherited capital there corresponds a band of more or less equally probable trajectories leading to more or less equivalent positions (this is the field of the possibles objectively offered to a given agent), and the shift from one trajectory to another often depends on collective events—encounters, affairs, benefactors etc.—which are usually described as (fortunate or unfortunate) accidents, although they themselves depend statistically on the position and disposition of those whom they befall (e.g., the skill in operating 'connections' which enables the holders of high social capital to preserve or increase this capital), when, that is, they are not deliberately contrived by institutions (clubs, family reunions, old boys' or alumni associations etc.) or by the 'spontaneous' intervention of individuals or groups.¹¹³

Other trajectory effects include the "Don Quixote effect," in which the habitus of the individual is the result of a social space that no longer matches well with present conditions, thereby rendering the agent inappropriately attuned to his or her field of possibles.

Collective or "modal" trajectories can be identified when aggregates of individual trajectories are found that maintain a more or less close degree of deviation from one another. Collective trajectories can be used to identify rising or declining classes or class fractions.

¹¹³ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 110.

The concept of trajectory is closely related to the concept of a reconversion strategy. Mobility in social space can be vertical, wherein the type of capital stays the same but the amount changes, horizontal, wherein the type of capital changes but volume remains constant, or some combination of the two. Any degree of horizontal or “transverse” movement implies a change in the structure of capital. Changing the structure of one’s capital is a reconversion strategy, which is “a transformation of asset structure which protects overall capital volume and maintains position in the vertical dimension.”¹¹⁴ In other words, the vertical dimension of one’s position can be maintained by exchanging one form of capital for another, which at the time may be more stable or strategically advantageous. Higher education is one of the most pervasive and obvious reconversion strategies. The conferment of a university degree transforms economic capital into a specific form of cultural capital, namely educational capital. The credential objectifies the agent’s cultural capital in a visible form, and increases the probability that he or she will earn a higher salary or enter an occupation in a vertically equivalent region of social space. Bourdieu cites numerous examples of reconversion strategies, including, for example, the ability of children of parents with a large amount of cultural capital to succeed in commercial ventures that exploit their inheritance of that capital, e.g., as antique dealers or bistro managers.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 132.

Subfields

For more focused studies of self-identifying social spheres, Bourdieu parses social space into a number of subspaces or “fields of” a particular subset of social or cultural life. Bourdieu has studied variously the religious field,¹¹⁵ the journalistic field, the economic field,¹¹⁶ the scientific field,¹¹⁷ the literary and artistic field,¹¹⁸ the bureaucratic field,¹¹⁹ the academic field,¹²⁰ the juridical field,¹²¹ the housing field, the educational field,¹²² and has alluded to others. These fields all represent different social or cultural worlds, which have a greater or lesser degree of “relative autonomy” in that they obey their own rules, rather than adhering slavishly to global societal trends. The economic field exercises an especially powerful influence on social space in general. In behaving in their idiosyncratic ways, each field contributes to the overall dynamics of social space. The subfields of social space that interest Bourdieu are normally ones that occupy some specific region of the upper half of social space as a whole. This half of social space, since it contains the highest concentration of all forms of capital, is termed the field of power, and is identified broadly with the dominant class. It encompasses the dominant portion of the economic field and the dominant semiautonomous cultural fields. The field

¹¹⁵ Bourdieu, “Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field.”

¹¹⁶ Bourdieu, “Le champ économique.”

¹¹⁷ Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity*.

¹¹⁸ Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production.”

¹¹⁹ Bourdieu, “Rethinking the State.”

¹²⁰ Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*.

¹²¹ Bourdieu, “The Force of Law.”

¹²² Bourdieu, *The State Nobility*.

of power is thus the site of accumulated cultural and economic capital, which nonetheless admits of powerful internal tensions. The reason that so many of the individual subfields that Bourdieu studies are located in the field of power, and not in the lower half of social space is that they have a threshold amount of accumulated power to identify themselves as distinct social and cultural spheres. So, individual fields are nested inside the field of power, and also within social space as a whole:

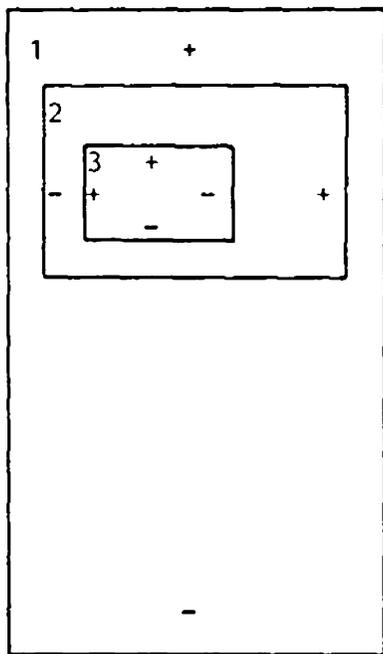


Figure 6. Bourdieu's diagram of nested fields, showing the position of (3) the artistic and literary field with respect to (2) the field of power and (1) social space. Source: Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production."

The diagram above shows the literary and artistic field¹²³ situated close to the left pole of the field of power, since the world of art and literature deals in cultural capital far more than it does in the economic variety. The field of power, constituting the dominant

¹²³ See Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production."

portion of social space, is controlled by the economic form of domination, thus the + sign at the right and the – sign at the left side of that field. The literary and artistic field, however, is not aligned with the field of power. In fact, it obeys a reverse polarity, since in the literary and artistic world, cultural value is perceived as more important than economic success. The creation of literary and artistic works is thus always understood in terms of the opposition between the “high-brow” or “intellectual” works on one hand and the “low-brow” and “commercial” works on the other. This ability of the literary and artistic field to achieve a hierarchy opposed to that of the field of power indicates that it has a high degree of relative autonomy. Bourdieu thus refers to the literary and artistic field as “the economic world reversed.”¹²⁴ There are tensions, in such a field, between success in the field of power and success as a member of that field. In this case, we have the well-known conflict between literary and commercial success, which is attended by a diverse range of strategies to position oneself for success in one or the other pole of the field, or even to achieve an uneasy stability by pursuing success both as an artist and as a “producer.” Bourdieu’s analysis of the complex space of literary strategies (genres, movements, etc.) that emerged in the highly autonomous literary field of the late nineteenth century is reveals the dizzying complexity of positions, fronts, strategies and counter-strategies engendered by its tensions with the field of power.

The struggle that goes on within an autonomous field is thus both an internal and an external struggle, with the forces of the field and with the field of power. Since the autonomy of the field is resisted by the economic domination of the field of power, “the

¹²⁴ Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production.”

boundary of the field is a stake of the struggles,”¹²⁵ where the members of the field attempt to secure recognition and legitimacy as an independent faction. In the case of the literary and artistic field, which is also called the field of cultural production, the high degree of relative autonomy means that the boundaries of the field are highly contested. Successes shored up by the left side of the field are appropriated and delegitimated by the right—a “serious” work is parodied on television, for example. At the same time that the old genres and topics are abandoned by the intellectual wing, they move toward a new strategy, perhaps a more austere avant-gardism. The struggle for autonomy in this field is so concentrated, Bourdieu notes, that the most highly specialized forms of avant-garde art are produced for an audience composed solely of other artists.

Individual fields each have their own idiosyncratic properties. Nonetheless, Bourdieu insists that there are general laws that apply to the structure and function of all fields. The more individual fields are studied, Bourdieu says, the more we learn about the general properties of fields. The first general law of fields—in fact a defining feature of them—is the presence of a struggle. Fields are always sites of conflict. Their internal tensions is what establishes them as complex phenomena, in which more than one event is always occurring, and prevents them from collapsing into absolutely monopolistic spheres of activity. A field thus presupposes differences among its participants, and since the fundamental structure of social space is defined in terms of capital, the most important struggles between different participants in individual fields are struggles for control of the specific forms of capital relevant to that field. And since dominance of social space involves the imposition of the dominant vision of social space on the rest of

¹²⁵ Ibid., 43.

the field, dominance of a particular field implies control of the sense of what is important within that field—the specific “secondary variables”¹²⁶ that do not carry the same importance outside of that field. Bourdieu frequently expresses this by saying that the rules of the game are themselves at stake in the game. The existence of a special set of stakes, which are “irreducible to the stakes and interests specific to other fields,”¹²⁷ defines a field as a semi-autonomous region of social space, different from social space in general, and different from other semi-autonomous fields.

Bourdieu often uses a religious idiom to describe the fundamental struggles that determine fields. The struggle between dominant and subversive participants in a field, between *orthodox* and *heterodox* positions, is undergirded by a common belief in the value of the specific stakes of the field, and of the struggle over those stakes. The common root word *doxa* is thus employed by Bourdieu to describe belief, shared by all participants in a field, in the objectives of participation. The *doxa* is thus an objective feature of the field, as well as a subjective, epistemic property of each of its agents, and in fact is what determines the existence of each separate field. The importance of the *doxa* of a given field is usually not remarked upon or even noticed by the participants themselves, simply because it is *too obvious*, too fundamental from their point of view to be worth mentioning. That the obviousness of the *doxa* only applies within a particular field is shown by the fact that outsiders do not possess this sense of what is important in that field, because “every category of interests implies indifference to other interests.”¹²⁸ Despite its status as a belief, it is nonetheless an unconscious belief. Paradoxically,

¹²⁶ Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question*, 72.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

participants in a field do not consciously register doxic content precisely because of its fundamental importance to their field. It is “unthinkable”¹²⁹ because it is a precondition for entry into a field, and once the field has been entered, it is no longer strategically valuable to question it. Thus once a field has emerged, its principle features are its struggle between orthodox and heterodox positions, and the underlying doxa that consists of “everything that goes without saying.”¹³⁰

The struggle between orthodox and heterodox participants is thus enabled by an underlying agreement in the specific stakes of the field, an unquestioned belief in the rightness of the existence of the field, in its legitimacy as a sphere of activity. Despite the fact that the *doxa* may not register in the consciousness of the subjects involved, its presence through the collective unconscious of the field’s participants constitutes “an objective complicity which underlies all antagonisms.”¹³¹ As a condition for the existence of a field, *doxa* imposes a crucial restriction on what sorts of activity can occur, especially with regard to heterodox position-takings. Because even those who fail to gain success in the field play a role in reproducing it, certain forms of radical or revolutionary change cannot be imposed on it, at least from within. Instead, the struggles within a field tend to take the form of “*partial revolutions*,” which “do not call into question the very foundations of the game...”¹³² When a new contingent takes control of a field, its revolutionary rhetoric is usually one of returning the field to its original aims or spirit.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 51.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., 73.

¹³² Ibid., 74.

Another property of fields is the importance of the cumulative effect of previous states. The synchronic state of a field is not simply a “snapshot” of the distribution of agents and capital at a given time. Since strategizing, consciously or unconsciously, is fundamental to the disposition of the players, each state of the field is characterized by the aggregate of positioned agents, each of whom is practically, and therefore temporally, comported to make the most advantageous changes to his or her behavior, image, etc., so as to improve his or her position. In so doing, each agent has a specific perspective on the state of the field as a whole, which is itself determined by the past position-takings of the participants, and the accumulated shifts in the distribution of capital that have occurred. According to Bourdieu, one way of identifying when a particular area of activity has begun to function as a field is when its products can be observed to contain an awareness of the history of the field. Such marks are absent, for example, in the work of an amateur painter who fails to take into account the “entry fees” of the field. The presence of the field of painting can be perceived, Bourdieu says, by comparing such works as amateur paintings with the highly field-conscious work of artists like Duchamp, who “understand the logic of the game well enough to defy it and exploit it at the same time.”¹³³ In short, one can be sure that one is dealing with a field when knowledge of the history of the relevant practice is a pre-requisite for understanding the objects of its current production.

Fields transform individuals, or, more accurately, they shape their habitus, which is only partially identifiable with what we ordinarily think of as individual identity. It is knowing the history of a field that allows this to happen: “Being a philosopher means knowing what one needs to know of the history of philosophy in order to be able to

¹³³ Ibid., 75.

behave as a philosopher within a philosophical field.”¹³⁴ The same can be said, of course, for being a painter, a poet, or a politician. This view is reminiscent of Foucault’s theory of the “author function,” in which the social function of the author is recognized as having a traceable history seems to function quite independently of the particular intentions of individual writers. Bourdieu would likely add that it is the doxic beliefs and dispositions that one accepts as a condition of entry to the literary field that perpetuates the “author function,” as something than can be traced historically, since the particular doxa that one acquires is subject to the state of the field in the specific historical moment that one enters it.

Homology

The subfields of social space are regarded as mutually interdependent. Through the active mediation of the habitus, fields become structured according to mutually-reinforcing principles, resulting in “homologous structures” between fields. Homology in social space implies “the existence of structurally equivalent—which does not mean identical—characteristics in different groupings.”¹³⁵ For example, Bourdieu identifies a homology between the artistic and literary producers in the field of cultural production and the dominated class generally in social space: “the cultural producers, who occupy the economically dominated and symbolically dominant position within the field of

¹³⁴ Ibid., 76.

¹³⁵ Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, 141.

cultural production, tend to feel solidarity with the occupants of the economically and culturally dominated positions within the field of class relations.”¹³⁶

In the analysis of homologies between fields the concept of class emerges as explanatorily important:

...the practices or goods associated with the different classes in the different areas of practice are organized in accordance with structures of opposition which are homologous to one another because they are homologous with the structure of objective oppositions between class conditions.¹³⁷

Social classes have characteristic positions in each field of cultural production because “...the generative schemes of the habitus are applied, by simple transfer, to the most dissimilar areas of practice...”¹³⁸ The notion of class here is thus the common relational structure that can be observed in spaces representing disparate areas of social life. This common relational structure is made possible by the fact that each individual agent is positioned simultaneously in multiple fields of cultural production, but nonetheless possesses a single habitus, which ensures that the agent’s position within the different fields do not conflict with one another. The habitus is able to produce this regulative effect because it simply applies the same acquired dispositions in different areas of life, each of which are completely determined by the simultaneous functioning of a multitude of habitus. Class, then, is what remains identifiable as a pattern of relations between groups when social space is subdivided into the different practices that traditional sociology would treat as independent. Thus class has significance “on paper” in addition

¹³⁶ Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production,” 44.

¹³⁷ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 175.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

to, and in indeed because of, its significance in the practice of agents. It should be noted that not all classes on paper correspond with classes in the real world. This is itself an effect of the class hierarchy in social space. Since dominant classes impose the legitimate vision of social space on subordinate classes, they are less likely to recognize themselves as potentially powerful groups. Thus many classes on paper are only 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 submitted to similar types of conditioning, have every chance of having similar dispositions and interests, and thus of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances.”¹³⁹

Homologies between fields are functional as well as structural. For a homology to be functional simply means that the reproduction of a structure in one field can be linked to a homologous reproduction of structure in another field. Take for example the fields of artistic production and the taste production. The field of artistic production—in which are distributed the various producers of artistic works—bears a structural and functional homology to the field of taste production—populated by the consumers of artistic works. Bourdieu regards the specific case of fashion as a near perfect example of structural and functional homology:

The endless changes in fashion result from the objective orchestration between, on the one hand, the logic of the struggles internal to the field of production, which are organized in terms of the opposition old/new, itself linked, through the oppositions expensive/(relatively) cheap and classical/practical (or rear-guard/avant-garde), to the opposition old/young (very important in this field, as in sport); and, on the other hand, the logic of the struggles internal to the field of the dominant class which, as we have seen, oppose the dominant and dominated fractions, or, more precisely, the established and the challengers, in other worlds—given the equivalence between power (more specifically, economic power) and age, which means that, at identical biological ages, social age is a

¹³⁹ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 231.

function of proximity to the pole of power and duration in that position—between those who have the social properties associated with accomplished adulthood and those who have the social properties associated with the incompleteness of youth.¹⁴⁰

Thus, the dynamics of the world of fashion are a product of the fact that the space of production—that is, the designers and retailers—and the space of the consumers—drawn from the dominant class—is organized around identical or at least closely related oppositions. This “logic of homologies,” according to Bourdieu, “causes works to be adjusted to the expectations of their audience.”¹⁴¹ In other words, despite the relative autonomy of the two fields, individuals consistently discover works and genres that they feel “were made for them.” This is because individuals acquire a habitus that predisposes them to giving their assent to a certain kind of work, which they acquired by exposure to a region of the field of taste production that is homologous with the region in the field of artistic production that generated that kind of artwork. The position that the consumer occupies in the field of taste production is opposed to other positions (perhaps representational painting, for example, if he or she is an avant-gardist) that are themselves homologous to positions that are opposed to the preferred work in the field of artistic production. Homologies between fields of production and consumption therefore function to perpetuate the market of goods associated with their given fields.

Because they are all sub-divisions of an encompassing social space that is itself reproduced by the action of the totality of habitus in the system, the various fields of cultural production constitute a system of spaces that is highly complex, yet overdetermined rather than indeterminate. Bourdieu opposes his conception of the

¹⁴⁰ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 233.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 239.

dynamics between the fields to the “one-dimensional and one-directional representation of the social world” associated with the Marxist tradition, in which “the social structure is reduced to the opposition between those who own the means of production and those who sell their labour-power.”¹⁴² In its place, Bourdieu advances his view of a complex social space: “In reality, the social space is a multi-dimensional space, an open set of relatively autonomous fields, fields which are more or less strongly and directly subordinate, in their functioning and their transformations, to the field of economic production.”¹⁴³ Whereas the field of economic production clearly plays a central role in the reproduction of class hierarchies, it is far from being the only relevant domain of struggle. Bourdieu’s theory of social space thus seeks to model the complicity of literally every cultural sphere in the relations of domination and subordination formerly associated only with economic differences. Relations of domination and subordination are reproduced across a number of fields because of the function of the habitus as a unified set of structuring tendencies. Thus, as David Swartz remarks, “homology of position among individuals and groups in different fields means that those who find themselves in dominated positions in the struggle for legitimation in one field tend also to find themselves in subordinate positions in other fields.”¹⁴⁴

Social space is the central organizing framework of Bourdieu’s entire theoretical system. All of his major concepts—capital, habitus, trajectory, and so on—are inseparable from it and must therefore be conceived always as spatial concepts. Spatial thinking of the kind Bourdieu employs in theorizing social space amounts to the “break

¹⁴² Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 244.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹⁴⁴ Swartz, *Culture & Power*, 130.

with linear thinking” that social and political theory must perform if they are to achieve a level of explanatory sophistication they have hitherto lacked.

Competing Models

Now that the basic framework of Bourdieu’s social topology (that is, our falsified objectivist reconstruction) is in place, it is helpful to compare it to other conceptions of social space that have been put forward in the social sciences. Such comparisons illustrate the specific virtues of Bourdieuan social space, such as its specific attunement to power structures, and reveal some of its limitations, for example the negative and inexact way it treats social connectivity.

The notion of social space has a long history in the western tradition. Pitirim Sorokin, whose own view will be discussed below, even suggests that conceptions of social space existed throughout the ancient world.¹⁴⁵ The roots of the concept can be traced with accuracy beginning in the early modern era, especially to the work of Erhard Weigel, who in the latter half of the seventeenth century expounded a Pythagorean view of the geometrical nature of moral and social life, and who influenced Leibniz in his conception of a universal mathematics.¹⁴⁶ Leibniz himself is an important touchstone for Bourdieu’s spatial thought. Bourdieu follows Leibniz in dubbing his topology an *analysis situs*, and cites the seventeenth century thinker as identifying the “order of

¹⁴⁵ Sorokin, *Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time*, 103.

¹⁴⁶ Beck, *Early German Philosophy*, 194-5.

coexistences”¹⁴⁷ as the defining feature of space, an early formulation of what Bourdieu, after Strawson, calls “the reciprocal externality of positions.”¹⁴⁸

Notions of social space were prevalent in the founding of classical sociology. In 1842 Auguste Comte announced the foundation of “social physics,” which would complete his system of the positive sciences. Georg Simmel agreed that “sociology proceeds like physics”¹⁴⁹ and developed a sociology that relied heavily on spatial models. Although it is true that Simmel’s models were frequently limited to one-dimensional hierarchies with basic movements upward or downward, his theory of “societal forms” strongly implies a more complex framework. He develops, for instance, an understanding of social differentiation based on mutual opposition,¹⁵⁰ a network-like model of group structures,¹⁵¹ as well as a particularly subtle theory of social distance in his analysis of the position of the stranger in society.¹⁵²

Despite the early promise of spatial thinking in the social sciences, it has consistently availed itself of a blend of spatial, geological, and biological metaphors. Concepts of stratification (Marx), crystallization (Simmel), organic growth (Durkheim) and residue (Pareto) have been exploited. From a pedagogical point of view, mixed metaphors can be particularly useful, each part capturing some aspect of the phenomenon missed by the others. Bourdieu himself frequently combines talk of social space with talk

¹⁴⁷ Leibniz quoted by Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 134.

¹⁴⁸ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 134.

¹⁴⁹ Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, 24.

¹⁵⁰ See Park’s discussion of this in *The Crowd and the Public* or the original text by Simmel, *Über Soziale Differenzierung*.

¹⁵¹ Simmel, *Conflict & The Web of Group Affiliations*.

¹⁵² Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, 402-408.

of games and markets. But spatial thinking occupies a unique position in the range of metaphorical thought in that it lends itself to the possibility of consistent, statistically informed modeling. In what follows I will discuss three alternative conceptions of social space in order to highlight the virtues of Bourdieu's model, as well as to note some of its limitations. In particular, I will discuss the social space of Pitirim Sorokin and the more recent model of "small worlds" networks.

Sociocultural Space

Pitirim Sorokin was an influential, although controversial, Russian-American sociologist who developed systematic, philosophically-minded sociological theories. It is worth discussing Sorokin's theory of "sociocultural space" in relation to Bourdieu, since Sorokin's theory is one of the most detailed and well-considered examples of spatial thought in the social sciences. Sorokin's view departs from the ordinary Comte-Simmel "social physics" conception in that he rejects the importation of space concepts from physics and mathematics into the social sciences. Sorokin is deeply critical of sociologists who follow this approach, including Simmel and Lewin.¹⁵³

Sorokin presents three reasons why the use of "physicogeometric" space comments is inappropriate in the social sciences. First, such conceptions cannot be sensibly applied to such things as meanings, and meanings are one of the most important elements in the social and cultural world. According to Sorokin, because meanings have

¹⁵³ Sorokin also cites a number of now obscure theorists in this regard, including Pontes de Miranda, Pinto Ferreira, M. Lins, J. F. Brown, F. Ratzel, Robert E. Park, Emory S. Bogardus and Leopold von Weise.

no location in physical space, physical space should not be used as a model for their location in sociocultural space. Moreover, the general difficulty of obtaining quantitative data in the social sciences makes the application of geometrical space even to social agents and cultural artifacts prohibitively difficult. The second reason Sorokin offers is that efforts to transcribe physical and mathematical space concepts into the social sciences replace perfectly good social-scientific concepts and confuse physical and mathematical ones, resulting in confused or meaningless interpretations of social and cultural phenomena. Thus, Sorokin's evaluation of the topological psychology of J. F. Brown:

Any thoughtful reader can hardly fail to see that the whole operation is a mere verbal preoccupation of "ordering of some phenomena of behavior" to the "psychological field" and rechristening some good and comprehensible terms of psychology with the terms "magnitude," "force," "vector," "field," and the like, which not only do not add anything to our knowledge of the behavior "of a hungry rat trying to get cheese" or "a man trying to clarify a psychological theory," but only confuse this knowledge and distort the physicommechanical concepts of vector, force, magnitude, direction and the rest.¹⁵⁴

And again, "the *A, B, C, D...* formula and the diagrams do not help us to understand the simple description of these phenomena, but this simple description is absolutely necessary to the understanding of these "parasitic and superfluous" *A, B, C, D*, and diagrams."¹⁵⁵ The third reason Sorokin offers has to do with his relativist view of sociocultural space. According to Sorokin, there are many, characteristically conditioned forms of sociocultural space, and what we think of as physical space and geometric space are themselves only particular forms of socially and culturally conditioned sociocultural

¹⁵⁴ Sorokin, *Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time*, 109-110.

¹⁵⁵ Sorokin, *Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time*, 111.

space. For this reason, physico-geometric space is well suited to the study of physical phenomena, but not well suited to be applied to culture and society, especially not to all cultures and all societies universally.

In place of physical or geometric space concepts, Sorokin advances a spatial schema based on our “common manner of thinking” about social and cultural phenomena, which “can be conveniently used for scientific explanation.”¹⁵⁶ This schema aims at being largely if not wholly qualitative, relying on the relations between meanings, cultural artifacts and social agents in their respective domains of social and cultural classification. Sorokin admits that some subcomponents of the space may admit of “scalar or metric” quantification, but insists that the main structure of the space is wholly qualitative. The space itself consists of three “planes”: meanings, vehicles (i.e., cultural artifacts) and human agents. Specific meanings, vehicles and agents have a determinate location in their respective planes. Each plane organized by the “sociocultural systems of coordinates,”¹⁵⁷ which are language, science, religion, fine arts and ethics.

Sorokin also considers the plane of human agents separately, labeling it “social space.” Social space is finite, unlike physical or geometric space, being bounded by the total size of the human population. Location in social space is a function of group membership. Much like the Simmel’s web of group affiliations, Sorokin conceives of the identity of individuals and determined by their membership in a variety of social groups. These groups are in turn related to each other within a larger population, and populations are in turn related to one another on a global scale. This group-relational location is what

¹⁵⁶ Sorokin, *On the Practice of Sociology*, 211.

¹⁵⁷ Sorokin, *Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time*, 137.

Sorokin refers to as the horizontal dimension of social space, although he states that in reality it is a multidimensional space in its own right, with a separate dimension for each group. Along with the horizontal dimension, social space also has a vertical dimension, which indicates the relative status of the individual within a given group. It is this dimension which captures the meaning of such common expressions as “upper and lower classes,” “his position is very high,” and so on. This basic framework also gives meaning to Sorokin’s concepts of social distance and social mobility.

The differences in the basic formal features of Bourdieu and Sorokin’s spatial models are thus quite striking. Whereas Bourdieu’s space is organized around the structure and volume of capital, Sorokin’s space is a range of groups and relative positions within those groups, the horizontal ordering of which is never clearly explained. Bourdieu’s space is thus better suited to bring out the political structure of the social world. More than this, however, the political structure of the social world takes on the role of content in Bourdieu’s space, whereas in Sorokin’s it remains in the formal background. As such, the existence of classes in Sorokin’s social space is presupposed in the very framework, while Bourdieu’s model allows them to appear spontaneously, as a result of the correspondences of agents, artifacts and practices with varying types and amounts of capital. Moreover, Bourdieu’s account of social mobility is able to be more complex than Sorokin’s, and more accurately model real social dynamics, because it measures two distinct forms of status, the volume and structure of capital, and accounts for their joint exploitation by social agents, whereas Sorokin only has a one-dimensional conception of ascending and descending status. Bourdieu’s version of the horizontal/vertical distinction is one that bases both horizontal and vertical values on the

concept of capital, thereby enabling the explanation of horizontal movements, about which Sorokin remains mute. Bourdieu explains:

Vertical movements, the most frequent ones, only require an increase in the volume of the type of capital already dominant in the asset structure, and therefore a movement in the structure of the distribution of total capital which takes the form of a movement within a field (business field, academic field, administrative field, medical field, etc.). Transverse movements entail a shift into another field and the reconversion of one type of capital into another or of one sub-type into another sub-type (e.g., from landowning to industrial capital or from literature to economics) and therefore a transformation of the asset structure which protects overall capital volume and maintains position in the vertical dimension.¹⁵⁸

It may seem that there is a significant similarity between Bourdieu's social space and Sorokin's sociocultural space in that they both bring together social agents and cultural artifacts in the same framework. But whereas Bourdieu's model, by mapping agents as well as artworks and institutions on the same social dimensions, forces them together, revealing their correspondences and oppositions, Sorokin's model separates agents and artifacts into different planes, ensuring that they cannot overlap and therefore reveal their shared structural relations. Sorokin's space thus presupposes too much about the object it intends to study, the structure of social relations, by imposing an absolute distinction between agents and artifacts in the investigative framework itself.

There is a tension in Sorokin's model between the finitude of the space and Sorokin's denial that it can be a space governed by quantification. It is true that the assignment of numerical magnitudes to social phenomena presents some difficulties. But the fact that social space is bounded by the total size of its contents implies that the ratios between relative and total amounts can always be determined. This feature is exploited by

¹⁵⁸ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 132.

Bourdieu in fixing the “amount” of cultural capital in social space. Both economic and cultural capital have value by virtue of their relative scarcity. Since there is only so much to go around, the relative positions of agents, artifacts and practices can always be fixed by reference to the percentage of the system’s total capital that they possess. This solves the problem of how to assign cardinal magnitudes to social phenomena, that is, how to decide what a “unit” of something like capital is. This procedure can be applied to anything that can be characterized as a continuous but limited range in social space. The same principle can be applied to the field of possible occupations, for example, or hobbies, or favorite musical works. Thus Bourdieu’s space captures the qualitative sense of relationality that Sorokin is after, without sacrificing the potential for statistical accuracy.

The contradiction between Sorokin’s rejection of the use of mathematical space concepts and his conception of the finitude of social space manifests itself in his theory in several ways. Not only does Sorokin smuggle in mathematical concepts in spite of his own prohibition (planes, coordinates, finitude, etc.), he also rejects topological spatial conceptions only to reintroduce them in disguised terms. Topology studies the relations between spatial forms, principally part-whole relations such as “being included in” and “surrounding.” It is related to set theory, but specifically analyzes spatial configurations using the rules of the organization of space itself. Its one virtue over other geometrical space concepts, on Sorokin’s view, is that it is not always metrical. This feature is also why topology recommended itself to spatial theorists in the social sciences, like Kurt Lewin and J. F. Brown. Sorokin’s space, resisting topological equations and diagrams, nonetheless includes topological concepts, for instance the idea that social location is

fixed by determining the set of fields and subfields that an individual belongs to. Bourdieu's social space, on the other hand, is not a topological space in this limited sense of the word, but it does importantly make use of part-whole relations as a point of entry for statistical evidence, which is the key feature of topological space that Sorokin overlooks.

By far the most important virtue of Bourdieu's social space over Sorokin's is its reflexivity, which accounts for the dialectical interactions between its objective and subjective versions. This of course takes us beyond the objectivist view adopted for the purposes of this chapter, but it should be noted that Sorokin's model—and indeed most spatial models of social systems—does not attempt to account for the interactions between the objective structure of the space and its subjective understandings that the agents have of it. In Sorokin's case it is particularly striking that he does not develop such an account, since he shares with Bourdieu a conception of social space as a “common manner of thinking,” which “may be conveniently used for scientific explanation.” But only Bourdieu accounts for the dynamics between its common and scientific uses. Sorokin fails to take account of the fact that social position itself conditions one's view of social space, and therefore affects its objective transformation. Sorokin's sociocultural space has the character of a uniform, unvarying *Weltanschauung*, rather than a malleable and contested social vision. It therefore lacks the ability to model social dynamics in a way that preserves the dialectical interactions that drive them.

Social Network Analysis

Recently, the study of complex or “small world” networks has gained popularity in the social sciences. Researchers who study social networks use sophisticated statistical and visual modeling techniques to map relationships in the social world. The network approach has also been used to study a wide range of other phenomena, from cell interaction to the worldwide web. In the social sciences, it has been applied to a wide range of phenomena, from friendship and authorship networks, to the network of email messaging preceding the Enron scandal of 2001.¹⁵⁹ The modeling of social networks reveals the way connections are formed between individuals and groups in society. Thus it is interested in many of the same questions that motivate Bourdieu's research, for instance, the question as to how social position influences one's potential for mobility, and how dominant groups reproduce themselves from one generation to the next. As a spatial model, however, social networks take a radically different approach to the problem. Instead of emphasizing the differences between individuals and groups, networks focus on the positive connections between them. In fact, it could be said that Bourdieu's social space is a kind of inverted social network. As such, social networks capture some features of the social world that Bourdieu's model misses, and vice versa. I have chosen to include complex networks in this discussion because they have the ability to set Bourdieu's model in relief, highlighting some of its particular strengths, as well as some of its limitations.

Network models of social systems typically take individuals as their basic data set and then collect information about the connections between them. These links can be directed (A is influenced by B, for example, but not B by A) or undirected (A and B

¹⁵⁹ Each of these applications are discussed and referenced by Barabasi.

influence one another), and can even be assigned different weights (A is strongly influenced by B, but B is only weakly influenced by A). Social network analysis has revealed that real world social networks are not random, as is commonly supposed, but exhibit a particular kind of architecture, which in turn leads to particular patterns of behavior and predictable regularities in the evolution of the network itself. Social networks have what is called a “scale free topology,” meaning that while most individuals have only a few links to those around them, there also exist a number of heavily connected “hubs”: highly social individuals who are connected to a great number of people. The existence of these hubs means that in spite of having relatively poor immediate connectivity, an individual will be closely connected with almost anyone in the network. This is known as the “small worlds” phenomenon, and is a structural feature of all nonrandom complex networks. As a result, in most social networks it is possible to trace a connection between any two people with only a handful of links, a feature that has given rise to the popular idea of “six degrees of separation.”

While this model of social topology is useful in some respects, it is less useful to Bourdieu's particular concerns. Because the network model is entirely objective in its representation of social structure, it can distort real social relationships and give the illusion that connections exist between individuals and groups that have no basis in practical social life. Social network analysis thus risks drawing false or unhelpful conclusions about social structure because of its reliance on diagrammatic models that constitute synoptic illusions. Most significantly, the conception of social distance¹⁶⁰ associated with network models is very different from the practical reality of social interaction. While two people may be no more than a few links away from one another on a network model, there may be very little likelihood that they will ever actually meet or interact. And while the same may be said for social distance on Bourdieu's model, his conception of social distance has the virtue of corresponding to real, meaningful and effective similarities between individuals. This correspondence is far from perfect, since social distances are prone to being misrecognized by agents, depending on their positions. This misrecognition in turn finds expression in the correction of social distances to

¹⁶⁰ Milgram, “The Small World Problem.”

conform to agents' expectations. Nonetheless, the Bourdieuan conception of social distance resists artificiality by taking such dialectical effects into account. Recognition and misrecognition, and the behavioral variations that follow from them, are themselves accounted for in terms of social distance, since proximity in social space is linked to similarity in perceptual dispositions. Social network analysis distorts social relations by failing to account for how agents themselves distort them, resulting in a model that is artificial from the point of view of practice.

This artificiality of course only applies to the most generic versions of the network model. The approach has produced more sophisticated, and more relevant, notions of social distance. One of the first applications of social network analysis was the study of how friendship and acquaintanceship structures operate as a network for connecting people with jobs. Mark Granoveter¹⁶¹ discovered, in analyzing maps of interpersonal ties, that the common trend was towards small groups of tightly interconnected clusters in which every individual is tied to every other one. These clusters, however were found to be only weakly tied to one another. Thus a general division is observed between the strong ties that bind close circles of friends and weak ties that "bridge" clusters to one another. Granoveter's central finding was that it is the weak ties that one has that are more likely to lead to the acquisition of a job, since it is the weak ties that connect the individual with the larger network. The strong ones just connect the individual to a small circle of friends who are themselves connected most strongly with one another. This is a significant finding because it indicates that a certain kind of connectivity, that of weak ties, is an important factor in social positioning and mobility.

¹⁶¹ Granoveter, "The Strength of Weak Ties."

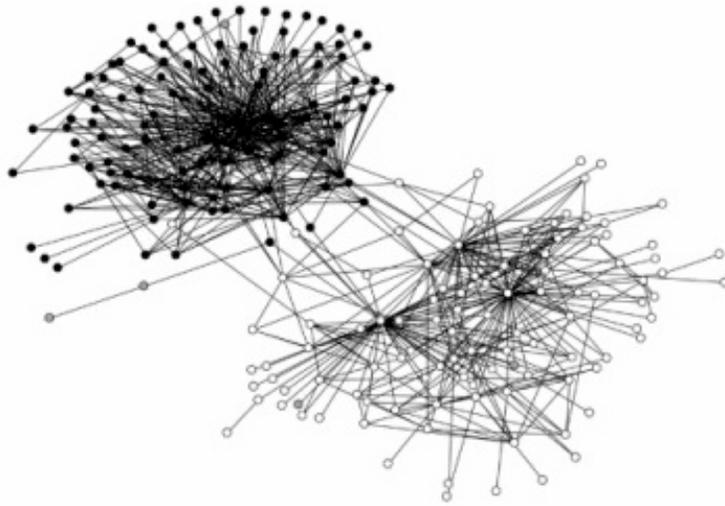


Figure 7. Social network diagram of citation patterns in professional literature about small world networks. Source: Freeman, *The Development of Social Network Analysis*

Connectedness of this kind is important because it has practical effects on social structure. Bourdieu's model of social space does not include, at the formal level, any equivalent notion. In fact, its focus on difference and differentiation among agents and groups has the effect of covering up the positive connections between them. It can show us that two agents have the same structure and volume of capital, for example, but not if they are actually connected with one another. For this reason, the "strength of weak ties" phenomenon does not come within the horizon of Bourdieu's model, which does not include particular ties at all. Instead, Bourdieu uses the notion of social capital, a metric that captures the degree to which an agent is connected to other agents and organizations and his or her ability to draw on these connections. The major virtue of this conception is that it links up with the general multiform theory of capital, and can help explain how connectivity operates by the conversion of social capital into other forms. As a pure metric, however, social capital does not capture the specific connections between agents,

such as exactly who those agents are, their place in the social world, the strength of the ties, and whether they are unidirectional or bidirectional. Other sociologists have taken an approach to social capital that explicitly conceives of social capital as connectedness to/within a network of personal or group affiliations.¹⁶² These theorists are not committed to Bourdieu's field-theoretical framework, however, which demands that the specifics of social capital be overlooked in favor of simple volume. Nothing in Bourdieu's conception of social capital is incompatible with more detailed analyses of its structure and function, however, and such analyses might usefully be integrated into the empirical stages of Bourdieu-style model-building, playing a role similar to that of questionnaires and statistics.

Social networks are sometimes conceived of as competitive arenas, in which agents compete for links and connectivity functions as a valuable commodity. Bourdieu's notion of social capital functions in a similar way, as we have seen. In Bourdieu's model, it plays a crucial role in facilitating the entire social economy, since capital cannot be converted or exploited unless the social opportunities to do so are available. In order to land an academic position, for example, thereby securing a particular position in social space, a candidate must be connected to the academic field, by professional relationships, friendships and acquaintanceships, which must periodically be reaffirmed through face to face meetings, phone calls, handshakes, and so on. In order for the habitus to do its job, it must be encountered, and in order for such encounters to take place, concrete social ties must exist. There is, in Bourdieu's model, thus a constant interaction between social capital and other forms of capital. The more social capital one possesses, the more

¹⁶² See Portes, "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology."

opportunities one has to mobilize one's other forms of capital, an action that will affect one's future asset structure, including one's social capital. It could be argued that, in dealing only with a pure indicator of connectedness, Bourdieu's model has everything that it needs. This conclusion would be misplaced. The specific conditions of acquisition of social capital are relevant to the structure of social space in ways that become invisible if the network of social connections is reduced to a single variable. The strength of weak ties is an excellent example of this. An agent's chances of following an improbable trajectory may be improved by having a relatively large number of weak ties, even though he or she may have a comparatively small amount of social capital overall. On the other hand, an individual with a great amount of social capital, the constituent connections of which are all strong, may be confined to a narrow social corridor because all of his or her ties are to agents or groups in his or her own region of social space. Thus, in terms of Bourdieu's model, it is of great significance how strong the individual ties that constitute social capital are, as well as where they lead.

Finally, there is an interesting divergence between the ways that Bourdieu's social space and social network analysis treat stability and change. Bourdieu's account of social reproduction explains how social structures actively reproduce themselves, thereby preventing radical structural changes like revolutions. Bourdieu's model is also good at explaining certain kinds of gradual change that involve the conversion of capital from one type to another. But his model is not well suited to explaining sudden widespread changes, which do occur in social systems.¹⁶³ Richard Jenkins even goes so far as to

¹⁶³ This criticism has been made by numerous commentators on Bourdieu, notably Paul Dimaggio, "Review Essay: On Pierre Bourdieu," Richard Jenkins, "Pierre Bourdieu and the Reproduction of

describe Bourdieu's system as "a machine for the suppression of history"¹⁶⁴ because of its emphasis on determinate reproduction.

The spread of fads, diseases, attitudes towards the strength of the economy, are frequently rapid and complete. The scale-free architecture of social networks explains these types of revolutionary shifts by analyzing the degree of connectedness among the nodes and hubs of the network. Of course, in order to explain revolutionary changes in class structure (the rarity of which is one of the key motivators for Bourdieu's theory), a rigorously reflexive model would be required, since the changes that spread through the social network in such cases affect the structure of the network itself. I am unaware of any analyses that have taken a reflexive approach to network evolution. Social network analysis has a wealth of resources to explain social stability. This feature of scale free networks has been studied in biology in connection with the ability of cells to survive under stressful conditions. It is not difficult to imagine social analogues in the resistance of class structures to revolutionary practices and ideologies. Hubs in scale free networks ensure that the network can continue functioning even if a number of nodes or small hubs are "shut down." Thus the stability of social structures may partially be a product of the "topological robustness"¹⁶⁵ of the social network. This stabilizing function is another feature of social networks that could be understood in tandem with Bourdieu's theory of the stabilizing function of habitus-field interactions.

Determinism," and Scott Lash, "Pierre Bourdieu: Cultural Economy and Social Change" and a very helpful discussion of the question can be found in Terry Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion*.

¹⁶⁴ Jenkins, "Pierre Bourdieu and the Reproduction of Determinism," 279.

¹⁶⁵ Barabasi, 113.

Conclusion

It should be clear from this outline that Bourdieu's social space functions as an absolutely central and ineliminable framework for his general theory of practice. The specific organization of his spatial schema is a direct consequence of the social phenomena it is intended to capture. As an expanded social economics, and as a form of structural sociology, it exploits basic features of space itself—finitude, exteriority, relationality, etc.—to visualize the behavior of social systems. Moreover, the ordering of the spatial schema in terms of multiple forms of capital carries a pervasive political significance, which realizes commonsense conceptions of the social world in a rigorous way without simply translating the social into spatial terms. Finally, as a form of social phenomenology, it captures the social agent's representation of his or her place in the social world, but goes beyond phenomenology by reconnecting those representations with the objective structure of society.¹⁶⁶ And although it is not perfectly suited to all species of sociological investigation, as illustrated by its differences from social network analysis, Bourdieuan social topology nonetheless provides a general explanatory model that preserves the functional behavior of social systems.

What differentiates Bourdieu's model of social space from alternative conceptions are the features that tailor it to the particular aspects of social phenomena that he deems essential, namely the relations of power between different agents and groups. This means that Bourdieu's field theory is at bottom a political theory, and represents a vision of

¹⁶⁶ While I am aware that certain types of phenomenology do in fact connect the phenomenological level of description to its objective conditions of possibility, Bourdieu nonetheless consistently treats this as a limitation of phenomenology.

society as shot through with differential structures of power, within which and across which various agents and groups vie with one another for the privilege of controlling the very conditions of their struggle. The spatial model is a powerful and intuitive tool for capturing arena and the stakes in these conflicts. Moreover, where other models of the social world are apt to become detached and scientized corruptions of life as it is lived, social space captures, through its use of both locational and positional understandings of social orientation, the acquired senses of place of each agent and group included in the model. Space is never simply a tool for constructing scientific models, but, so long as we remain bodily agents, it is also something constituted and reconstituted in practice. The foregoing excursus of Bourdieu's field theory must therefore be supplemented with an account of spatial practice, which is the subject of the next chapter. The fact that Bourdieu provides such an account, that he addresses it specifically on a number of distinct occasions in his writing, and that he carries the notion into nearly all of his theoretical work in the notion of habitus, speaks to a thoroughly reflexive understanding of space. This reflexive understanding is developed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3

THE STRUCTURES OF PHYSICAL SPACE

Introduction

Whereas the previous chapter dealt in isolation with Bourdieu's representational space, with his abstract spatial model of the social world, this chapter deals with the role of “physical” space in Bourdieu, i.e., with concrete and corporeally occupied space, the kind of space we build, inhabit and interpret. These two aspects of space are complimentary. They structure one another according both to the theories they engender and to the practices in which they are used, a dynamic that will be treated in detail in Chapter 4. The principle aim of this chapter is to understand how it is that, according to Bourdieu, physical space functions as an organizational template for the structure of the social world, and how it comes to enforce oppositions, carry meanings, and reinforce inequalities. Bourdieu concerned himself directly with questions of physical space several times during his career, beginning with his study of Panofsky's work on Gothic architecture, then again in his analyses of the role of the house in the Algerian Kabyle culture, and in his later work on housing and urban social inequalities in France. I will discuss each of these developments in Bourdieu's thinking in turn with the goal of collecting each component of his general theory of spatial practice. In so doing, I will pay special attention to the phenomenological tradition that Bourdieu constructs his theory in reaction to, even while self-consciously employing some of its methods.

The Historical Construction of Space

In order to appreciate the full significance of Bourdieu's studies of physical space, it is helpful first to reprise the discussion of Kant from Chapter 1, since it is the historicist critique of Kant's mechanisms of thought and perception that point toward the view of space operative in Bourdieu. For Kant, space and time are transcendental conditions for the possibility of experience and knowledge, and, as such, they are both necessary and universally valid. Hegel's historicist critique of this doctrine, however, asserts that these conditions are the products of culture, and as such are subject to historical transformation. This insight is of enormous importance, since it not only demands a new, historically informed account of the Kantian transcendental structures, but also fundamentally changes the status of philosophical inquiry. As Fredric Beiser puts it, "Rather than seeing philosophy as a timeless a priori reflection upon eternal forms, Hegel regards it as the self-consciousness of a specific culture, the articulation, defense, and criticism of its essential values and beliefs."¹⁶⁷

Hegel's most powerful argument against Kant is his critique of the transcendental form of Kant's philosophy. This argument is of particular interest, since it is a spatial or spatio-temporal argument that deals with the logic of limits. I will be following the version of the argument that Hegel presents in his so-called "lesser" *Logic*, forming Part I of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*. Hegel's understanding of limits is that they produce identity through distinction, by opposing some limited entity to something outside its limits, something that it, by definition, is not. This way of thinking about

¹⁶⁷ Beiser, "Hegel's Historicism," 270.

limits is in fact a precursor of the Saussurean logic that Bourdieu will come to employ. The particular limit that Hegel is concerned with is the limit that Kant posits as the boundary of reason, which is also the boundary of the subject. The distinction between the “I” and the “not-I,” or equivalently between phenomena and *noumena*,¹⁶⁸ then, is held by Kant to be established once and for all with the completion of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Hegel’s contention is that the very notion of a limit disallows such completion because it implies a contradiction—of a rather special kind, as we shall see—that can only be resolved through the historical analysis of the identity of the rational subject. The notion of limit also implies, according to Hegel, that such a historical analysis must proceed dialectically, by tracing the cycles of determination between reason and its other, i.e., that which lies within the boundary and that which lies outside of it:

Let us now consider more closely what a limit implies. We find that it contains a contradiction within itself, and so proves itself to be dialectical. That is to say, limit constitutes the reality of being-there, and, on the other hand, it is the negation of it. But, furthermore, as the negation of the something, limit is not an abstract nothing in general, but a nothing that *is*, or what we call an “other”. In something we at once hit upon the other, and we know that there is not only something, but also something else. But the other is not such that we just happen upon it; it is not as if something could be thought without that other; rather, something is *in* itself the other of itself, and the limit of a something becomes objective to it in the other.¹⁶⁹

In other words, discrete entities, whether subjects or objects, are identified and constituted as such by virtue of their limits—by virtue of their not being other likewise defined discrete entities. Things have identity because they are *delimited*. A given entity cannot exist independently of its other (or its others). That is why Hegel says that

¹⁶⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 295-315.

¹⁶⁹ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, 148.

something always contains its own negation, i.e., its other. Applied to Kant's theory, Hegel's insight means that the limits of reason and subjectivity, far from acting as mere restrictions on the application of reason, in fact contain their own other and are therefore self-contradictory *as limits*.¹⁷⁰ The self-contradictory nature of reason, by virtue of its being limited, implies that, instead of a universal, necessary and unchanging structure, reason in fact admits of a self-critical and transformative structure, which reconceives its identity as well as its relation to the world in a series of revolutionary revelations. These dialectical transformations are what Hegel traces in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

In temporal terms, the contradictory logic of limits adheres in Kant's attempt to determine the limits of reason *while* operating with reason within those limits. Hegel agrees with Kant that reason should be recognized as finite, but sees the pure reflexivity of Kant's ahistorical critical method as contradictory: "the investigation of cognition cannot take place any other way than *cognitively*," he says, and "to want to have cognition *before* we have any is as absurd as the wise resolve of Scholasticus to *swim before he ventured into the water*."¹⁷¹ The only way to escape this contradiction without backsliding into the dogmatic metaphysics of pre-critical philosophy is to reconceive the critical project as a historical one in which the elements of reason are traced in the necessary progression of their development. All this means that, instead of regarding space as a universal and necessary structure of subjective consciousness, space must (1) be investigated in its historical development, and (2) be treated in both its subjective and objective aspects.

¹⁷⁰ Hegel's critique exploits the distinction in German between *Grenze*, limit, and *Schranke*, which carries the injunctive force of a restriction. Hegel, Geraets, Suchting and Harris eds., Glossary n. 28, 351.

¹⁷¹ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, 34.

Now, for Hegel, this progression has certain peculiar characteristics that few contemporary theorists, Bourdieu included, would wish to preserve. For example, Hegel's conception of historical dialectics focuses almost exclusively on radical, oppositional shifts. And while such shifts certainly occur in the history of reason, and there is usually a tendency for a new theory to exaggerate its absolute rejection of the position it is reacting to, there is no justification of the assumption that the development of concepts always takes this form. Also, Hegel's theory assumes that history can be captured in a single linear, progressive narrative, whereas the reality is usually much more complex. Still, Hegel establishes that what Kant thought of as necessary and universal forms of perception and knowledge are in fact subject to historical development and that they in fact cannot be understood apart from this development. This insight looms large in Bourdieu's understanding of the function of space in the human construction of the world.

The historical transformations of the concept of space have been approached in a variety of ways, sometimes explicitly as the history of the concept as it can be traced in theoretical and scientific writings, as in Alexandr Koyre's *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, which treats the revolutionary change in the scientific and theological conception of space in the early Enlightenment, or implicitly through the history of other spatial practices, such as Lewis Mumford's highly philosophical treatment of the development of urban form in *The City in History*. Alterations in the conception and perception of space have been the subject of philosophical work by Heidegger, Benjamin, Adorno, Barthes, and numerous others. Of central importance is the work of Foucault on

the increasingly disciplinary structure of space in the eighteenth century.¹⁷² A vast amount of work has been done in phenomenology on the historical and cultural boundedness of particular space conceptions.¹⁷³ For Bourdieu, it is important that both theory and practice fall within the scope of relevant cultural and historical conditions. Therefore the examples discussed below show that both practical and theoretical constraints help determine the specific character of space in a given cultural and historical context.

First, consider the highly developed spatial conceptions and practices of certain societies of Pacific islanders. According to Yi-Fu Tuan, the Puluwat people are accustomed to navigating non-motorized voyages of up to 150 miles on the open sea. In order to do so, they have developed a highly sophisticated educational regime that combines formal knowledge of star routes with bodily knowledge of wave patterns. One's tactile sense, as well as one's sense of equilibrium aid the navigator in "analyzing the roll and pitch of the vessel"¹⁷⁴ The succession of stars, the feel of the waves, and even variations in the coloration of the water contribute to a highly particular conception and perception of space. For the Puluwat, "the ocean is a network of seaways, linking up numerous islands, not a fearsome expanse of unmarked water."¹⁷⁵ This network conception of space is visible in the stick and shell models that Polynesian cultures use to represent their navigational space. Puluwat space is a result of their specific social, economic and safety interests: "The forging of larger socio-political nets broadens the

¹⁷² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, "The Eye of Power," and "The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century."

¹⁷³ See particularly Tuan, and Casey, *The Fate of Place*.

¹⁷⁴ Lewis, Quoted in Tuan, *Space and Place*, 82.

¹⁷⁵ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 82.

intellectual horizon, extends the range in choice of goods and in marriage partners, and permits the tiny communities to cope more effectively with natural disasters, notably typhoons.”¹⁷⁶ Thus the practical constraints within which the Puluwat operate, both the specific challenges of open sea navigation as well as more general social needs, have produced a thoroughly distinctive navigational conception of space.

Another telling example is Foucault’s account of disciplinary space.¹⁷⁷ According to Foucault, social institutions in eighteenth-century Europe began to structure themselves spatially in a way that tended to increase the degree to which populations could be controlled. This control was carried out through what Foucault terms the “means of correct training,” a set of broadly applied techniques by which populations are made visible, punishable and finally docile. The physical manifestation of these techniques can be seen in the organization of classrooms, hospitals, prisons and military camps. A case can even be made that the widening and straightening of city streets during the same period functioned according to the same spatial logic, since it facilitated the observation of urban populations, as well as inculcating in those populations the sense of being observed. Foucault’s famous example is that of the panopticon, a circular prison designed by Jeremy Bentham in 1785 that enabled the perpetual visibility of prisoners, without their being cognizant of their own observation. The effect of this organization, according to Foucault, was the restructuring of physical space into a space that always presupposed relations of power. For Foucault, space became political in the eighteenth century in a way that it had not previously been, since it carried with it relations of domination and

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 81.

¹⁷⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

subordination, both in the way it was conceived and the in way it was inhabited. Space became identified with the ranked “distribution of bodies.”¹⁷⁸ Bourdieu’s own analyses of physical spaces reveal similar political structurings, although Bourdieu is often more concerned with showing how those political structurings are maintained and reproduced, rather than tracing the detailed history of their construction.

Panofsky, Gothic Architecture and Habitus

For Bourdieu, who has strong ties to the French structuralist tradition, the historical construction of concepts must be understood by relating a given conceptual/perceptual¹⁷⁹ schema to others within a structured whole, to account for their integrated co-development. The perception of space in a given society, for example, should be understood in concert with other conceptual/perceptual schemes in that society, like those involved in gender politics, for example, or in education. The historical development of these concepts and percepts is thus a history of structural relations within a society conceived as a total system. The most readily identifiable of these relations are the “structural homologies” that can be observed between different spheres of activity.¹⁸⁰

It is therefore highly significant that Bourdieu initially adopted his famous concept of

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 144-145.

¹⁷⁹ It should be noted that, unlike the enlightenment philosophers, Bourdieu does not distinguish rigidly between conception and perception. I have, in my excursus of Kant on this matter, conflated his absolute distinction between forms of intuition and concepts of the understanding. Bourdieu subscribes to no such cognitive taxonomy, and, since the same critiques of historical contingency apply to both types of apprehension. I have intentionally treated them as only ambiguously differentiated.

¹⁸⁰ Such as the homology between the space presupposed by Albertian perspective in painting and the one postulated by Cartesian geometry in science. See Jay, “Scopic Regimes of Modernity.”

habitus in the context of a translation project dealing with just such a structural homology. In 1967 Bourdieu translated Erwin Panofsky's *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* into French, and included in his translation a "Postface" containing his own interpretation of Panofsky's project. It is in this postface that Bourdieu first adopts the notion of habitus as an inculcated set of schemas capable of being transposed to a variety of contexts.

Panofsky's argument is that both the design of Gothic cathedrals and the structure of scholastic theological texts or *summa* admit of formal homologies, which are explained by the fact that the monopoly held on education by the schools, combined with its highly regimented mode of operation, uniformly bestowed upon its pupils a "mental habit" that subsequently found expression both in written discourse and sacred buildings. This historical "concurrence" of the education of both architects and scholastic philosophers resulted in a parallelism between the two disciplines, which Panofsky traces from the eleventh century, through a "concentrated phase"¹⁸¹ in the connection between both disciplines (1130-1270) through the coincident High Gothic period in architecture and the High Scholastic period in philosophy (1270-1340), and finally through their mutual decomposition in the fourteenth century. Although historians had previously argued for a parallelism between the two disciplines in this period, the novelty of Panofsky's argument is that, instead of simply appealing to the mutual "influence" of scholars on architects or vice versa, the notion of a distinctively scholastic "mental habit" is employed to explain the homologies in their work. The mental habit is the product of the uniquely scholastic mode of education, and, as the origin of homologous structures

¹⁸¹ Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, 20.

that can be identified in detail in disparate arts, is more concrete than the vague *Weltanschauung* that commentators frequently appeal to.¹⁸²

Panofsky hints at a more pervasive theory of mental habits, which, according to him, are “present in every civilization” as mental formulae that regulate behavior. He cites several additional examples, such as the concept of evolution that pervades historical writing, and the fact that “all of us, without thorough knowledge of biochemistry or psychoanalysis, speak with the greatest of ease of vitamin deficiencies, allergies, mother fixations and inferiority complexes.”¹⁸³ What is remarkable about the scholastic mental habit is that it represents a case in which the habit was created in a concentrated environment, highly localized in space and time. This intellectual milieu produced concrete artifacts off of which the structure of the habit can be read, namely by comparing the homologous organization of Scholastic texts and Gothic churches. The scholastic mentality emphasized the principles of “clarification for clarification's sake” as well as “arrangement according to a system of homologous parts and parts of parts.”¹⁸⁴ The composition of a Scholastic *summa* thus involved a rigorously detailed yet highly transparent mode of organization, the effect of which is that the structure of the argument is as much the center of attention as the argument itself. Similarly with Gothic architecture, the aim seems to have been to design a church by dividing it into as many proportionate or congruent parts as possible, at every possible scale, while also making

¹⁸² This tendency is evident throughout the scholarship on Gothic architecture. It is captured, for instance, in Simson's references to the “medieval mind,” and in Frankl, who employs the metaphor of a plant, the parts of which are different cultural spheres, “transfused with, and vitalized by, the same sap...” 299.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 45.

that proportionality and congruity as obvious as possible. Both Scholastic *summa* and Gothic cathedrals admit of a complex system of part-whole and part-part relations that repeat themselves as often, and an as many levels of detail as possible. This can be most immediately seen by making explicit the structural homologies that are produced between levels of organization in a Scholastic text and levels of structural articulation in a Gothic church.

First, take the case of the Scholastic text. In such a text, "...the same relation of subordination obtains between, say, sub-section (a) section (1), Chapter (I), and book (A) as does between, say, sub-section (b), section (5), chapter (IV) and book (C)."¹⁸⁵ This type of homology is familiar to anyone who has written anything in a conventional outline format. Such formats did not exist, however, before the Scholastic period, and their introduction there is a highly significant philosophical development, since it arose out of a need to lend reason additional resources of clarification in light of the belief that reason could only clarify, and not prove, matters of faith. Scholastic writing was thus governed by "a scheme of literary presentation that would elucidate the very processes of reasoning to the reader's imagination just as reasoning was supposed to elucidate the very nature of faith to his intellect."¹⁸⁶ According to Panofsky, exactly this sort of clarification by means of the repetition, on different scales, of part-whole and part-part relations can be identified in the structure of a Gothic cathedral. The organization of the cathedral in terms of "logical levels" is "most graphically expressed in the uniform division and

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 32.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 31.

subdivision of the whole structure.”¹⁸⁷ Panofsky offers the following as evidence for this organization:

Dividing the entire structure, as was customary in the period itself, into three main parts, the nave, the transept, and the chevet (which in turn comprises the forechoir and the choir proper), and distinguishing, within these parts, between high nave and side-aisles, on the one hand, and between apse, ambulatory, and hemicycle of chapels, on the other, we can observe analogous relations to obtain: first, between each central bay, the whole of the central nave, and the entire nave, transept or fore-choir, respectively; second, between each side aisle bay, the whole of each side aisle, and the entire nave, transept or fore-choir, respectively; third, between each sector of the apse, the whole apse, and the entire choir; fourth, between each section of the ambulatory, the whole ambulatory and the entire choir; and fifth, between each chapel, the whole hemicycle of chapels, and the entire choir.¹⁸⁸

The homology between the organization of the cathedral and that of the text is obvious when we apply the scholastic schema to the names of the cathedral’s parts:

- A. Entire nave
 - I. Whole central nave
 - 1. Central bay
 - 2. Central bay
 - ...
 - II. Whole of each side aisle
 - 1. Side aisle bay
 - 2. Side aisle bay
 - ...
- B. Entire transept
 - I. Whole central nave
 - 1. Central bay
 - 2. Central bay
 - ...
 - II. Whole of each side aisle
 - 1. Side aisle bay
 - 2. Side aisle bay
 - ...
- C. Entire forechoir
 - I. Whole central nave
 - 1. Central bay
 - 2. Central bay
 - ...

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 45.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 48.

- II. Whole of each side aisle
 - 1. Side aisle bay
 - 2. Side aisle bay
 - ...
- D. Entire choir
 - I. Whole apse
 - 1. Sector of the apse
 - 2. Sector of the apse
 - ...
 - II. Whole ambulatory
 - 1. Section of the ambulatory
 - 2. Section of the ambulatory
 - ...
 - III. Whole hemicycle of chapels
 - 1. Chapel
 - 2. Chapel
 - ...

This schematization reveals the logical positions of the various parts of the cathedral with respect to the whole, which implies that two elements functioning on the same logical level will not necessarily share any of the same physical dimensions. A strict ordering of the components purely in terms of proportional measurement is also possible, but would fail to capture the hierarchical homology between, for example, the central and side aisle bays as they contribute analogously to their respective divisions of the tripartite structure of the church as a whole. The form of the building is governed by these hierarchical homologies in the fact that, for instance, “the cross section of the nave can be read off from the façade.”¹⁸⁹ Moreover, Panofsky states that such concerted sub-division is operative at even the smallest level of detail in structures of the High Gothic period.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 44.

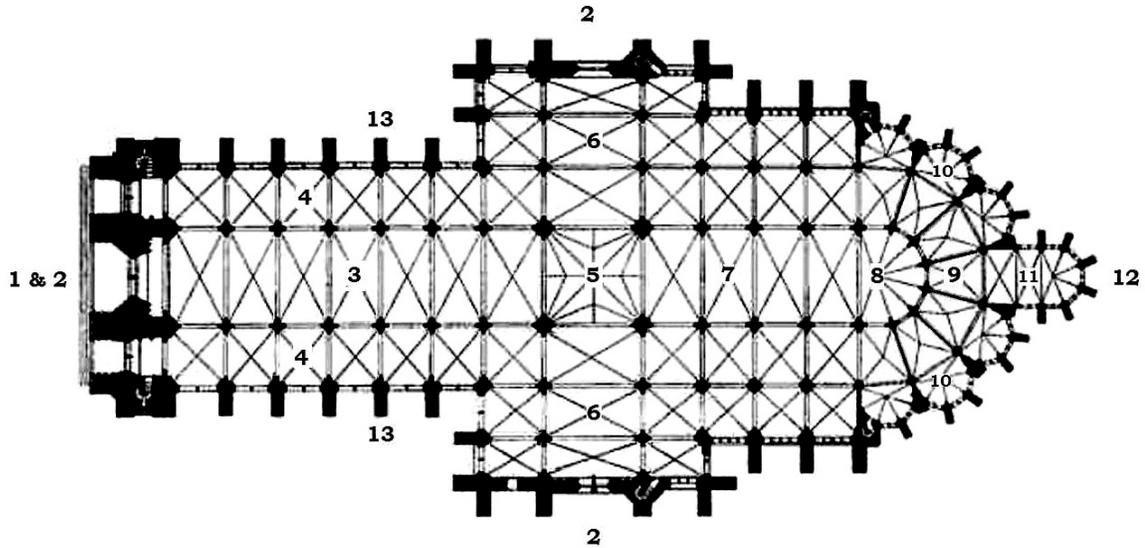


Figure 8. Amiens Cathedral floorplan. The numbers on the plan correspond to the following elements: (1) west end, (2) façade, (3) nave, (4) aisle, (5) crossing, (6) transept, (7) choir, (8) apse, (9) ambulatory, (10) radiating chapel, (11) lady's chapel, (12) east end (13) buttress. Source: Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cathedral_diagram), accessed March 4, 2009.

Panofsky's argument is greatly helped by his showing not only the highly homologous organization of Gothic cathedrals and Scholastic manuscripts in their contemporaneous periods of maximum intensity, but also the highly interrelated ways in which both arts diverged from this homology. High Scholasticism, which explained the relation between reason and faith as one of clarification, dissolved into two contrary schools of thought while the the High Gothic style fell from cohesion to contradiction:

Mysticism was to drown reason in faith, and nominalism was to completely disconnect one from the other; and both these attitudes may be said to find expression in the Late Gothic hall church. Its barnlike shell encloses an often wildly pictorial and always apparently boundless interior and thus creates a space determinate and impenetrable from without but indeterminate and penetrable from within.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 44.

The interpretation of Panofsky's argument that Bourdieu advances in his postface is the occasion for his initial adoption of the term *habitus*. In point of fact, Panofsky does not himself use the scholastic term “*habitus*.”¹⁹¹ In each instance where Bourdieu renders the term as “*habitus*” in his translation of Panofsky, the English original is the phrase “*mental habit*.” Panofsky does suggest that he intends his term “*mental habit*” to capture the specifically scholastic mode of thought and action, by defining it, after St. Thomas Aquinas, as a *principium importans ordinem ad actum*, a “principle that regulates the act.”¹⁹² Bourdieu's interpretation of Panofsky's argument does, however, fill in much of what will become Bourdieu's particular usage of the term.¹⁹³

Bourdieu sees Panofsky's project as uncovering the history of a particular form of misrecognition. Panofsky's view, as interpreted by Bourdieu is that the general concepts of explanatory rationality and architectural space that functioned during the scholastic period, namely the principles that comprise a sensibility of clarification for clarification's sake, are misrecognized as individual acts of creativity. It is the notion of *habitus* that allows us to recognize that the expression of these concepts in disparate spheres of activity has a definite origin in the conscious and unconscious presuppositions of the architects and philosophers of the age, which can be traced back to a particular, centralized educational regime. Panofsky localizes the effects of this regime to a radius of one hundred miles around Paris, where the majority of the influential schools were clustered. The major virtue of Panofsky's study—a virtue with which he invests his idea

¹⁹¹ Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion*, 49.

¹⁹² Panofsky, 21.

¹⁹³ For a point-by-point comparison between Panofsky's “*mental habit*” and Bourdieu's “*habitus*,” see Hanks, “*Pierre Bourdieu and the Practices of Language*.”

of habitus—is that it does not require the theorist to “invoke a ‘unitary vision of the world’ or a ‘spirit of the time,’” rhetorical shorthands which are in fact merely placeholders for concrete systems of exposure, education and inculcation to particular modes of operation:

In a society in which the transmission of culture is monopolized by a school, the profound affinities that bind together human works (and, obviously, behaviors and thoughts) find their principle in the scholastic institution vested with the function of transmitting, consciously and also, in part, unconsciously, a subconscious knowledge, or, more exactly, of producing individuals endowed with this system of subconscious (or deeply buried) schemes that constitute their culture or, better yet, their habitus; in short, of transforming the collective heritage into an individual and collective subconscious.¹⁹⁴

This unconscious is both individual and collective in that members of a group who have internalized the same educational regimes share it, but it is also capable of being expressed in a variety of individual forms, such as philosophy and architecture. Presumably the capacity for habitus to be individually expressed applies to the variations between the work of individuals in the same sphere of activity as well, although at the time he composed his “Postface” Bourdieu had not yet formulated his conception of the field, within which such variations are distributed. In the specific case of Panofsky's study, the educational regime responsible for the creation of the habitus is so powerful, and the homologies between its expressions are so clear, that Bourdieu needs only theorize a single, monolithic habitus, “through which the creator partakes of his community and time, and that guides and directs, unbeknownst to him, his apparently most unique creative acts.”¹⁹⁵ This is not so much to deny creativity to the producers of

¹⁹⁴ Bourdieu, “Postface,” 221.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 226.

architectural and philosophical works as to recognize that this creativity is guided by a definite set of historically sensitive and internalized schemata. As Bruce Holsinger puts it, “though the architects and designers responsible for the great Gothic cathedrals were surely creative and even ingenious as individuals, their creativity cannot be separated from the forms and dispositions of a collective unconscious that produced it...”¹⁹⁶ In other words, the notion of habitus provides Bourdieu with a way of explaining the role of historically contingent schemes *within* creativity.

In addition to this conception of the habitus as “community at the very heart of individuality,”¹⁹⁷ Bourdieu also gathers from Panofsky that acquired systems of habits are general enough to be transposable to multiple spheres of activity. It is in the light of this realization that Bourdieu is able to produce his first definition of habitus: “a whole body of fundamental schemes, assimilated beforehand, that generate, according to an art of invention similar to that of musical writing, an infinite number of particular schemes, directly applied to particular situations.”¹⁹⁸ Thus, structural homologies might be identified between, say, a genre of music, a style of verbal expression, or conventions of social interaction, which can be traced back to a single habitus responsible for the particular schemas that produced them.

Conspicuously absent from this early definition of habitus is the embodiment of the dispositional schemes that make it up. Habitus certainly remains here a wholly mental, though unconscious set of schemes. It is puzzling that Bourdieu did not extend his understanding of the generative schemes that produced the structure of Gothic

¹⁹⁶ Holsinger, 99.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Bourdieu, “Postface,” 233.

cathedrals to the primarily bodily dispositions that will mark his later development of the concept. The role of the clarified, sacred space of the cathedral as itself reinscribing the scholastic habitus in the “individual and collective subconscious” that helped create it would be a move typical of the later Bourdieu. It is possible that he refrains from making such a move in his discussion of Panofsky because of a lack of direct textual and architectural evidence for that conclusion. The historical record can substantiate the formation of the habitus in the scholastic mode of education, and presents us with ample evidence of the homologies between the form of Gothic cathedrals and Scholastic texts, but it does not offer direct evidence of the conceptual and perceptual response to the clarified space of the cathedral. In order to argue that the built environment plays a strong role in reproducing habitus, Bourdieu will need to draw on a more directly observable body of evidence, one in which the built environment and spatial behaviors can be studied in concert. This is precisely what Bourdieu does in his study of the Kabyle house.

The Kabyle House

In his 1970 essay “The Kabyle House or the World Reversed,”¹⁹⁹ Bourdieu presents the system of oppositions associated with the spatial arrangement of the typical Kabyle house, which he further analyzes in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, and returns to again in *The Logic of Practice* and *Masculine Domination*. Bourdieu’s analysis of the physical layout of the house, as well as the specific uses that are made of that layout, shows how the space functions as an instrument of social reproduction. According to

¹⁹⁹ Bourdieu, appendix to *The Logic of Practice*, 271-283.

ethnographer Paul A. Silverstein, in this study Bourdieu “underlined how temporality and spatiality, rather than mere structural categories, are manipulated elements of everyday life that organize and are organized by social practice.”²⁰⁰ This analysis, which Bourdieu reworks and elaborates numerous times, is central to his thinking about the relationship between the physical and the social. Specifically, it represents the original working out of his view that objective social structures are embodied and come to constitute “bodily knowledge” in the form of dispositions to behave in certain constrained ways. The practical expression of these dispositions contributes to the determinate form of social reality by fulfilling a specific local function in the objective social structure that conditioned them in the first place. The objective social structures, which have been conditioned by the collective actions of the individual bearers of habitus, then act on the body again, continuing the cycle of social reproduction. More concisely, we can say that social structures reproduce themselves through the medium of an embodied habitus. This cycle of social reproduction must always be thought of as a structural cycle—that is, a cycle that functions as such only at the level of the whole population, each individual member of which acquires a habitus unique to his or her position in society, by means of which he or she contributes to the structure of the overall field.

In many cases, social reproduction is mediated primarily by symbolic structures in spoken and written language. Since the Kabyle do not possess an elaborate written language, the built environment plays a more prominent role in this process. The Kabyle house enables the study of a physically expressed social structure, the details of which are

²⁰⁰ Silverstein, “Of Rooting and Uprooting,” 554. Silverstein’s own study of the Kabyle house is highly informative in that it contextualizes Bourdieu’s analysis by showing how the house was in fact a threatened cultural form at the time that Bourdieu studied it, and arguing that Bourdieu himself disseminated a popular nostalgic understanding of it.

more rigid and reliable than orderings of space in other cultures, because it carries a greater burden in the accurate transmission of bodily social knowledge. This makes the explanatory task of the anthropologist easier, however, since the symbolic order is legible in the very form of the built environment.

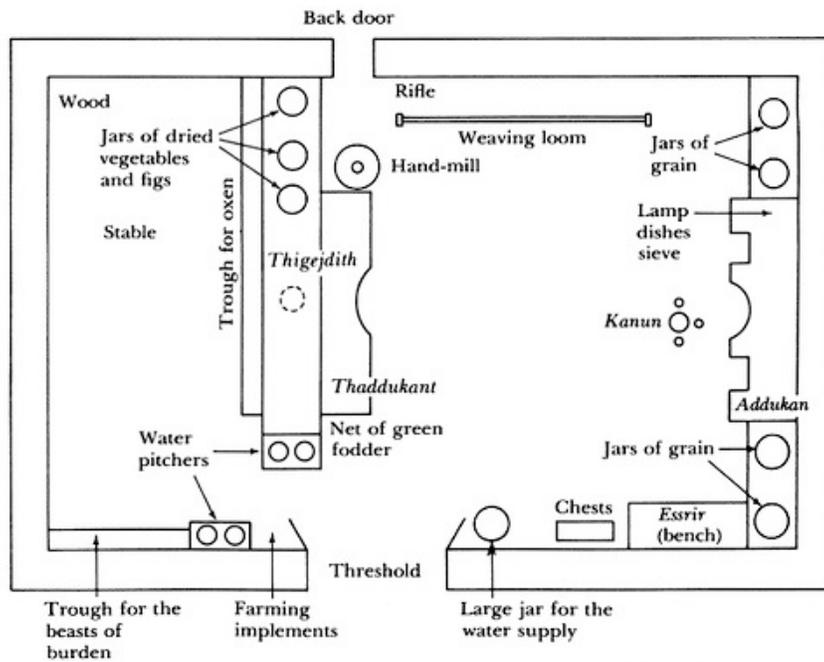


Figure 9. Plan of the Kabyle house. Source: Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 272

The Kabyle house is divided into two parts of unequal size. From the point of view of an observer standing at the threshold, the larger right side of the house (see Figure 9) is associated with dominant masculinity, while the left side is associated with dominated femininity. This fundamental opposition, which is essentially a division of sexual labor, is also associated, through the medium of the house, with numerous others, including up/down, dry/wet, open/closed, full/empty, day/night, spicy/bland, public/private. The association between these oppositions is analogical in that they are

“similar in difference,”²⁰¹ that is, they comprise a kind of alignment between the fundamental oppositions within the natural and social universe. These oppositions are aligned in that all of the terms on one side are associated with one another, and opposed to all the terms on the other side, which are likewise associated with one another. The individual oppositions are ultimately arbitrary, except for the fact that they form a coherent system when considered together. In other words, the very opposition of their terms is the mediating factor that creates the analogy. Some of the instances are based on relations of likeness, such as the association of male/female with full/empty, but for the most part the associations are arbitrary and are governed only by their similarity in difference.

Bourdieu’s point in elaborating these associated oppositions, however, is not simply that the arrangement of the house is symbolic of gendered power relations. Instead, the point is that the individual’s bodily occupation and use of the space of the house constitute practices that continuously rearticulate the structural whole, including the distinction between male and female power roles. It distributes the work of maintaining a social hierarchy in the objects and properties that are organized in physical space. This is because “the greater the extent to which the task of reproducing the relations of domination is taken over by objective mechanisms, which serve the interests of the dominant group without any conscious effort on the latter’s part, the more indirect and, in a sense, impersonal, become the strategies objectively oriented towards reproduction...”²⁰² By constellating these power roles within an entire universe of

²⁰¹ Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 7.

²⁰² Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 189.

oppositions, the political structure of the society comes to be misrecognized and taken for granted. It quite literally comes to seem as natural as the difference between night and day. And in the Kabyle society the central element in this naturalization of the social order is the relation between the body and the space of the house: “inhabited space—and above all the house—is the principle locus for the objectification of the generative schemes...”²⁰³

Concrete, material oppositions, such as outside/inside, high/low, light/dark, and so on, are comingled with abstract, cultural oppositions, such as *nif* (male honor)/*hurma* (female honor). As Richard Jenkins explains, “the tangible presence of artifacts, commodities, and physical structures symbolises and refers to the abstract cultural order of values and interpretive morality.”²⁰⁴ Cultural power relations, most importantly those between men and women, are aligned with an entire system of concrete and therefore materially given relations, almost all of which “prove to be based on movements and postures of the human body.”²⁰⁵ The oppositional structure of the human body in terms of up/down, front/back, and left/right, and the possible movements from one to the other of those poles, not only grounds the structure of human space perception, as Kant noted in his pre-*Critique* essay,²⁰⁶ but also structures the social and cultural world. Because of the quasi-foundational role played by spatial oppositions in Kabyle culture, Bourdieu notes

²⁰³ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 89.

²⁰⁴ Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu*, 33.

²⁰⁵ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 119.

²⁰⁶ Kant, “On the First Ground of the Distinction of Regions in Space.”

of the front/back distinction that “it would not be difficult to reconstruct the quasi-totality of Kabyle ritual practices from this one scheme.”²⁰⁷

Such a reconstruction with respect to the oppositions within the house is clear enough, taken by itself, but the opposition between the house itself and the outside world puts an interesting twist on the matter. That is because the oppositions that hold within the house also hold between the house and the rest of the world, except in reverse. Thus, “it is both true and false to say that the external world is opposed to the house as the male to the female, day to night, fire to water, etc., since the second term in each of these oppositions splits, each time, into itself and its opposite.” Bourdieu holds that this relationship, which can be symbolized “ $a : b :: b_1 : b_2$,” is simply an economical way for a culture to organize its symbolic relationships, since “it cannot counterpose without simultaneously uniting.”²⁰⁸ Thus the house can be identified with the feminine (and other categories) in opposition with the rest of the village, while the interior of the house can still be divided into male and female, dry and wet, light and dark, and so on. Moreover, the oppositions that are organized spatially by the house, and by the world/house relation, are also linked with the Kabyle agrarian calendar, with its opposed periods of activity (wet season/dry season, sowing/harvesting) and its transitional periods, which according to Bourdieu, are associated with the contact of opposites and reversal. Thus, the total system of oppositions is both spatial and temporal, with analogical points of contact between spatial and temporal oppositions. The diagram with which Bourdieu represents these oppositions can be read both spatially, opposing the properties at the top with those

²⁰⁷ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 122.

²⁰⁸ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 277.

at the bottom, or temporally by tracing the counter-clockwise movement of the agrarian cycle.

This complicated system of nested oppositions is inculcated in and embodied by the individual in his or her daily activities, by exposure to an ever-present order of meanings and the incondensable bodily reality of those meanings. Since the oppositions are all linked to one another, the entire system is invoked whenever one performs such mundane actions as entering the house or filling a container. Every activity of the body—even remaining at rest within the structured space—recreates the order of the social universe, making *all* practice “cosmogonic practice.”²⁰⁹ The body, structured as it is in terms of its primary spatial axes—front/back, left/right, top/bottom—functions as a basic template onto which any oppositions, natural or cultural, can be mapped. The body is the central term in a system of analogies articulated in practice. It is in the context of this analysis of the body in physical space, and not in that of his subsequent theory of social space, that Bourdieu writes the following:

...it is the dialectical relationship between the body and a space structured according to the mythico-ritual oppositions that one finds the form par excellence of the structural apprenticeship which leads to the embodying of the structures of the world, that is, the appropriating by the world of a body thus enabled to appropriate the world.²¹⁰

Thus, the relationship between the body and its space is internalized in the form of habitus and, since that relationship carried with it an entire world of analogously structured relationships, those relationships are internalized as well. Moreover, the entire system is reproduced every time one of its components is exercised in practice, most

²⁰⁹ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 114.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

tangibly in “the form of movements of the body, turning to the right or left, putting things upside down, going in, coming out, tying, cutting, etc.”^{211 212}

This global system of oppositions, which admits of an inversion at the threshold of the house, explains many ritual activities that would otherwise remain mysterious. The placement of the loom, for example, can only be understood by conceiving of the loom as operating simultaneously in the “house system” as well as in the “universe system,” of which the house system is an inverted analogue:

The loom, the instrument *par excellence* of female activity, *raised* facing the east like a man and like the plough, is at the same time the east of the internal space and has a male value as a symbol of protection.²¹³

...from the standpoint of her male kin, the girl’s whole life is in a sense summed up in the successive positions she successively occupies vis-à-vis the loom, the symbol of male protection. Before marriage she is placed behind the loom, in its shadow, under its protection, just as she is kept under the protection of her father and brothers; on her wedding day she is seated in front of the loom, with her back to it, with the light upon her, and thereafter she will sit weaving, with her back to the wall of light, behind the loom.²¹⁴

The ritual practice of the married woman coming out from behind the loom and thenceforth sitting facing the “wall of darkness” and femininity is opposed to the ritual practice of the unmarried girl stepping through the warp of the loom, from the space in front of it to the protected, male space behind it. Such bodily movements have meaning within the total system of oppositions and, once removed from that system they appear simply as irrational or magical rites. This is not to say that they are not in a sense

²¹¹ Ibid., 116.

²¹² Bourdieu sometimes uses the term *body hexis* to capture this effect of the structured world upon the body. See *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 87.

²¹³ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 277.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 273.

arbitrary, but the fact that they are logically integrated within a larger system of equally arbitrary practices helps explain their cultural durability.

Another important practical scheme is that of union and separation, which by a fairly transparent analogy governs both the agrarian cycle and the cycle of human sexual reproduction. In a world structured by sets of oppositions unified by analogy, practical life always has the character of staying within or transgressing certain well-defined limits. The separation of the agrarian calendar into distinct periods, such as the dry season and the rainy season, sowing and harvesting, is accompanied by transitional periods, periods of union between opposites (necessarily so because of the cyclical nature of the agrarian year). Union and separation, as well as convergence and divergence, govern the logic of all practice within an oppositional framework: “Male and female, wet and dry, are in a sense separated only so as to be reunited, since only their union—ploughing or marriage—can free them from the negative properties (negative only in the respect in question, that of fecundity) that are associated with them so long as they remain in the *odd-numbered, imperfect, state of separateness.*”²¹⁵

Bourdieu’s analysis of the objective structure and practical use of the space of the Kabyle house reveals that the bodily occupation of space is thoroughly integrated with the system of cultural meaning in a given society, including its basic power relations. The basic relations of the body to its space function as an analogical template for an entire universe of oppositions, social and cultural as well as material, that themselves become, as integrated components of a total system, embodied in the form of habitus. Habitus that has been adjusted in this way to function within a socially structured physical space

²¹⁵ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 137.

makes the practical engagement of the individual with his or her world seems entirely natural. Conscious reflection on one's physical space may not be enough to break the spell of this naturalization, which manifests itself epistemically in what Bourdieu calls the *doxa*, an unquestioned belief in the objective reality of structured appearances. It is thus the case that the objective organization of the space of human habitation is a factor complicit in the reproduction of power relations simply because it is such a factor in the reproduction of *all* social relations.

Bourdieu's analysis of the Kabyle house carries implications that reach far beyond that particular case. They apply in fact to all aspects of the built environment. In a recent article applying Bourdieu's and Anthony Giddens' sociologies of physical space to the case of the Biotechnology Building at Cornell University, the sociologist Thomas F. Gieryn quotes Winston Churchill on the links between the built environment and social life: "We shape our buildings and afterward our buildings shape us."²¹⁶ Churchill was talking about the destruction of the British parliament buildings by bombing in 1941, and the significance of that event for the shaping of a democratic society. Gieryn himself is among a large group of scholars who recognize that the built environment is the depository of social structures. There is little illusion among these authors, Bourdieu included, that buildings hold social structure absolutely stable. As Geiryn says, "buildings stabilize *imperfectly*"²¹⁷—their contribution to social inertia is contingent on a wide range of factors, from whether or not they continue to stand, how their physical contexts change, and whether or not our interpretations of them remain fixed. The following

²¹⁶ Gieryn, "What buildings do," Churchill quoted at p. 35.

²¹⁷ Ibid. Gieryn traces this view to Simmel.

sections explain how Bourdieu thinks of physical space as both the site and the stake of social struggle.

Housing and the City

Bourdieu's subsequent writings on physical space are widely scattered, with comments tending to appear briefly in the context of elaborating other arguments, like, for example, his comments on the Parisian apartment interiors in *Distinction*, which are nonetheless suggestive of more general insights. He advances the idea here that taste in interior decorating indicates and produces the "unconscious unity of a class."²¹⁸ More than the oppositional division of domestic space (although that surely remains relevant as well), the most efficacious features of that space in social reproduction are the subtle differences in materials and organization, which are embodied as habitus and taken for granted, in ways that may be "as profoundly unconscious as the quiet caress of beige carpets or the thin clamminess of tattered, garish linoleum, the harsh smell of bleach or perfumes as imperceptible as a negative scent."²¹⁹

Beginning in the early nineties, Bourdieu produced a series of sustained discussions of the social function of housing.²²⁰ The most important of these is the essay "Site Effects," which forms part of a collaborative project that Bourdieu engaged in

²¹⁸ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 77.

²¹⁹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 77.

²²⁰ These include a collection of articles in the 1990 volume of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* under the heading "L'économie de la maison," a collaborative research project published in 1993 as *The Weight of the World*, and two analyses of the housing market, first in the 1994 essay "The Meaning of Property," coauthored with Monique de Saint Martin, and then in *The Social Structures of the Economy*.

during the early nineties that was later published as *La Misère du monde*. The aim of the collaborative project was, in part, “to understand what happens in places like projects or housing developments as well as in certain kinds of schools, places which bring together people who have nothing in common and force them to live together, either in mutual ignorance and incomprehension or else in latent or open conflict—with all the suffering this entails...”²²¹ The work largely refrains from abstraction, directly transcribing interviews with individuals who occupy a dominated position in social space. It is clear from the statements of the interviewees, however, as well as the short commentaries that accompany them, that the physical spaces they occupy frame, contribute to, symbolize and stigmatize their condition. The book’s title (literally “the misery of the world”) refers to its major thesis, that quite literally the entire world is structured to maintain the relative positions of dominated and dominating classes. Physical space is an inescapable locus of the argument, both as setting and as mechanism. The various contributors, both the researchers and their interviewees, describe the physical and emotional features of high-rise housing projects, industrial suburbs and “hyper ghettos.”²²²

The most explicit statement of the role of physical space in the structuring of social power is given in the section entitled, “Site Effects,” authored by Bourdieu himself. The motivating thesis of this essay is that “one can break with misleading appearances and with the errors ascribed in substantialist thought about place only through a rigorous analysis of the relations between the structures of social space and

²²¹ Bourdieu, “The Space of Points of View,” 3, in *The Weight of the World*.

²²² This term belongs to Loïc Wacquant. See *Urban Outcasts*, 46.

those of physical space.”²²³ Bourdieu then proceeds to explain the principles upon which such an analysis would be based.

Bourdieu draws a distinction between site and place. Human beings occupy a site (*le lieu*) in physical space, meaning their location in relation to the sites occupied by other agents, institutions, and so on. Place, on the other hand, is the volume or “bulk” that a given agent or group occupies at a given site. This pair of locational concepts is drawn from the observation that dominance of physical space is reducible neither to the presence of an individual or group at a given site in physical space, nor to their monopolization of a given region. The separation of the dwellings of the working poor from the zones in which prestigious cultural institutions are located, for example, is both an effect and a cause of the separation between classes defined by a differing asset structure in terms of cultural and economic capital. But this homology between social and physical space cannot be explained purely by the amount of physical space that low cost housing or art museums take up, nor by the purely topological relation between the regions. Instead, both site and place are determined by the structure of social space, and the particular ways in which different forms of capital affect these variables depends on the details of the particular case. This means that the distortions that result from the translation of social space into physical space arise from the uneven expression of different agencies in social space, defined by their different combinations of economic and cultural capital, in the physical location and relative scale of the components of the built environment associated with those agencies.

²²³ Bourdieu, *The Weight of the World*, 123.

Consider the enormous contrast between the physical structure of a large American state university, on one hand, and a prestigious French university on the other. Arizona State University (ASU) takes up hundreds of acres of real estate in central Arizona, with campuses in Tempe and Phoenix, as well as a growing number of smaller satellite campuses. This strategy is a typical feature of the business model of large American universities that can marshal enormous sums of economic capital but are relatively poor in cultural capital (academic prestige). Despite its enormous bulk, however, ASU is relatively indifferent to the position of its buildings with respect to the existing urban environment,²²⁴ tending to make use of cheap real estate in undesirable or underused locations, such as Air Force bases and failing strip malls. On the other hand, consider the *École Normale Supérieure*, where Bourdieu studied for his teaching qualifications, which is unsurpassed in cultural capital. The ENS occupies only a few buildings on the Rue d'Ulm, as well as several single-building satellites elsewhere, but its location with respect to the rest of the urban environment, its site, is extremely non-arbitrary. It is located in the intellectual left bank, and clustered closely together with other elite French schools.²²⁵ It would not be unreasonable to hypothesize from this case that site is more closely linked to cultural capital than place or bulk. As factors contributing to the distribution of agents and groups in physical space, however, it must be recognized that cultural and economic capital both have an influence on site and place.

Physical spaces in the social world are structured in a way similar to that of social space. That is, there is structural significance in the way its sites are differentiated and

²²⁴ This is beginning to change, however, with the creation of the School of Sustainability.

²²⁵ This geographical fact was pointed out by Grenfell.

distanced from one another. Distinction and proximity articulate structures in physical space, for example between the city and the suburb, the capital and the province (as in France), commercial and residential districts, safe and unsafe neighborhoods, prestigious and undesirable addresses, and so on. These basic geographical features, which Bourdieu has made great use of in his notion of field, were originally taken from the topological fact that space can be thought of as a set of mutually exclusive positions. The simple fact is that individuals and groups occupy particularized spaces, that they do not occupy all positions simultaneously, but must struggle with one another for sites in a finite space. This struggle results in topographies that are always social and political, as well as spatial. It is because a multiplicity of positions, especially ones associated with interested agencies and parties, are always also oppositions, that physical space is structured in terms of social hierarchies. As Bourdieu puts it, “There is no space in a hierarchized society that is not itself hierarchized and that does not express hierarchies and social distances...”²²⁶

The sociologist’s task of mapping the physical expression of social hierarchies and distances is necessitated by what Bourdieu calls the “naturalization effect” of physical spaces. The social organization of the built environment is taken for granted by the agents who inhabit it due to the “long-term inscription of social realities in the natural world.”²²⁷ In other words, we tend to treat the built environment as a natural feature of the world: we regard it with passive acceptance rather than suspicion or critique. It seldom occurs to most people, unless they take a professional interest in such matters,

²²⁶ Ibid., 124.

²²⁷ Ibid.

that the physical spaces we occupy play this role of providing an additional source of inertia to the structure and reproduction of the social world.

According to Bourdieu, physical space is a distorted or “blurred”²²⁸ translation of social space. This blurring is not an indeterminate or random effect, however, since it is the structure of power in social space that shapes the structure of physical space. Certain individuals and groups with enough economic and cultural capital have the power to impose their own vision of the social world on the ground. Architects and planners, who occupy a position of great cultural capital (politicians could be included here as well, although the form of capital they possess is of a distinct kind), as well as developers and investors, who occupy a position of great economic capital, exercise a controlling influence over the form of the space that is inhabited by all classes. This influence is, of course, mediated by a wide range of intervening parties and processes, for example potential tenants, transportation concerns, zoning clearances, and so on. In spite of the resultant blurring, however, homologous relations between social space and physical space are common as classes and groups who tend to cluster in social space also tend to cluster in physical space, or else they occupy positions that are equivalently separated from those of classes and groups that they are separated from in social space.

Physical space is thus “reified social space,”²²⁹ and, given Bourdieu's theory of relatively autonomous fields within the general field of classes, it is possible to read particular physical spaces as more faithful translations of certain fields rather than others. Nonetheless, the tendency of the individual fields to be structured homologously to each

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid., 126.

other results in a general tendency for social inequalities, advantages and disadvantages in various fields, to manifest themselves in the same divisions of physical space. According to Bourdieu, “the result is a concentration of the rarest goods and their owners in certain sites of physical space (Madison Avenue or Fifth Avenue in New York, the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honore in Paris) which contrasts in every respect with sites that, principally and sometimes exclusively, collect the most disadvantaged groups (poor suburbs, ghettos).”²³⁰ Similarly, the physical space of France on the national scale is characterized by the congregation in one site, namely Paris, of all of the individuals and groups that occupy a dominant position in their respective fields, i.e., the most prestigious employers, academic institutions, publishers, the highest valued companies and industries, and so on:

...the capital city is—no pun intended—the site of capital, that is, the site in physical space where the positive poles of all the fields are concentrated along with most of the agents occupying these dominant positions: which means that the capital cannot be adequately analyzed except in relation to the provinces (and "provincialness"), which is nothing other than being deprived (in entirely relative terms) of the capital and the capital.²³¹

The social effects of the distinction between capital and provinces is elaborated by Bourdieu in his study of the unmarriagable men in his native region of Béarn who fail to incorporate the urban habitus that the region’s women have come to expect.²³² More fine-grained distinctions appear at closer levels of inspection that reveal the divisions within various fields. The distinction between “right bank” and “left bank” in Paris could refer

²³⁰ Ibid, 125.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Bourdieu, “The Peasant and his Body.”

to the geographical layout of the city itself, or to varieties of political affiliation or to tastes in literature and theatre. Similarly, “Broadway” and “off-Broadway” map not only the sites of venues in Manhattan but also the aesthetic distance between conventional theatre and the avant-garde, as well as the social distance between genre-specific audiences.

Bourdieu's main interest in analyzing the structures of physical space is, as in his study of the Kabyle house, to identify the ways in which these structures contribute to the reproduction of power structures. Power structures pervade physical space. A general sense of the value-laden way that physical space is divided can be seen in the linguistic designations we use to describe it and orient ourselves within it. We are accustomed to speaking, for instance, of the “head of the table” versus the other positions, the “wrong side of the tracks,” versus the more reputable districts, “uptown” versus “downtown” and innumerable other such divisions. It is not enough simply to point out that relations of power structure physical space. Bourdieu goes further in identifying the active role of habitus in reproducing the social order—and with it the spatial order—by the bodily incorporation of socio-spatial relations, which is a further consequence of the naturalization effect mentioned above. This incorporation “takes place through the displacements and bodily movements organized by these social structures turned into spatial structures and thereby naturalized.”²³³ Although certainly not the only determinate of habitus, physical space is one of the most important, since habituation to occupying and traversing physical space involves the body directly in the acquisition and mastery of spatialized social structures. “Architectural spaces,” says Bourdieu, “address mute

²³³ Ibid, 126.

injunctions directly to the body..."²³⁴ The fact that we gain largely unconscious familiarity with its structures, that they are practiced rather than explicitly learned, tends to disguise the fact that the particular power structures they exhibit are not necessary features of the environment, but the products of a particular social order.

The built environment thus manifests a version of what Bourdieu calls symbolic violence,²³⁵ a notion that he develops more fully in connection with domination through language, but which functions here in the same way. Symbolic violence or symbolic domination operates undetected by conscious observation because it works by the automatic decoding of power relations that are constituted by the very structure of a symbolic discourse. Thus legitimate or authoritative forms of speech, such as we might associate with members of the legal profession or academics, place the listener in a position of domination and amount to techniques of intimidation, whether the listener consciously registers a feeling of intimidation or not. The symbolic violence of verbal speech is in some respects continuous with the symbolic violence that works through the built environment. Regional differences in speech patterns tend to be perceived as non-authoritative variants of the "official" language, which is usually associated with the large cities and their more "refined" or "correct" way of speaking. Intra-urban variations in speech are relevant as well. Consider, for example, the distinctively different associations of a New York accent on one hand, and the accents of suburban commuters on the other, who have historically tended towards a more "conservative" dialect type.²³⁶

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ See Bourdieu, "Symbolic Violence."

²³⁶ On the linguistic conservatism of New England dialects, see Wolfram, 107.

²³⁷The former is likely to strike one as a “working class” distortion of proper speech, whereas the latter sounds more “normal” and correct.²³⁸ The submissive posture called for from the use of authoritative speech has an architectural analogue in such automatic responses as “the respectful demeanor called for grandeur and height (of monuments, rostrums, or platforms) and the frontal placement of sculptures and paintings...”²³⁹ as well as all the more subtle distinctions alluded to above.

In his discussion of physical space as reified social space, Bourdieu is insistent that we conceive such spaces as the arenas of a struggle for domination. Here Bourdieu extends his familiar economic terminology into the specific field of the built environment. He identifies three types of “profits,” which, as in his discussions of various types of capital, we may imagine to be secured by the investment of resources (which may be economic, symbolic, or otherwise) and exchangeable for one another. “Profits of localization” are economic profits that result from the proximity of the location of an individual, group, institution, etc., to “rare and desirable agents and goods,” in other words, from proximity to schools, theatres, hospitals and other institutions that constitute an advantage for those who have privileged geographical access to them. Profits of localization are contrasted with “profits of position or rank,” which function in an analogous way, except that they are cultural or symbolic profits, rather than economic

²³⁷ Some evidence for intra-urban geographic distribution of class-specific dialects can be gleaned from William Labov’s 1966 study of “the social stratification of (r) in New York City department stores,” Labov, 40-57. Although the author himself does not pursue specifically geographical conclusions at length, the relative locations of the department stores in the sample suggest both social and geographic stratification.

²³⁸ The tendency even for speakers of “New York English” to recognize their own speech as an exception, if not a vulgarization of the language, exemplifies what Bourdieu calls “symbolic violence,” and testifies to the success with which the dominant group has been able to install the arbitrary features of their own speech as the standard of proper diction.

²³⁹ Ibid, 126.

ones. These are the forms of cultural capital that correspond specifically to differentiations in physical space, which we tend to think of in terms of the relative prestige or ill repute of a certain neighborhood, street, town or other location. Every site must be said to be associated with a certain amount of, shall we say, “positional capital,” which is not a fixed magnitude but is determined in relation to its rank in the order of positions. Profits of position are secured, again, by privileged geographical access to a particular site, whether by direct ownership of real estate, occupational or professional association, or any other relation that ties an individual or group to a specific site. Both of these forms of profit are tied closely to the cost, both in economic capital and in time, of transportation from one place to another, so that agents or groups that have ownership, residence or professional attachment to a given site are spared the considerable costs of accessing it. A third form of profit, the “profits of occupation,” are cultivated simply by taking up space at a given desirable site, which prevents others from attaining proximity to its center, and thereby reinforces the distinction between the site and those that it excludes. Bourdieu thus suggests that the spaciousness of, say, an apartment or an office building, is more than simply a function of the comfort and luxury of the occupants, but also a way of imposing physical distance (and therefore social distance) between itself and whatever spaces may be contiguous with it.

By delineating these general forms of spatial profits, Bourdieu makes it clear that the “struggle to appropriate space”²⁴⁰ is more nuanced than a mere land grab, or a hoarding of real estate conceived as exactly analogous to economic wealth. The stakes in the struggle, the kinds of profits to be won or lost, not only enable the reproduction of the

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

way physical space is structured, but also supply advantages (or disadvantages) to the continuing struggle for social position that is not immediately physical. One's fate in such struggles, Bourdieu asserts, is dependent on one's possession of capital, both economic and symbolic, since it is capital that "makes it possible to keep undesirable persons and things at a distance at the same time that it brings closer desirable persons and things..."²⁴¹ The embodiment of certain forms of capital in the habitus ensures that this economy of physical space proceeds at times at a highly visceral level, since "socially distanced people find nothing more intolerable than physical proximity..."²⁴² Actual bodily discomfort accompanies contact between individuals with radically different asset structures in terms of the volume and type of capital they possess. Because of this, existing spatial differentiations between class districts in the city, or between the city and small towns, have an inertial resistance to increased heterogeneity. At the same time, heterogeneous districts tend to separate themselves out, to produce internal divisions or to become fractionally absorbed by adjoining districts with well-defined homogeneous asset structures.

Bourdieu notes that struggles to appropriate physical space can take an individual or a collective form. At the individual level, there is a widespread desire for what Bourdieu calls "spatial mobility," the spatial analogue of the familiar sociological idea of social mobility, in which individuals attempt to improve the spatial position they occupy, "as with relocations in both directions between the capital and the provinces, or

²⁴¹ Ibid, 127.

²⁴² Ibid, 128.

successive addresses within the hierarchized space of the capital.”²⁴³ Bourdieu has the particular case of France in mind here, but the same principle applies to inhabited space, none of which escapes hierarchical social differentiation. So in the United States a considerable amount of spatial mobility is presupposed by a move, for example, from rural Arkansas to Little Rock, or from lower to upper Manhattan. Of course, such spatial mobility has to be paid for, usually both in money and in cultural capital. Spatial mobility requires, for example, that one be culturally prepared to meet the demands that a new place “tacitly requires of its occupants.”²⁴⁴ One possesses, in other words, a habitus that enables one not to feel “out of place,” and to do so more or less effortlessly, in one’s adoptive spatial position. Certain public spaces, both public ones like museums and hospitals, as well as private addresses, operate on what Bourdieu calls a “club effect”: “Like a club founded on the active exclusion of undesirable people, the fashionable neighborhood symbolically consecrates its inhabitants by allowing each one to partake of the capital accumulated by the inhabitants as a whole.”²⁴⁵ This adds to the inertia of social reproduction, since the club effect magnifies an existing aggregate of cultural capital by associating it with a particular physical site, yielding a surplus of site-specific cultural capital for the residents of that district.

In terms of collective struggles to appropriate space, Bourdieu emphasizes the joint role of the state and financial institutions in creating and financing policies of land use that “[favor] the *construction of homogeneous groups on a spatial basis.*”²⁴⁶ Valuable

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 129.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

spatial commodities like housing quality, access to schools, hospitals and parks, as well as access to other localized holdings of cultural capital like trendy restaurants and shops, are unevenly distributed spatially as a result of the collective actions of financial and governing bodies. The kinds of site effects that are of direct concern to Bourdieu's research group are those that emerge after the withdrawal of these homogenizing forces, the kinds of self-organization that spontaneously arise in places the only common feature of which is that they have been held at a distance from all forms of locally prized capital.

The places described in *The Weight of the World* illustrate many of the concepts developed by Bourdieu in his essay. Jonquil Street, for example, is described as “a large treeless avenue lined by small houses with tiny gardens (four square meters) enclosed by a small wall and often strewn with paper refuse, broken toys, and abandoned utensils.”²⁴⁷ The victims of “restructuring” in the steel industry—skilled workers who are now unemployed or underemployed inhabit it. The district “includes nothing that ordinarily enlivens city space—butchers, bakers, grocery shops, cafes, news-stands or tobacconist...”²⁴⁸ This is a place, in other words, that has been entirely cut off from even the most basic profits of localization, and although the street itself is wide, it is also empty, since the locals have little to do with one another. The space that each family occupies thus yields nothing in the way of profits of occupation—to occupy space here is simply to be contained. The vastness of the outside space of the street highlights this fact, since the houses themselves do not match it in scale. Square footage is valueless here, at least in terms of cultural profits. As for profits of position, there is nothing prestigious

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 6.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

about Jonquil Street, which is located in a district that was once designated simply “ZUP” for “Zone for Priority Urbanization.” The residents of this street have as little control over their physical environment, however, as they do over their social position. The individuals that Bourdieu interviews at this location describe problems with their employers and the local government, the limited educational possibilities for their children, and strenuous conflicts with their heterogeneous assortment of neighbors. In confirmation of Bourdieu’s point about the role of the state in collective social mobility, the action that the state has taken to improve the situation in this district is to rename it (“Val Saint Martin”) the only effect of which will be to make it less visible to the inhabitants of more prosperous positions. The study is full of similar accounts, each from a different social point of view, but each combining descriptions of social disenfranchisement with interviews that illustrate the internalization the positions that have been assigned to them. This internalization is greatly helped by the constant reminders of it that make up the physical environment. What this study illustrates, perhaps more than anything else, is the contribution to social suffering of the very homes of the sufferers.

In chapter V I will bring some of these notions to bear on districts that have not been abandoned by the state, but instead serve as good examples of the club effect Bourdieu mentions. In so doing, it will be possible to observe some of the techniques by which the various types of spatial profits are acquired and reinvested.

Spatial Practice and Phenomenology

It is easy to see how Bourdieu's studies of space as *practiced* could be confused for a kind of sociological phenomenology. Bourdieu's sociological investigations of physical space certainly depend on an understanding of the immediate subjective apprehension of space, in its way of appearing to the subject as natural, familiar, and prior to all theoretical questioning. One might be tempted, therefore, to place such investigations in the tradition of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, who, in interrogating what Husserl termed the "natural attitude," attempt to describe the pre-theoretical, subject-centered appearance of space, as well as the development of more abstract space conceptions that result from making breaks with this primordial mode of consciousness.²⁴⁹ This is an interpretation that Bourdieu is careful to avoid, however. Bourdieu's understanding of how agents inhabit physical space, committed as it is to the notion of space as practiced, is not phenomenological in the traditional sense, although it does take account of certain phenomenological evidence. Although Bourdieu insists that habitus, understood as the sense of one's place, as well as one's dispositions to place oneself, is a form of bodily knowledge acquired and reaffirmed in practice, the practice in which it is produced and exercised is not accessible by an epistemic bracketing of the natural attitude alone, but must be informed by an empirical account of the objective relations that structure physical space. The need to supplement a phenomenological account with an objectivist one arises, for Bourdieu, because phenomenological investigation presents one with a fully naturalized version of our conceptual and perceptual schemes. This very naturalization, however, admits of a long history of historical and cultural accumulation and transformation: "What today presents itself as

²⁴⁹ See Husserl, *Ideas II*, and Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*

self-evident, established, settled once and for all, beyond discussion, has not always been so and only gradually imposed itself as such.”²⁵⁰ In other words, phenomenological analysis is particularly misleading because it tends to present historical structures of perception and consciousness as self-evidently ahistorical. “...the ‘natural attitude’,” says Bourdieu, “is a *socially constructed relationship*.”²⁵¹

It should be mentioned that Bourdieu’s criticisms of phenomenology always appear in the form of generalizations, and tend to oversimplify, and often misrepresent it. Many proponents of phenomenological methodology seek precisely to de-ontologize, and de-naturalize, the phenomena, that is, to avoid the arriving at the consequences of which Bourdieu accuses phenomenology. That phenomenology ends up naturalizing phenomena, despite its explicit aims to the contrary, is from Bourdieu’s point of view an ironic and unintended consequence. In addition, when Bourdieu characterizes his own reflexive approach as a supplement to and correction of a purely phenomenological methodology, it is likely that he is utilizing phenomenology as a straw man, in order to cast his own approach in more vivid relief.

For Bourdieu, in covering over the social construction, both historical and cultural, that lends our experience of the world its particularity, phenomenology also covers over the political inequalities, the structural relations of domination and subordination, that define it and that it functions to reproduce. Phenomenology is “so perfectly ‘neutralized’ politically that one can read it without drawing any political

²⁵⁰ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 174.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, 174.

conclusions...,”²⁵² an observation that is true enough, at least with respect to the foundational texts of phenomenology. This neutrality of phenomenological investigation has the effect of reinforcing the political essence of its subject matter by denying its existence. Bourdieu is not denying that phenomenology performs a necessary function by breaking with the theoretical and self-consciously encultured ways of interpreting experience, but he is insisting that it be reconnected with the social and cultural conditions that gave rise to the agent’s construction of the world in its phenomenologically particular way. Therefore, the phenomenology of space that we can be made aware of, the particular ways that our bodies have of occupying, moving through, and manipulating objects in that space, must be recognized as a continuous affirmation of the political order that that phenomenology presupposes. Habitus, as the corporeal locus of this phenomenology, must be conceived as a complicit actor in the everyday work upholding the political status quo, although it is seldom, if ever, recognized as such:

Every social order systematically takes advantage of the disposition of the body and language to function as depositories of deferred thoughts that can be triggered off at a distance in space and time by the simple effect of re-placing the body in an overall posture which *recalls* the associated thoughts and feelings, in one of the inductive states of the body which, as actors know, give rise to states of mind.²⁵³

Bourdieu thus reconnects phenomenological structures with their material basis, both by locating them in the biological habitus and by revealing their dependence on objective, historically particular social and cultural conditions.

²⁵² Ibid, 173.

²⁵³ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 69.

Even so, there are strong reliances on the insights of phenomenology in Bourdieu's thinking about space. Perhaps the best way of bringing these out is to explore briefly the findings of the phenomenologist who comes closest to Bourdieu's own subject area, Alfred Schutz. Schutz developed a phenomenology that, in Bourdieu's words, "tried to describe how social agents experience the social world in the naïve state..."²⁵⁴ Schutz is interested, in other words, in discovering the specifically social aspects of the natural attitude. His work is of paramount importance to the history of sociology as it gave rise to the current known as ethnomethodology, which Bourdieu characterizes as, "a kind of rigorous phenomenology of the subjective experience of the world," and "the absolute antithesis of objectivist description." Schutz, who sees the task of his phenomenology as clarifying the "problem of the social sciences," namely, "attaining objective and verifiable knowledge of a subjective meaning structure", would likely contest this description.²⁵⁵ For Schutz, then, phenomenology aims at objective knowledge, but resists reduction to something like rational action theory, since it takes into account "all the difficulties encumbering the real actor in the everyday life-world,"²⁵⁶ which are, for Schutz, uniquely revealed by phenomenological description. There must be an agreement, in other words, of the constructs of the sociologist with the structures of the world as apprehended by the prereflective consciousness of the subject. "Each term in a scientific model of human action," he says, "must be constructed in such a way that a human act performed within the life-world... would be understandable for the actor himself as well as for his fellow-men in terms of common-sense interpretation of

²⁵⁴ Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question*, 56.

²⁵⁵ Schutz, *Collected Papers*, Vol. 1, 36.

²⁵⁶ Schutz, 42.

everyday life.”²⁵⁷ Schutz thus sees his phenomenological contribution to sociology as a resolution of the tension between the objectivist construction of the social world by the sociologist and the subjective structures of that same world as lived by the subject.

Bourdieu and Schutz thus share the belief that the social sciences suffer from a dislocation between subjectivist and objectivist methodologies. Their solutions to the problem, however, could not be more different. For Schutz, the subjectivist and objectivist moments of social scientific research are to be brought into agreement with one another. For Bourdieu, on the other hand, sociology can only proceed by the imposition of a rigorous reflexivity—or rather, the recognition that such a reflexivity always obtains in the practice of sociological theorizing. The sociologist is engaged in a thoroughly subjective, particular and perspectival construction of an objective model, which tries to reproduce what are assumed to be real social relations, while trying to analyze his or herself as well, in order, not necessarily to correct the distortions one has introduced, but to be aware of their influence. The model which the sociologist produces is thus constructed with the full aim of objective accuracy, which is of the utmost importance, since it must constellate the positions and dispositions of numerous social agents, none of whom may be taken to be inert or interchangeable, but rather just as limited and “pre-constructed” by his or her particular position and subjective outlook as an individual and as a sociologist. Bourdieu’s sociological methodology thus posits a reflexive dialectic, which, instead of resolving itself like Schutz’s would, steadfastly refuses to do so.

²⁵⁷ Schutz, 44.

Bourdieu always takes the opposition in the social sciences between subjectivism and objectivism as the central problem of the discipline, which is solved by the adherence to a rigorous reflexivity and the conviction that social reproduction takes place through a dialectical relationship between the subjective (habitus) and the objective (field). Bourdieu identifies the objectivist position with the classical tradition in sociology, exemplified by Durkheim and Marx, which attains sociological knowledge by “breaking away from primary representation.”²⁵⁸ Conversely, subjectivism is identified with Sartrean existentialism, phenomenology, and ethnomethodology, and treats sociological knowledge as “continuous with common-sense knowledge, because it is only a ‘construction of constructions.’”²⁵⁹ Bourdieu’s third option, a reflexive sociology, sees the points of view central to these two approaches as mutually formative and constructive. Thus, sociology must embrace both an objectivist and a subjectivist moment, the first of which describes and analyzes the objective configuration of social positions, the second of which is subject to perspectival limitations, and is understood to operate at each of the positions grasped in the objectivist moment, in such a way that the objective description of the social world is transformed, and must be returned to and described again. This reflexivity is made thorough by considering the sociologists own “objective” construction of sociological theory to be constrained by his or her status as a subject, along with all the constraints, prejudices and manipulations attendant to that reality. This dialectic will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. For now, it will suffice to quote Bourdieu on its major difference with the Schutzian approach,

²⁵⁸ Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, 125.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

namely that, “the points of view are apprehended as such and related to the positions in the structure of the corresponding agents.”²⁶⁰ In other words, where Schutz rests with a subjectivist, phenomenological account, Bourdieu reintroduces the objective point of view and its power to understand individual phenomenological positions relationally.

Schutz himself pays relatively little attention to spatial concerns, and perhaps this should be taken as a sign of the ultimate limits of his theoretical program, that space and time do not appear to his sociological phenomenology as shot through with social meaning, but can be fully handled by the non-sociological, purely epistemological or “ontological” researchers of conventional phenomenology. Schutz does endow spatial perception with one social function of basic importance, however, namely the constitution of the irreducible intersubjectivity of primary experience. It is through a “reciprocity of perspectives,” acquired in the immediate experience of encountering other individual subjects in space, that one comes to perceive the world as one that is common to multiple, indeed to an indefinite number of other selves. For Schutz, this is immediately evident in the natural attitude, and never calls for theoretical proof, because of the following phenomenological truth:

I take it for granted—and assume my fellow-man does the same—that if I change places with him so that his “here” becomes mine, I shall be at the same distance from things and see them with the same typicality as he actually does; moreover, the same things would be in my reach which are actually in his. (The reverse is also true.)²⁶¹

The fact that there always obtains the potential for such reciprocity of perspectives is the origin of our naïve belief in objective truth, that objects that I can observe could be

²⁶⁰ Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, 126.

²⁶¹ Schutz, 12.

observed by someone else if he or she were to occupy the position I do. It is important that this aetiology of objectivity in no way cheapens the scientific value of objective knowledge, however, since such knowledge remains for Schutz the intent of all science. What it means instead is that there is an essential difference between the social and the natural sciences, namely that the social sciences must take the primordial, pre-objective, character of human experience into account, whereas the natural sciences are under no such obligation. The behavior of social agents, which the sociologist takes as his or her object, is determined by the pre-constructed and pre-interpreted life-world of individual subjects, which can nonetheless be studied accurately due to a presumptive generality of phenomenological evidence. Schutz recognizes that this generality is imperfect, and that knowledge is “socially distributed,” meaning that different individuals have different biographical particularities that define their unique perspective. This presents no obstacle to most activities of everyday life, however, since it is also part of the natural attitude that we recognize the limits of our own biographical situation and presuppose a similar limitation to apply to other individuals we encounter.

Socially distributed knowledge sounds, at first, like something that would appeal to Bourdieu’s understanding of the social world as a “space of points of view,” where each agent occupies a uniquely differentiated position that distorts his or her view of the rest of the social world. Schutz recognizes that the situated interests of particular social agents lead them naturally to prefer a “graduated knowledge,” in which different areas of knowledge and different facts are can be thought of as layered strata such as are used to represent mountains on topographical map, indicating “contour lines of relevance.”²⁶² He

²⁶² Schutz, *Collected Papers* vol. II, 93.

even recognizes that within such a variegated epistemic space, certain kinds of knowledge are taken to be authoritative and elevate the normative epistemic status of their holders. “Socially approved knowledge,” he says, “is the source of prestige and authority; it is also the home of public opinion.”²⁶³ All this sounds very much in congruence with Bourdieuan social topology, and up to a point it is. But where Schutz emphasizes the overcoming of differences of perspective through the universal pre-knowledge of the reciprocity of perspectives, Bourdieu sees socially significant meaning in the differences themselves, and the potentiality of reciprocity functions not infrequently as a universally available excuse not to recognize the differences between one’s own point of view and one that conflicts with it. That said, Bourdieu and Schutz would generally be in agreement that particular characteristics of an individual’s world form a fully naturalized and taken for granted understanding of the world. Bourdieu would point out additionally that this naturalized perspectival understanding of the world is locked in tension with those of the other individuals with which it shares the social world. The space of points of view is not simply perspectivalism in the Nietzschean sense, in other words, but a structural explanation of the collective behaviors that are together responsible for the assignment of each individual to a particular position. It is in this sense that Bourdieu’s insistence on the social history of the natural attitude carries, for him, so much weight—merely spelling out its contents does nothing to explain where they came from. The situation is even worse when those contents are given only in their most general form, and are not studied in their mutual interaction.

²⁶³ Schutz, *Collected Papers* vol. II, 134.

The major difference between the Schutzian and the Bourdieuan approaches to social scientific theory is that, rather than attempt to accommodate both objectivist and subjectivist methodologies within a single reflexive methodology, Schutz posits the attainment of objective truth within a wholly subjective horizon. It is evident that this approach leads him to completely counter-Bourdieuan conclusions. For example, in his essay on the “well-informed citizen” he asserts that “it is the duty and privilege...of the well-informed citizen in a democratic society to make his private opinion prevail over the public opinion of the man on the street.”²⁶⁴ Such a claim would be neither possible nor desirable for Bourdieu, since he would take it for granted that the objective situation that the well-informed citizen purportedly has access to is partially the effect of his or her own exposure to and reproduction of that objective order.

Schutz’s reflections on the reciprocity of spatial perspectives, however, do not constitute a thoroughgoing understanding of the sociality of physical space. It simply recognizes a kind of elementary, pre-reflective spatial logic at the root of the phenomenon of inhabiting a world along with other subjects, and being able to communicate and (sometimes) agree with them about the features of that world.

In their in-depth analysis of the role of phenomenology in Bourdieu’s work, Throop and Murphy have harshly criticized what they see as Bourdieu’s premature dismissal of phenomenology, as well as his allegedly covert or unrecognized use of its selfsame methods and ideas. Bourdieu’s major critique of phenomenology, according to these authors, is that “structures of consciousness must themselves be understood as the

²⁶⁴ Schutz, *Collected Papers* vol. 2, 134.

product of a dialectical ‘internalization’ of objective structures.”²⁶⁵ I quote their formulation of Bourdieu’s critique simply because it does a good job of capturing his main source of discomfort with phenomenology, which is really very simple. The authors concern themselves with defending the legacy of Husserl and especially Schutz against Bourdieu’s critique. They take issue in particular with what they call Bourdieu’s doctrine of habitus as a “*thing*” that “*does something*” and contrast this with Schutz, who “treats his subject matter more as process.”²⁶⁶ I think that this criticism surely misses the point of Bourdieu’s engagement with phenomenology, the point of which is to reconnect it with the objective study of the social world via the medium of a dialectical metatheory. It is a virtue, not a flaw, in Bourdieu’s theory that habitus is grounded in the objective features of human physiology. Biological determinism provides a way out of the descriptive methodology of phenomenology, without implying that such methods should be ignored. Interestingly, Throop and Murphy attempt to reveal that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, while ostensibly not related to the use of that term by Husserl, is in fact derived from Husserl via Dilthey and Cassirer, the sources from which the notion ended up in Panofsky to begin with.²⁶⁷ Unfortunately, I think that this genealogy of the concept has less to do with its use in Bourdieu’s work than with the authors’ desire to undermine Bourdieu’s legitimate use of the notion by establishing its use in phenomenology as the original and therefore legitimate use.

Bourdieu himself published a brief reply to Throop and Murphy in the same issue of *Anthropological Theory* in which their essay appeared. At their most polemical,

²⁶⁵ Throop, Jason C. and Keith M. Murphy, “Bourdieu and Phenomenology.”

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 196.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 202, n. 1.

Throop and Murphy claim that, “Bourdieu seems to be merely rephrasing some of Schutz’s premises in his own idiosyncratic and overly deterministic vocabulary so as to make them sound new, when in reality they are not.”²⁶⁸ Bourdieu replied by clarifying his position with respect to the role phenomenology ought to play within the social sciences: “It is my aim to integrate phenomenological analysis into a global approach of which it is one phase (the first, subjective phase), the second being the objectivist analysis.”²⁶⁹ The overall point, therefore, of Bourdieu’s critique of phenomenology is not to oppose it but to incorporate it within a more complex cycle of methodological alternation. Throop and Murphy seem to have misinterpreted the style of Bourdieu’s language, which can admittedly seem purely antagonistic at times, as an attempt to refute phenomenology, whereas in fact he wishes to preserve the gains that it has made and exploit them within the larger arena of sociological research.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to argue that the order of social phenomena is constituted in practice. Included in social phenomena are such things as scientific theories, and the following chapter, on the interaction between practical and theoretical space, can be thought of as a focused examination of this limited but important instance of the practice of theory. What is important here is to emphasize a few fundamental points. First, all social practice is performed in space. As such, the processes that are productive

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 197.

²⁶⁹ Bourdieu, “Response to Throop and Murphy,” 209.

of social order may always avail themselves of the logic inherent in our body's basic direct to physical space. These relations are highly stable, by virtue of their being corporeal, and are therefore available not only as a template for social relations but specifically as a *durable* template, one that helps explain the remarkable stability of social phenomena, which "social physics" has traditionally referred to as inertia, and which Bourdieu calls reproduction. This point will be developed further in the following chapter, the major purpose of which is to integrate spatial practice and spatial theory in a common framework. This point is highly significant, since it separates Bourdieu from the tradition of social theorists who understand space as socially and historically constructed, but who neglect the crucial factor of the physical and corporeal boundedness of this process.

CHAPTER 4

THE DIALECTIC OF SOCIAL SPACE AND PHYSICAL SPACE

Introduction

The aims of this chapter are to formalize the dialectic between social space and physical space, and to provide a framework for understanding the dependencies and determinations between those two “moments” in the process of socio-physical reproduction. I will build on Bourdieu’s well-developed notion of social space, as well as his notion of habitus in its connection with physical space, to provide a model for understanding the relations of structuration that obtain between man’s social environment on one hand, and his physical environment on the other. While this effort in some respects entails going beyond the letter of Bourdieu’s theory, it remains wholly within the bounds of that theory’s logic, and it is strongly implied by certain passages in Bourdieu’s work. My intention is, therefore, simply to flesh out the details of an underdeveloped aspect of Bourdieu’s own work.

The first task is to expound Bourdieu’s general view of the dialectic between objectivist and subjectivist points of view. It is necessary to clarify this aspect of Bourdieu’s theory because it is only in relation to this dialectic that the contrasting dialectic between social space and physical space can be articulated. In defining the structure of *that* dialectic, I will trace two patterns of structural determination, one running from social space to physical space, and the other running in the opposite direction. In so doing, I will extend Bourdieu’s theoretical apparatus, in part by appealing

to the insights of other researchers. Because we are cutting to the philosophical heart of the matter, the following will involve us in a great tangle of oppositions: subjectivism/objectivism, social space/physical space, field/habitus, theory/practice, synoptic/narrative. The resulting schematization will be a construct, useful for understanding socio-physical processes, but bearing no ontological pretensions. At the simplest level, we are dealing with two dialectical processes: the dialectic of objectivism and subjectivism and the dialectic between social space and physical space. The matter is complicated, however, by the fact that these two processes are not independent of one another, but are inextricably linked. We are dealing, then, with the theoretical tools for understanding the socio-physical environment as a nonrandom but deeply complex system.

A preliminary note is in order concerning my use of the term “system” in referring to Bourdieuan dialectical processes. This usage marks a significant departure from Bourdieu’s standard idiom. When questioned about the relation of his field theory to Niklas Luhmann’s theory of social systems,²⁷⁰ for instance, Bourdieu expresses a preference for the field terminology, in part to avoid a number of specific “postulates” associated with Luhmann’s theory, but primarily because the notion of a system seems to imply internal coherence within a determinate, “hard” boundary. It is an important property of fields, on the contrary, that their boundaries, their existence as autonomous spheres of activity governed by their own rules, are always at issue for the fields’ participants: “Every field constitutes a potentially open space of play whose boundaries

²⁷⁰ See Luhmann, *Social Systems*.

are *dynamic borders* which are the stake of struggles within the field itself.”²⁷¹ The present chapter is concerned not with individual fields, however, but with social space as a whole, and especially with the system constituted by social space-physical space interaction. Social space, in contrast to the individual fields nested inside it, does admit of fixed boundaries insofar as it refers to a social economy, and is usually circumscribed by national identity. Physical space, too, constitutes a fixed-boundary system, the limits of which are essentially arbitrary (a house, a district, a city), but which are decided upon for the purpose of constraining research. None of this is to deny that “edge effects”—often very interesting ones—occur at the limits of a society or its physical environment. Focusing on these would simply entail a broader delimiting of the system. Systems thus refer to socio-physical processes, the internal dynamics of which encourage special attention, and are therefore creatures of theory, rather than of “nature.”²⁷² Or, if they *are* ontological (as Luhmann suggests²⁷³) theirs is an ontology of transience, continually interrupted by empirical revision. The reason for this is the topic of the first section of this chapter.

²⁷¹ Bourdieu in Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 104.

²⁷² Reasons for treating the phenomena at issue here as systems could be developed on the basis of Bourdieu’s discussion of habitus as a fully systematic. See Bourdieu, “Habitus,” in Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby, *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, 44.

²⁷³ Luhmann, *Social Systems*, 12.

THE DIALECTIC OF SUBJECTIVISM AND OBJECTIVISM

The Concept of Dialectics

The term “dialectic” has a tendency to be employed carelessly and vaguely to indicate any process involving two parties, concepts, entities, etc. The logician Nicholas Rescher has described dialectics as “the *alchemy* of philosophy” because it tends to be “all things to all men.”²⁷⁴ Rescher offers a general test for judging when dialectical processes are at work, however, namely that such processes “react sequentially to or against their own prior products.”²⁷⁵ This general formulation applies perfectly well to the Bourdieuan conception of reflexivity, but more precise formulations of dialectical logic cannot be squared so easily with what Bourdieu gives us. Friedrich Engels, for instance, describes dialectics as governed by three laws: the transformation of quantity into quality and *vice versa*, the interpenetration of opposites, and the negation of the negation.²⁷⁶ These laws apply only imperfectly to Bourdieu’s theory. The first law might be said to capture the relation between capital and the habitus, whereas Bourdieu’s dialectic of objectivism and subjectivism might be construed as an instance of the second law. The first law, however, is hopelessly broad and could be made to apply to any quantifiable phenomenon whatsoever. The second law begins to capture something of the relationship between objectivist and subjectivist points of view, but does not apply to other Bourdieuan dialectical processes, such as the interaction between habitus and field,

²⁷⁴ Rescher, *Dialectics*, 119.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁷⁶ Engels, *The Dialectics of Nature*

which are not opposites. The third law, moreover, has no place at all in Bourdieu's theory. Rescher's formula, on the other hand, concisely states the general feature that characterizes everything that can be regarded as dialectical in Bourdieu's system.

The dialectic of objectivism and subjectivism is closest to what Rescher calls an "ontological dialectic." The dialectic that Hegel traces in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is an ontological dialectic, for instance, because it treats reality as contingent upon the rational understanding of reality. Likewise for Bourdieu, the objective structure of the social world is continuously reproduced by the actions of its inhabitants, who are guided by their subjective visions of that world. Ontology is at issue in such a dialectic. What separates Bourdieu from Hegel is the former's recognition of the immense complexity of the relations between subject and object. In light of this recognition, rationality could not be "realized" in anything like the simple and direct way that it is for Hegel.²⁷⁷ Bourdieu further distinguishes himself from Hegel by emphasizing the stability of dialectical systems rather than their revolutionary transformations. Social revolutions are rare events, and when they do occur, they have to be explained within a framework that describes the nearly ubiquitous and constant tendency for social structures to reproduce themselves.

Throughout his work, Bourdieu insists on a transcendence of the perennial opposition between objectivism and subjectivism, which he regards not only as a false choice, but also as "the most fundamental, the most ruinous"²⁷⁸ opposition in social

²⁷⁷ The autocatalytic effect of established bureaucracies on their own legitimate dispensation of authority, for example, involves a constant feedback between reality and the official representation of reality. On the level of the social system, this feedback is tied into other processes, however, such as the money economy and electoral politics, which prevent its effect from being even or predictable.

²⁷⁸ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 25.

science. Social theory is not obliged, nor is it to its benefit, to reduce social phenomena to either an objectivist or a subjectivist explanation. Rogers Brubaker has characterized this opposition as one between, on the one hand, theories that appeal to “mind-independent and agent-independent elements such as material conditions of existence,” and, on the other hand, theories that appeal to “mind-dependent and agent dependent elements such as the conceptions and beliefs of individuals.”²⁷⁹ Objectivist approaches, such as Durkheim’s, treat the social world as a collection of objects, whereas subjectivist approaches, like Schutz’s, treat the social world as a system of beliefs. The difference, as Bourdieu puts it, is tantamount to the difference between “social physics” and “social phenomenology.”²⁸⁰ Neither point of view is adequate for understanding social systems, however, since the social world is “intrinsically double”:²⁸¹ the objects of social physics are arranged and constructed in response to, and as expressions of, the conceptions and beliefs of agents, and the conceptions and beliefs of agents are themselves a product of the objective organization of the social world. Objectivism and subjectivism both must be taken into account, both must be given a place in sociological theory, if an accurate understanding of social phenomena is to emerge.

For this reason Bourdieu resists the temptation to reduce social theory to either an objectivist or a subjectivist point of view. Since both objective and subjective “moments” play a role in the total process of social life, both must be included as necessary components of a more complex theory. The key terms in Bourdieu’s idiom—habitus, field, doxa, and so on, are each defined in a way that is intended to capture the fully

²⁷⁹ Brubaker, “Rethinking Classical Theory,” 750.

²⁸⁰ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 25.

²⁸¹ Quoted in Brubaker, 750.

transcendent view of the opposition of objectivism and subjectivism. Habitus, for example, is an objective set of dispositions that agents possess, and admits of measurable effects, and measurable conditions of acquisition. It is also, however, a subjective “sense of one’s place” or a “feel for the game” by means of which the subject experiences his or her world as an arena of personal and social struggle. The resistance to reductionism on either side results in a dialectical understanding of the relation between subjectivism and objectivism. Objective states of affairs shape subjective states of affairs, which in turn produce the next phase of objective ones, and so on. This kind of self-perpetuating loop, wherein the outputs are fed back into the system as inputs, may be labeled reflexive, self-referential, self-organizing, or simply dialectical.

I use the term “dialectic” or for a number of reasons. First of all, Bourdieu himself uses the term consistently throughout his *oeuvre*. Second, the understanding of the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity implied by Bourdieu’s treatments of the issue is similar to the traditional use of the term in the Hegelian-Marxist tradition, to which Bourdieu may be said very loosely to belong. Third, the term dialectic preserves the temporality central to Bourdieu’s theory of social practice. The objective and the subjective influence each other in the practices of social agents, who produce the objective relations that in turn produce them. Both the practical temporality of the agent and the theoretical temporality of the observer are relevant to the models that Bourdieu constructs. Temporality is essential to the Bourdieuan understanding of the interaction between the objective and the subjective because there is never a resolution of the tension between them, but only an ongoing process of interaction, which the sociologist is always necessarily “walking in on the middle of.” It is also important that Bourdieu’s

transcendence of this opposition does not take the form of abandoning the traditional terminology, and speaking instead in terms of metaphors such as “performance” or “text,” but preserves the language of objectivity and subjectivity and weaves it into his larger theoretical construction. This is because, according to Bourdieu, “The very fact that this division constantly reappears in virtually the same form would suffice to indicate that the modes of knowledge which it distinguishes are equally indispensable to a science of the social world...”²⁸²

How does the dialectic between objective and subjective points of view inform the notion of social space? Subjectively, social space is encountered as a space of possibilities in which the agent can act; that is, courses of action appear to the subject to be either possible or impossible, goals either attainable or unattainable. Moreover, attainable goals appear in varying degrees of practical proximity, from ones so natural and commonplace that they may not even register as goals, to ones that are possible, but distant and difficult. The subjectivist view of social space is therefore contoured according the specific topology of obstacles and attractions in the social environment. In this sense the subjectivist view of social space is the perfect complement of the subjectivist view of the habitus. The former is the space of social choices, whereas the latter is the “sense of one’s place” in that space. The constraints that cause the space of possibilities to appear in the specific way that it does to the individual agents, however, cannot be grasped from the agent’s point of view within it, because the agent’s point of view is limited, preventing him or her from taking account of the more distant determinants, and because the agent’s perception of the space of possibilities is distorted

²⁸² Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 25.

by the interested way in which he or she naturally regards it. To explain why the space of possibilities is structured the way it is, an objective understanding of social space, one that breaks with the distortions and limitations of the subjectivist point of view, in other words a field theory, is also necessary. For Bourdieu, this means constructing a multidimensional space defined in terms of the structure and volume of capital, in which the positions and movements of agents and groups are mapped.²⁸³ In this sense, social space is the complement of the objectivist view of habitus, since it maps the distribution of embodied dispositions that have objective effects on one another. A similar theoretical division of labor is understood to apply in the case of physical space, where habitus and physical space interact on an objective and well as a subjective level.

Bourdieu's dialectic between subjectivist and objectivist points of view is thus instantly more complex than its predecessors in the Hegelian/Marxist tradition. The traditional dialectical jargon is almost entirely absent: there is no determinate negation, contradiction or synthesis, and dialectical elements are not created or destroyed. Instead, Bourdieu's model captures the "logic of practice" rather than the "logical logic" of contradiction and resolution. In Bourdieu's model, social space, physical space and habitus each straddle the objectivist/subjectivist divide in and of themselves. The result is a less artificially logical, more empirically complex account of social dynamics.

Nonlinearity

²⁸³ See Chapter 2.

Unlike Hegel and Marx, Bourdieu is not a linear thinker. For them, dialectical elements annihilate and replace one another in a repetitive sequence, the account of which takes the form of a linear narrative. What is inadequate about this type of account is that it allows a maximum of one relation to be specified at any given moment. This does not correspond to the real dynamics of the social world, and does not provide a useful model, especially if we regard, with Bourdieu, relations and structures rather than individuals and substances as the more significant and efficacious species of social phenomena. For Bourdieu, the goal is to preserve the dynamical understanding of subject/object relations without forcing the process into the traditional “one step at a time” schema. Objective and subjective states of affairs are not *moments*, as traditional dialectics labels them. Rather, they are mutually reproductive structures, “structured structuring structures,” the next phase of their interaction always dependant on the structure (positional and dispositional) of the previous iteration of the system as a whole. Thus, each “phase” of the system is a complex relational structure, a result of the structure of the previous phase, and determinative of the structure of the succeeding phase. Because the relational structure of each phase is far more complex than a simple linear relationship (the kind that could be expressed by a linear equation), the dynamics of this kind of system are better described as nonlinear, involving many steps at a time. How many steps? As many as there are relations among the aggregate of agents, institutions and other items in social space.

Relationality and nonlinearity go hand in hand for Bourdieu. Relational thinking is opposed to “linear thinking,” and demands the inclusion of a large number of variables

in the same model, rather than the separation of variables for the analysis of linear relationships:

To account for the infinite diversity of practices in a way that is both unitary and specific, one has to break with *linear thinking*, which only recognizes the simple ordinal structures of direct determination, and endeavor to reconstruct the networks of interrelated relationships which are present in each of the factors. The structural causality of a network of factors is quite irreducible to the cumulated effects of the set of linear relations, of different explanatory force, which the necessities of analysis oblige one to isolate, those which are established between the different factors, taken one by one, and the practice in question; through each of the factors is exerted the efficacy of all the others, and the multiplicity of determinations leads not to indeterminacy but to overdetermination.²⁸⁴

In this passage Bourdieu imbues Althusser's notion of overdetermination with the scientific backing that it lacked upon its initial formulation. The notion of overdetermination was created precisely as a means of moving beyond the Hegelian logic of "simple contradiction," but Althusser's adherence to Marxist dogma resulted in a paradoxical fusion of the ideas of contradiction and complexity, in other words to a purely nominal notion of contradiction, the details of which were never adequately fleshed out.²⁸⁵ As argued in Chapter 1, Bourdieu developed his field theory in part in order to correct this vague formulation of overdetermination. He accomplishes this by infusing nonlinearity into his model of social space, and consequently into his metatheory of social dynamics.

Nonlinearity enters into Bourdieuan social systems in at least two specific ways: first in the relations of between the contents of social space, i.e., agents, artifacts, activities, and so on, and second in the relations between the types of capital active in

²⁸⁴ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 107. Italics original.

²⁸⁵ Althusser, *For Marx*, 101-102.

social space, namely economic and cultural. Linearity is defined in terms of additivity. That is, a system is linear if it can be described by an equation in which all of the individual relations that play a role in the system are described by functions that can be added together. Nonlinear systems, on the other hand, cannot be described in this way. The reason that additivity is not possible in such systems is usually because of an internal self-reference or reflexivity; that is, one or more of the functions to be added up depend on or include reference to the outcome values of the equation as a whole. This is a very complicated way of saying that some of the relations in the system (and frequently, as in social space, all of the relations) are contingent upon all of the others, such that in the process of adding up the relations, one inevitably comes across ones that cannot be computed until after the summation is complete. This is, of course, impossible, and prevents the system's being described by a linear equation. Linear models, according to Manuel Delanda, "fail to capture any property that emerged from complex interactions, since the effect of the latter may be multiplicative (e.g., mutual enhancement) and not just additive."²⁸⁶

In the first way that nonlinearity is introduced, in the relations between agents in social space, each individual habitus is a source of systemic self-reference, since its role as a constituent of social space is dependant on its role as a representation of social space. Each individual habitus, as a "sense of one's place," inserts a complete and nuanced "picture" of the social world at the locus of every behavior. Thus, in every action or choice by an individual agent, it is only the system as a whole that can be thought of as causally efficacious. And because the picture of this system is different from each agent,

²⁸⁶ Delanda, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, 18.

depending on their position, the functions that determine their behavior cannot simply be added together to produce an equation based on common variables. While it is true that the positions of agents in social space are a result of the practical expression of their habitus, and this expression is always *local*, the local expressions are always a product of the *global* structure. In the Bourdieuan model, local actions produce global order, and global order guides local actions. In terms of the “social physics” operative here, the actions of each agent are never the product of a single cause, or even a single chain of causes, but always of the field, the shape of possible movement that results from all the pushes and pulls of individual social relations. Thus for each habitus there exists a complex topology to possibilities: hills and plateaus of inaccessibility, along with pits and furrows of ease and likelihood.

The second source of nonlinearity in the Bourdieuan model is the multiplicity of the forms of capital. The fungibility of capital would seem to provide a means of linearizing the system, by reducing all capital to, say, economic capital. Despite the fact that the various forms of capital are always exchangeable for one another in principle, however, the exchange rates between them are themselves at stake in the system. This is a crucial way in which the act of participating in social space changes the conditions of participation. In the most general forms of capital, namely economic and cultural, agents and institutions that dominate social space primarily in terms of one form of capital or the other, namely those who occupy the extremes of the top left and top right quadrants, routinely vie for the increased value of their own chosen mode of domination. Their successes can be seen in the extent to which those who possess a great deal of economic capital are persuaded that they need to “buy” cultural refinement, for example by

becoming art collectors, and the extent to which those who possess a bounty of cultural capital pursue it only for its eventual exchange value. At a more detailed level, the specific forms of capital that define semi-autonomous fields, such as the architectural field or the religious field, are constantly in competition for legitimacy (usually with the economic field, but sometimes with one another), and are therefore of heavily contingent relative value. The complex interdependencies between forms of capital specific to such fields, like the interdependences between individual social agents, prevent the identification of a common denominator, a common currency, which would allow them to be described by a unitary formula.

In broader terms, the source of nonlinearity is the dialectic between objectivism and subjectivism itself. The dependence of the objective state of the system on a multitude of imperfect representations of it makes the system self-referential and prevents linearity. In truth, the other two sources of nonlinearity are just particular cases of this general systemic self-dependence.

Reflexivity, or the dialectical traversal of objectivist and subjectivist points of view, is one way of encouraging the nonlinear understanding of social systems. Bourdieu's objectively constructed models are always set to work within a metatheoretical framework that explains the limitations and falsifications of the models. Neither diagrams, which eliminate time, nor narratives, which are an inherently linear form of exposition, can do justice to nonlinear phenomena.²⁸⁷ Thus Bourdieu's studies are always an uneasy marriage of spatial diagrams on the one hand, and textual reminders on the other, always to the effect that the objective states of affairs that the diagrams

²⁸⁷ See Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 126-131.

represent are lived by the agents involved in them as conditioned and interested *practices*. Because these practices are the expression of habitus, and because habitus is conditioned by the individual's (skewed and limited) embodiment of nonlinear social structures, the nonlinearity of the objective social system is part of the subjective vision and behavior of the individual agents as well. Their action in the system is performed for the most part on the basis of unconscious "bodily knowledge," which preserves the nonlinearity of the social context in which it originated. Social agents do sometimes formulate their sense of the social world in explicit terms, but when they do, it tends to take the form of linear approximations of their perceived state of affairs. Folk sociology (and frequently scientific sociology) trades in notions such as the "social ladder," or "social stratification." Nonetheless, an individual's social behavior is not a straightforward expression of such linear formalizations, but also of the strongly nonlinear habitus. Moreover, even if the individual linear formalizations of social structure did cause agents to order their behavior in such a way as to influence the objective structure of society, these local linearities would not produce global linearity. In a social system, the next iteration of objective structures is produced by the collective actions of all the agents in the system, and, because non-additivity is a feature of these systems, the resulting order is anything but linear.

But if the dialectic between the objective and subjective aspects of the social does not produce change that can be modeled in linear relationships, neither does it produce change that is totally random and unpredictable. Indeed, Bourdieu's major interest is in the *reproduction* of social structures, in what makes them so durable and what causes structural change to take place only gradually. In the absence of any fixed "laws" of

dialectical interaction, stability appears as an emergent feature of the nonlinearity of the dialectical elements, of their ability to influence one another as complex structured wholes. Objective structures are received as complex patterns, whereas subjective structures are objectified by complex collective action. At no moment during this dialectic of the objective and the subjective is any reduction of complexity performed. Moreover, the “points of contact” between the elements—the agents’ subjective acquisition of objective structures via habitus and the reproduction of those objective structures through the collective position-takings of the agents—are governed by reliable processes, physiological in the first instance and behavioral (as well as technological, architectural, etc.) in the second. The ordinary result of these processes is the system’s tendency to reproduce its relational structures. These structures are stable precisely because of the continuous dialectic between subjectivist and objectivist points of view. In other words, the stability of social structures is always a *dynamic* stability, actively perpetuated and not a merely sedimented or crystallized order.

Embodied History and Sensitivity to Initial Conditions

Nonlinear systems have the property of being sensitive to initial conditions. This means that their structure at any given moment, at whatever arbitrary starting point one begins to observe them, will determine the future shape of the system. Because nonlinear systems cannot be described by soluble equations, their future states are much more difficult, if not impossible, to predict. Nonetheless, their behavior is a function of the organization of the system at its starting point. Linear systems, by contrast, end up in

determinate, predictable states *regardless* of their initial conditions. They settle down into a state of equilibrium. As Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers put it, it is as if linear systems “forget” their initial conditions.²⁸⁸ Linear systems are the exception, however, since most systems, including social systems, are nonlinear. Each phase of their development is a result of the entire history of the system, and in this sense the history of the system is present in each new phase.

For Bourdieu, this sensitivity to initial conditions is captured in the notion that habitus, the set of dispositions acquired by each individual agent according to their position in social space, is a repository for the history of the agent’s engagements with its world: “The *habitus*—embodied history—internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history—is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product.”²⁸⁹ The agent acquires in the habitus a sense of his or her self, as well as a sense of his or her relation to the world. This sensibility allows the agent to act automatically, from an unconscious depth of familiarity and experience, in the same fields from which the agent acquired this embodied expertise originally, and somewhat less adeptly in unfamiliar fields. Bourdieu employs a long quotation from Durkheim on this point:

In each one of us, in differing degrees, is contained the person we were yesterday, and indeed, in the nature of things it is even true that our past personae predominates in us, since the present is necessarily insignificant when compared with the long period of the past because of which we have emerged in the form we have today. It is just that we don’t directly feel the influence of these past selves precisely because they are so deeply rooted within us. They constitute the unconscious part of ourselves. Consequently we have a strong tendency not to recognize their existence and to ignore their legitimate demands. By contrast, with the most recent acquisitions of civilization we are vividly

²⁸⁸ Prigogine and Stengers, *Order out of Chaos*, 139-140.

²⁸⁹ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 57.

aware of them just because they are recent and consequently have not had time to be assimilated into our collective unconscious.²⁹⁰

The important differences between Durkheim and Bourdieu here are, first, that habitus is a bodily form of knowledge, not a mental unconscious, and second that Bourdieu is far more expansive on the “differing degrees” in which individuals possess their history. The difference between agents is, properly speaking, not one of degree alone, but a complex difference of degree and kind (the structure and volume of capital). Indeed, it is the differences that make all the difference. *Which* historical memory one has strongly inclines one to act in such a way as to acquire certain types and amounts of capital, consigning one to a specific position in social space, a position that will be different from those of individuals with different embodied histories. This of course ties back to the dialectic between the objective and the subjective because habitus, as embodied history, is also the product and the producer of social structure. Social structure itself consequently must also be regarded as a form of objectified history.

Reflexivity, Theory and Practice

In Bourdieu’s dialectical understanding of objectivist and subjectivist points of view, social systems are essentially reflexive. James Gleick describes such systems as ones in which “the act of playing the game has a way of changing the rules.”²⁹¹ This resonates strongly with Bourdieu’s notion that, in the social “game,” agents strategize

²⁹⁰ Durkheim quoted in Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 56.

²⁹¹ Gleick, *Chaos*, 24.

within the constraints of pre-existing structures in order to impose their own view of the game's rules, which is the privilege of dominance.

Objective/subjective reflexivity is also at the root of Bourdieu's view on the relationship between theory and practice. Theory and practice alike acquire a dual status in Bourdieu's thinking. Theory is understood as an objective construction as well as a subjectively limited activity, in other words, as theoretical practice. As Georg Lukács put it, "in the dialectics of society the subject is included in the reciprocal relation in which theory and practice become dialectical with reference to one another."²⁹² The dialectic of theory and practice, a special case of the dialectic between subjective and objective points of view, implicates the researcher both as subject and as object. In Bourdieu's case, he creates an objective model of social distributions and movements (the diagrammatic social space), the dynamics of which are determined by the subjective comportment (the felt habitus, the sense of position in social space) of the agents it captures. This objective model, however, is circumscribed and limited by Bourdieu's own subjectivity, his own tendency to fall prey to the distortions of vision associated with the particular region in social space that he occupies. Throughout his career, Bourdieu sought out research projects that highlighted his own involvement in the social structures that were the objects of his research: French culture, the French academy, the field of photography, and so on. In all of these studies, Bourdieu's own subjectivity functions as a condition for the possibility of constructing an objective model, and the objective model thus constructed considers that his subjectivity, along with all others included in the sample, as an empirical object.

²⁹² Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, 207.

Take the representation of French society in the 1970s that Bourdieu constructs in *Distinction*. This space is constructed in the manner outlined in Chapter 2. Agents are located according to the proportion and degree to which they possess cultural and economic capital, and their dispositions to traverse the social space are projected along the (unrepresented) temporal axis. This representation is one of the objective structures that the sociologist (Bourdieu himself) has constructed, and is regarded as an objective representation of the social world in which agents are engaged. Each of the agents represented possesses, in the form of an incorporated habitus (or rather, in the form of the negative ground of that habitus), their own version of the social space, which is constrained by the realities of the space as Bourdieu has construed it, i.e., as it “really” is, as well as by the idiosyncratic filters imposed by the particular interests of the individual agents. The social space that Bourdieu has constructed is thus a space of spaces—that is, an objective space *of* subjective spaces. Now, the objectivity claimed for this space is recognized by Bourdieu to be “a necessary (but not sufficient) moment of research.”²⁹³ In other words, it is crucial for the performance of scientific research that the researcher regard the phenomena under study as objectively representable, but, unlike traditional science, it is not permissible simply to leave the analysis at that level without subjecting it to criticism from a vantage point premised on the non-objectivity of the researcher’s relation to the phenomena.²⁹⁴ Such a vantage point is subjectivist in that it takes into account the social conditionings of the researcher himself, and since such social

²⁹³ Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” 16.

²⁹⁴ On a closely related problem in dialectics, Theodor Adorno formulates the following rule: “the point about dialectics is not to negate the concept of fact in favour of mediation, or to exaggerate that of mediation; it is simply to say that immediacy is itself mediated but that the concept of the immediate must still be retained.” Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 21.

conditionings are the peculiar creatures of social science, the shift in mode of thought from the subjectivist to the objectivist amounts to a thorough reflexivity. This is illustrated in the case of the social space we are considering by the fact that Bourdieu himself is located somewhere in the space he presents to us, specifically in the upper right quadrant with the professional class, possessing a high volume of capital skewed only slightly in favor of the economic variety. Note now that the subjective social space of Bourdieu the Frenchman more or less *coincides* (correcting for the effects of synoptic representation) with the objective social space of Bourdieu the sociologist. The philosophical expression of this feature of Bourdieu's theory might be to say that the objectivist and subjectivist spaces touch on one another, are super-imposed on one another, or un-distinguish themselves from one another. In other words, the theoretical distinction between subjectivist and objectivist representations is overcome, not through erasure, but by being incorporated into the practice of theorizing.

This overcoming of the subjective and objective, in a scientific practice that concerns itself with both and can identify their points of contact, is brought about through a shift in the mode of thought on behalf of the social scientist. Phenomenologically, the shift can be characterized as a transition from the mode in which the subject's attention is so thoroughly absorbed by the object that the subject itself disappears from view (the objectivist moment), to the mode in which the subject recognizes its constructive relation to the object to the extent that the object itself becomes nothing more than reified subjectivity. Of course, this is a polar and extreme characterization. I do not mean to suggest that there is not a generous range of modes of thought intervening between these two extremes. The polar modes of objectivism and subjectivism are, however, instructive

in characterizing the shift in points of view. They correspond roughly to what Hegel called the *in-sich* versus the *für-sich*, and what Heidegger called the *vorhanden* versus the *zuhanden*. Bourdieu's contribution, a major one, is to introduce this shift from one mode of thought to the other (and back again) as *the* basic, dynamical comportment of the scientist towards the phenomena under study—one that makes the scientist's comportment toward himself an integral part of his comportment towards the phenomena. Bourdieu's style of argument, the discursive peculiarity of nearly every text he produced, can be understood as a rhetorical attempt on his part to get his reader used to switching back and forth between objectivist and subjectivist modes of thought, to make that reflexive turning an epistemic habit, and inasmuch as it is possible, to entrain the reader to hold both points of view at once.

I will now proceed on the basis of this understanding of the dialectic between objectivist and subjectivist points of view to an account of the dialectic between social space and physical space. At this point I shift from the straightforward exposition of Bourdieu's explicit view that I have pursued thus far, and begin a more subtly reconstructive effort. Bourdieu himself does not speak of a dialectic of social space and physical space. The following account, then, should be regarded as an extension of Bourdieu's thought, which is nonetheless strongly implied therein. It can be brought to light by confronting Bourdieu's investigations of physical spaces (discussed in Chapter 3) with his sociological metatheory, including the dialectic of objectivist and subjectivist points of view just described.

THE DIALECTIC OF SOCIAL SPACE AND PHYSICAL SPACE

Dialectical Mediation and Explanatory Relevance

On an overly-hasty reading, it is possible to misinterpret Bourdieu as holding that the dialectic between habitus and social space is the same as, or is a more specialized version of, the dialectic between objective and subjective points of view. It is tempting to preserve our ordinary way of thinking, with its ubiquitous opposition between the objective and the subjective, and to read the habitus as a subjective mode of apprehension, and to read social space as an objective mapping of social relations, and consequently to read their dialectical interaction as a repetitive tension and resolution of the subjective and the objective. This misunderstanding is of enormous consequence, however, since it obscures the crucial fact that the habitus/social space distinction does not map onto the subjective/objective distinction, but rather *cuts across* it. Habitus, social space and physical space can each be looked at from objectivist and subjectivist points of view, and both of these points of view play a role in the reproduction of social structure. Even while we may specify a dialectic between habitus and social space, or between social space and physical space, we must also keep in mind that each term of these dialectics encompasses, straddles or transcends the dialectic between objectivism and subjectivism.

For this reason, in order to construct a Bourdieuan model of the interaction between social space and physical space, we need to be very careful about our use of the terminology. We must distinguish, first of all, between three descriptive categories, namely social space, physical space, and habitus. Each of these categories is conceived as

a complex, relational whole, and exercises a determinate influence on the other two. The encounter between habitus and social space (or field) is the most familiar dialectical model in Bourdieu's work, but it by no means exhausts the theoretical possibilities of his general framework. Habitus and social space tend to anticipate one another because they are pre-adapted to one another's structure. Habitus is acquired by exposure to social space, and social space emerges from the co-expression of a totality of habitus. The result is the easy functioning of agents in their accustomed roles and environments, a surprising form of self-organization that Bourdieu sometimes refers to as a "pre-established harmony." This kind of smooth-functioning is the norm, and habitus provides a strong tendency towards it, but exceptional cases also occur, in which, for example, an agent finds him or herself in a social situation for which he or she is ill-equipped, and must endure the physical discomfort of embarrassment. These two possibilities of habitus-social space interaction, namely pre-established harmony and "misfirings," can also be observed in the encounter between habitus and physical space. A jarring sense of shame when one arrives unsuitably dressed to an exclusive restaurant, or a sigh of relief upon returning home from that restaurant to one's shabby bachelor apartment reveal the discordance or the concordance of habitus with physical space. Such examples are important here in order to recognize the habitus-social space relation and the habitus-physical space relation as highly analogous parallel cases.

My own interest in a Bourdieuan analysis of physical space might at first suggest a simple shift from habitus-social space to habitus-physical space as the central dialectic of interest. There are good reasons, however, for resisting such a move, and insisting that the most informative dialectical relation is that between social space and physical space.

The reasons for this shall become clear as we proceed. It should be emphasized here, though, that shifting to a focus on the dialectic between social space and physical space does not imply that habitus drops out of the picture. The fact is that no matter which dialectic we consider—habitus-social space, habitus-physical space, or social space-physical space—we are always selectively reducing the phenomena to an artificial dualism. A complete understanding of the behavior of a social system demands that we recognize that all three categories—habitus, social space and physical space—are operative in each of the dialectics mentioned above. The point need not be belabored that social interaction takes place in physical space, and that physical space plays an active role in the structuring of both habitus and social space. What should be underlined, however, is that it is not always economical to complicate social scientific models with a needless proliferation of concepts. Thus, despite Bourdieu's insistence that the complexity of social systems be reflected in their theory, he does display some conservatism when it comes to mentioning the relevance of physical space to the process of social reproduction. This is why, despite Bourdieu's explicit agreement that physical space is an ineliminable element in the functioning of practical logics, it can be left out of the analysis in a good number of cases to highlight the explanatory relevance of social features he happens to be more interested in. Thus, in his analysis of the house in Kabyle culture, for example, physical space plays a prominent role, whereas in his study of the French academy, it can be omitted.

Thus, whenever the dialectic is specified between social space and habitus, it must be remembered that physical space is involved, too, as a mediating term. Physical space is implicated in the kinesthetic process of the embodiment of habitus, as well as in the

equally kinesthetic practices of everyday life. These take the form, in Bourdieu's words, of a "gymnastics or dance taking advantage of all the possibilities offered by the "geometry" of the body."²⁹⁵ In addition to the kinesthetic relation to physical space that is present in all social practice, there is also the myriad of ways that physical space mediates social practice by objectifying social relations. The complete picture of the Bourdieuan dialectic of social space and habitus therefore includes the mediation of physical space. Similarly, if we wish to conceive of the relationship between social space and physical space dialectically, we can do so only insofar as we understand habitus to contribute a mediating link between the two. What I am suggesting is therefore not a break with Bourdieu's theoretical framework, but simply a shift in emphasis in what has always been in essence a three-term model. This move is sanctioned by the application of Bourdieu's theory to problems in architecture and geography (addressed in Chapters 5 and 6), since in such cases the role of physical space cannot be consigned to that of a vague mediating force, which shapes bodily habitus in some unspecified way, but must be taken as a central descriptive category, one in which the specific details matter.

Bourdieu frequently notes that, in its tendency to reproduce itself via its dialectical engagement with the habitus, social space consists of "differences which make a difference." In studies that do not take an explicit interest in the structure of physical space, where the dialectic that interests him is that between habitus and field, the habitus is regarded as admitting of internal structure, acquired from the individual's exposure to a specific region of social space, and that structure is understood to contribute to the reproduction of social space through the individual's actions and behavior. The habitus is

²⁹⁵ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 55.

thus understood to admit of an internal structure derived from that of social space, and distorted by the particular point of view the individual occupies, and the strategic challenges presented by that position. The sociologist does not have observational access to this internal structure, however, and so Bourdieu simply relies on the structures that he can map—those of the social space—and takes it as given that the internal structure of the habitus, the differences that make a difference, are some imperfect translation of the structures of the social space, adapted to the specific needs of the situated habitus.

The inaccessibility of the habitus' internal structure does not present an insurmountable challenge to sociological empiricism, however, since it is the cumulative effect of the aggregate of habitus that produces the social space, and this effect can be ascertained by observing regularities and changes in the structure of social space over time. The sociologist does not need to dissect each individual habitus in order to verify the myriad directive linkages supposed to be active between them and the social space as a whole. Instead, the sociologist simply needs to keep track of their total effects in the structure of social space, from which differences in habitus may be inferred.

Cases involving the organization of physical space are somewhat different, however, since the structure of physical space *can* be observed, qualitatively and quantitatively, and does not constitute an observational blind spot. In refocusing the dialectic, therefore, to one that takes social space and physical space as its basic “moments,” and habitus as a mediating element, the set of relevant, available data is greatly enlarged. Information can be gathered to specify the structures of both social space and physical space, thereby minimizing concerns about the “black box” status of

the habitus. In practice, this means that the researcher can observe more of what is going on in the social system.

Dialectical Transformations of Social Space and Physical Space

The chart below schematizes the categories relevant to Bourdieuan dialectic of social space and physical space:

<p>Subjectivist Social Space</p> <p>The apprehension of social space, distorted from its objective organization because it is constructed from the specific position occupied by the individual agent.</p>	<p>Objectivist Social Space</p> <p>Social space as modeled and diagrammed, presupposing a point of view external to the social system.</p>
<p>Subjectivist Physical Space</p> <p>Physical space as it appears to the pre-reflective, embodied subject. The subject of phenomenological analyses of space.</p>	<p>Objectivist Physical Space</p> <p>Theoretical and/or ontologized constructions of physical space that effect a separation from the phenomenology of space-perception.</p>
<p>Subjectivist Habitus</p> <p>The “sense of one’s place,” embodied by exposure to a particular position in social space.</p>	<p>Objectivist Habitus</p> <p>The structured set of dispositions that inhere in the corporeal biology of the individual agent.</p>

Figure 10. Theoretical categories relevant to the dialectic of social space and physical space

It should be noted that, as with Bourdieu’s own diagrams, this chart suffers from the “synoptic illusion.” Unless the components that it identifies are understood as temporary epistemic modes that emerge and subside during the practice of sociological research, it

is apt to produce the false impression that subjectivist and objectivist modes are independent, timeless forms of knowledge. Despite the fact that, for instance, the definition of “subjectivist social space” makes reference to a break with “objective organization,” this does not imply that objectivity is primary, or that subjectivist social space is in any way reducible to its objectivist version. What should be noticed is that the definitions on each side make reference to the items on the opposite side, indicating a non-vicious circularity. The total conception of social space, therefore, is entirely self-referential.

This self-reference is, through the mediating force of the expressed and enacted habitus, a feature of the development of the social system. That is, social space’s objectivist and subjectivist moments determine one another. The same is true of the objectivist and subjectivist moments of physical space. The mediation of habitus between subjectivist and objectivist physical space is responsible for the regularities in reproduction of both terms.

Rearranging the diagram to reflect its temporal structure, and omitting reference to the difference between objectivist and subjectivist points of view, this phenomenon of mediated reflexivity becomes clearer:

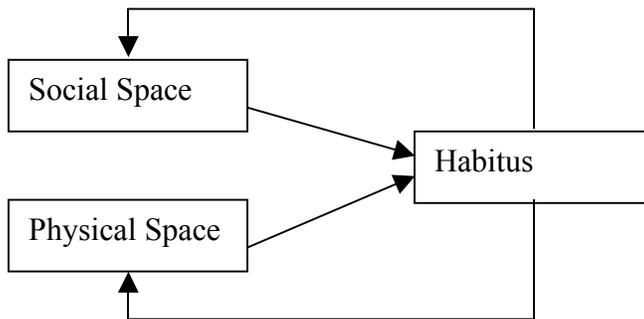


Figure 11. The general structure of the dialectic between social space and physical space

One can already see in this diagram the basis of the phenomenon that has long held intuitive sway for theorists of architecture and urban design, namely the integration of physical space in a system that, while not directly causing the structure of the social world, nonetheless affects it, not least of all by contributing to its manifest *inertia*. The semi-permanence of built forms, which contributes to our tendency to take them for granted, also contributes a significant degree of stability to the larger process of social reproduction that they are linked to via the habitus. It can also be anticipated here that the social organizations (frequently hierarchical institutions like licensing boards and civic governments) that produce and perpetuate certain regularities in the organization of physical space (such as building types, technical standards, architectural styles and other norms) in turn produce and perpetuate the very physical structures of which their social positions are a product.

Because we are interested in problems of the social structure of architectural works and human settlements, a complete understanding of the phenomena calls for an account of the interaction between social space and physical space. I shall now turn my

attention to this dialectical process. In so doing, I will artificially separate it into two “directions,” from social space to physical space and from physical space to social space, in order to analyze the similarities and differences between the two processes. Such a separation necessarily falsifies the essential nature of the phenomena, namely that the two processes are *coupled*, but is helpful in temporarily limiting the problem so that some of its fine-grained structure can be revealed.

Habitus: Dialectical Mediator, Analogical Operator

In order to understand the mutual interaction of social space and physical space, it is necessary to clarify the role of the habitus in this context, which mediates between them. Habitus is, in its objective sense, a set of embodied dispositions to act and perceive that are acquired through adaptive exposure to an agent’s social and physical environment. The collective action of habitus structures the social and physical environment. From a theoretical point of view, the structures that produce and are produced by the habitus are of two kinds, namely social and physical. How, then, can the dispositions acquired from social space influence the structure of physical space, and vice versa? The answer to this question can be phrased in two ways, one subjectivist and the other objectivist. The subjectivist response is that, from the point of view of the habitus, the social world and the physical world are not clearly differentiated from one another. That is, for the habitus, the social world is already present in the physical environment, and the physical environment is inseparable from the social. This “blindness” on the part of the habitus is what enables it to transpose dispositions from what an objectivist point

of view regards as disparate spheres of activity. The objectivist reply is that the habitus acts as an “analogical operator,”²⁹⁶ transferring the logic of one sphere of activity to whatever specific conditions it confronts in another. The transposition of dispositions from social space to physical space is only one example of a general feature of the habitus. Transposition of this kind also occurs between different fields within social space, resulting in the tendency for the existence of homologies between fields. The transposition of dispositions between social space as a whole, on one hand, and physical space, on the other, likewise results in homologous structures in those spheres of action. In the objectivist analysis of the processes involved, however, the particular mechanisms of acquisition and expression of habitus turn out to be quite different depending on which “direction” of the dialectic one considers, either from physical space to social space, or from social space to physical space.

Bourdieu discusses the habitus role as an analogical operator in the socialization of Kabyle children, which involves their simultaneous familiarization with the structure of society from a variety of sources:

Whether in verbal products such as proverbs, sayings, gnomic poems, songs or riddles, or in objects such as tools, the house or the village, or in practices such as games, contests of honor, gift exchange or rites, the material that the Kabyle child has to learn is the product of a systematic application of a small number of principles coherent in practice, and, in its infinite redundancy, it supplies the key to all the tangible series, their *ratio*, which will be appropriated in the form of a principle generating practices that are organized in accordance with the same rationality.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 72.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 71-72.

The habitus thus discovers the common logic that joins these diverse discourses, objects and practices, and masters its *ratio*, which allows it to reapply the lessons of its socialization in novel conditions and apparently unrelated fields. It is thus that the mediation of habitus produces structures in social space that are homologous to ones in physical space, and vice versa.

From Physical Space to Social Space

The role of physical space in the shaping of the habitus has already been discussed extensively in Chapter 3. Bourdieu's most detailed analysis of this is that of space in Kabyle society,²⁹⁸ wherein the body incorporates the structures of Kabyle cosmology and agriculture, as well as the structures of gendered power relations, via the divisions of the house, the village, and the orientations of the body within those spaces. Spatial oppositions such as above/below, inside/outside, right/left, and so on, are associated with oppositions in a variety of contexts, including oppositions in social power, resulting in a highly systematic social order. The systematic nature of this web of associations has the result that the bodily practices of everyday life, i.e., performing mundane tasks, moving about in the house and village, and so on, function as a continuous confirmation of the social order, and thus play an active role in the reproduction of that order. With respect to the Kabyle society, Bourdieu phrases the matter like this:

²⁹⁸ This analysis is principally found throughout *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and *The Logic of Practice*, as well as in "The Kabyle House or the World Reversed," *The Algerians*, 1-16, and *Masculine Domination*, 5-53.

Inhabited space—starting with the house—is the privileged site of the objectification of the generative schemes, and, through the divisions and hierarchies it establishes between things, between people and between practices, this materialized system of classification inculcates and constantly reinforces the principles of the classification which constitutes the arbitrariness of a culture.²⁹⁹

Objectification here refers to the fact that the social order is made to reside in the physical space of habitation. Social cohesion, regularity in the sense of the social order that is possessed by a population, is enabled by the commonality of physical space. Physical space thus instantiates patterns of organization that are held in common by the society, and offers a ubiquitous and subtle occasion for socialization. Habitus thus appropriates social structures via physical space. It is of great importance that this appropriation takes place in bodily, spatial practice, because as such the social structures appropriated never command the explicit attention of the agent. They are acquired, instead, in the course of doing other things. The role of physical space as a background, which is for the most part ignored, but nonetheless carries meaning and structure, deeply impressed the philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin. Benjamin noted that we encounter architecture in a state of distraction, that it is “mastered gradually—taking their cue from tactile reception—through habit.”³⁰⁰ This matter-of-factness that architecture possesses is what enables the social logic of which it is an objectified form to go unquestioned by the agents who, having acquired that logic, can then transpose it to other spheres of activity. The transposition of the logic acquired from, say, the employment office,³⁰¹ is thus

²⁹⁹ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 76.

³⁰⁰ Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility,” 121.

³⁰¹ The choice of this example is inspired by Kracauer, “On Employment Agencies: The Construction of a Space.”

responsible for what Benjamin called the “proletarianization of modern man.”³⁰² The organization of this space, an extreme case of a spatial form that exists in a wide variety of semi-public buildings, e.g., banks, shops, etc., can be shown to conceal power relations based on the hierarchy of which agents have access to different portions of the space, such as waiting areas, offices for consultation, and offices for management.³⁰³ The physical division between these portions of the space, as well as the “path-lengths” that obtain between them, contributes a spatial logic to the social order that the space enforces. What Benjamin misses in his characterization, and Bourdieu continuously reminds us of, is that such processes do not simply proletarianize “modern man”—an abstraction that is apt to mislead all but the most careful social scientist—but proletarianizes the *proletarians*. The bourgeoisie have their own spaces, which are responsible for the “bourgeoisie-ization” of that class.

To speak for a moment in a postmodernist tone, one might say that physical space is the primary template upon which the social order is written, that spatial practice is the process through which that order is inscribed on the body, and that the function of the habitus is to translate social meanings from one syntactic language to another. This characterization is metaphorical, of course, and its explanatory value for social science has very definite limits. Bourdieu is hardly Derrida, and it should not be forgotten that the process of habitus formation is regarded as biological, and in principle can be observed and described from a biological point of view.

³⁰² Ibid., 120.

³⁰³ The means of demonstrating this that I have in mind is Hillier and Hanson’s quantitative “space syntax” technique, developed in *The Social Logic of Space*

The acquired habitus is the mediating term in the influence of physical space upon social space. It is the laxity with which the habitus separates physical space and social space which enables one's sense of physical space to bleed over into one's sense of the social, and therefore to one's sense of place in social space:

...when the elementary acts of bodily gymnastics (going up or down, forwards or backwards, etc.) and, most importantly, the specifically sexual, and therefore biologically prestructured, aspect of this gymnastics (penetrating or being penetrated, being on top or below, etc.) are highly charged with social meanings and values, socialization instills a sense of the equivalences between physical space and social space, and between movements (rising, falling, etc.) in the two spaces and thereby roots the most fundamental structures of the group in the primary experiences of the body which, as is clearly seen in emotion, takes metaphors seriously.³⁰⁴

The habitus takes physical space and social space as metaphors of one another, as “mutually reflecting metaphors”³⁰⁵ and thus extends the logic of one space to the specific circumstances of the other. The example of sexual practice here underlines a general point about the role of constraint in Bourdieu's theory. Habitus uses what is available in order to acquire its structure. The logic that it perpetuates throughout the social world, across a multiplicity of fields, is thus constrained in a fundamental way by the physical and biological determinants of human life. In connection with sexual practice as a template for social structure, Bourdieu refers to the “social re-use of biological properties.” The same lesson applies to the habitus' engagement with physical space in general, and its use of spatial oppositions, as well as distances and volumes, for the structuring of the agents' sense of the social world, amounts to a social re-use of

³⁰⁴ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 71.

³⁰⁵ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 91.

geometrical and physical properties. From these are derived the necessary constraints that are required for the imposition of structure on the social world.

The encounter between the body and physical space does not constitute any kind of primordial relationship or foundation upon which increasingly complex layers of meaning are accreted. It is useless to ask, in other words, whether there is a fundamental relation between the body and physical space that pre-exists the imposition of social meaning. What examples like the Kabyle house reveal is that even the most basic experience of space is already freighted with social significance, and indeed with a great deal of it. To borrow a phrase from the phenomenologists, physical space is, from the point of view of the habitus, always already social. And despite the fact that this formula does not hold from the point of view of the objectivist construction of physical space (i.e., that of geometry, physics and geography) it does hold from the point of view of Bourdieu's metatheory, with its dialectical understanding of the objective and subjective elements of physical space.

Because of the physical space encountered by the habitus is always already social, the structuration of habitus by physical space depends on that space's historically specific conditions of existence. Since this same habitus then directs the behavior of the agent, the total effect of the expression of the habitus of a whole population results in a differentiated social space. Classes and class fragments that occupy a given region of social space are the result of a similarly structured habitus, and the structure of their particular type of habitus is determined in part by exposure to a similar embodied relation to physical space. The coordination of these different spatial practices results in a disposition, first, to know one's place as subordinate to a higher authority, but also as

equivalent with the place of a good number of fellow class-mates. For example, according to Thomas A. Markus, the space of the eighteenth century English schoolhouse, which affected only a pre-selected fraction of the population, transmitted the injunction to adopt a confident expansion of the body in the vertical dimension, yielding a freedom of bodily expression that is nonetheless the product of concerted control. The training of this space yields felicity with a wide range of other behaviors that place the body in an similar spatial position or orientation—ones that limit one’s attention to a fixed view or require one’s gaze to be directed upwards. Our spatial practices—which include both the physical spaces we actually occupy (standing behind a lectern, sitting in a cubicle, etc.) as well as the ways our body reacts to a diverse array of differently organized spaces that we may or may not feel “at home” in, label us, categorize us, and differentiate us into socially distinct groups.

Since the 1970s, a substantial body of research has grown up around the “space syntax” approach developed by Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson. Although not directly influenced by Bourdieu, the motivations of space syntax research are strongly reminiscent of Bourdieu’s ideas on socio-physical reproduction. Hillier and Vaughan, for example, describe the space syntax framework as an effort to “detect any influence there might be of social factors in the construction of... spatial patterns and also to explore any consequences there might be in terms of how social life [can] and [does] take place.”³⁰⁶ The intuition is that spatial and social structures give rise to one another, structure one another, in dialectical fashion.

³⁰⁶ Hillier and Vaughan, 206.

Space syntax consists of a sophisticated methodology for graphically and numerically analyzing the built environment, as well as a theoretical framework to explain and interpret the results. Like Bourdieu's analysis of the Kabyle House, space syntax regards physical and social organization together as an effective whole. The primary unit of analysis for space syntax is the *configuration*, representation of the built environment that takes the relative accessibility of different units of space (rooms of a building interior or streets or squares in an urban grid) into account. The categories of integration and segregation are thus fundamental to the space syntax approach. Similar to Bourdieu's method, space syntax treats configurations as complex relational wholes. Thus the configuration of a single physical space, say, a house, is given not simply by a plan, but by a finite set of a graphs representing the varying relations of integration and segregation with respect to each of the other spatial units from a the point of view of a given position. These graphs, termed justified or "j-graphs," together constitute a fully relational vision of a particular physical space and highlight the fact that integration and segregation are always a matter of degree, and that there always exists a more or less steeply hierarchized relationship of "depth" of one room, street or other spatial unit with respect to another.

By themselves these methodological concepts are only an empty formalism. But when combined with observations about the social oppositions and identifications that inhere in the same spaces, they provide a useful framework for explaining social formations such as ethnic solidarity, class divisions and gender roles. At the level of the city, these methods provide the empirical basis for the various forms of cultural capital that Bourdieu identifies with the division and control of space as a scarce resource. What

Bourdieu calls the “profits of localization,” that is, the proximity of a socio-economic class or social institution to limited, desirable sites, such as financial centers, hospitals, or symbolic landmarks, can be quantified in terms of the syntactic depth of those resources with respect to the spaces monopolized by that class or institution (its residences or offices). Space syntax provides a method for mapping not only the inclusion of a class or group but also the exclusion of others nontrivially and quantitatively.

Space syntax is not only concerned with the static occupation of space, however, but also with its *use*. The movement of bodies across, into and out of discrete regions and enclosures is fundamental to the approach. Space syntax thus concerns itself with spatial practice. As Hillier and Vaughan note, the competence that people have with complex spaces, when compared with the rather simple spatial language that we use (oppositions like top/bottom, before/behind, inside/outside) suggests that the social logic of space operates “at the unconscious level of ideas we think *with* rather than *of*.”³⁰⁷ Thus for space syntax theory, as well as for Bourdieu, distinctions such as inside and outside are understood as both physical and social categories, and moreover are understood to receive their social significance through spatial practice. It is one of the foundational principles of space syntax that “space has its own formal logic prior to acquiring a social logic, and indeed that it [is] this logic of space that [is] exploited in order to render space *social*.”³⁰⁸ The findings of space syntax researchers thus indicate, quite independently of Bourdieu’s research, that the same principle at work in the spatial configuration of Kabyle society, namely the use of physical space to give structure to social divisions

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 207.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 206.

through spatial practice, maintains explanatory power in a great many additional contexts. The large amount of research that successfully utilizes space syntax to explain social phenomena is a testimony to this fact.

Consider Hillier, Hanson and Graham’s simplified space syntax analysis of a French farmhouse:³⁰⁹

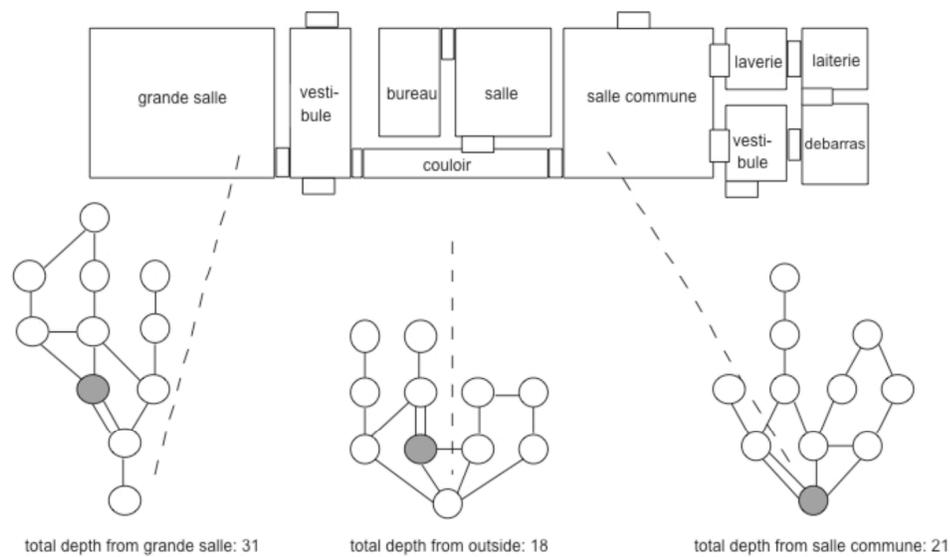


Figure 12. Space syntax analysis of a French farmhouse. Source: Hillier and Vaughan, 211

The three j-graphs included here are from the point of view of the *grande salle* (the formal reception room), the *salle commune* (the informal reception room and space for everyday living) and from the space outside the house. Ranked by their “total depth,” a metric of their respective degree of segregation, the rooms of the house stand in a relationship of relative accessibility to one another. The social differences written into

³⁰⁹ Originally developed in Hillier, Hanson and Graham 1987, cited here in Hillier and Vaughan, 211-212.

and reinforced by the spatial structure of the house are revealed once the question as to *who* each of the rooms correspond to or are associated with. The configuration of the house divides it, by degrees, into the space of formal visitors, informal visitors, and occupants, that is, into a spectrum of social proximity to the family. A gender hierarchy is revealed as well, once it is observed that the bureau, the office of the man of the house, is the second most segregated spatial unit.

Inside the house, segregation means that access is associated with privilege, importance and power. J-graphs of the spatial divisions within an apartment building, a school, or, most pronouncedly, in an office building, reveal more highly segregated and protected spaces that concentrate social power. In a curious repetition of Bourdieu's findings in his study of the Kabyle, this relationship is reversed when one passes the threshold of the door, where power becomes associated with highly *integrated* streets and districts (ones with easy access to publicly shared but scarce resources). At the door of the private residence, the opposition inside/outside is a switch that turns the power associated with segregation on its head. As always, one must avoid letting the analysis stand at the presentation of the configuration of a building or neighborhood. What must be remembered is that dispositions, both of unconscious behavior and of considered action (what Bourdieu calls *habitus*), are learned through the prolonged exposure to such spatial/social configurations, and, moreover, are reinforced by our continued use of such spaces. That is to say that *being* a man as opposed to a woman, or *being* an immigrant as opposed to a fully naturalized citizen, is learned, in part, from the occupation and participation in spatial configurations. The best proof of Bourdieu's idea of *habitus* is in the physical responses that agents of different social backgrounds experience when

placed in contexts in which they do not feel “at home.” The inner (and upper) offices in a large corporate tower feel distinctly different to those who work there than to those who, say, deliver the packages, and these physical responses constantly work to reinforce everyone’s sense of their place in the social order. Physical space thus plays a considerable role in what positivist sociologists have called social inertia, and what Bourdieu refers to as social reproduction.

From Social Space to Physical Space

Like the structuration of social space by physical space, the “reverse direction” of the dialectic is “driven” by the mediation of the habitus. The practical logic that the habitus masters is drawn from the agent’s social position, considered independently, in addition to the social structures of physical space. But what Bourdieu refers to as the “translation” of social space into physical space (see Chapter 3) is in fact a highly complex process, with many intermediaries. Thus, physical space can indeed be thought of as social space objectified, but untangling the route that a particular social space takes towards objectification is extremely difficult. Fortunately, Bourdieu’s expanded notion of capital provides a helpful tool for analyzing this problem, since if physical space is social space objectified, then sites in physical space are capital materialized. It is central to a Bourdieuan understanding of physical space that, like social space, it be conceived as an arena of struggle. Thus, certain sites will be understood as the product of a dominant social class, and others of a dominated one. In addition to merely expressing the social order, however, physical space is also a weapon, wielded by those who possess the power

to control it, whether through economic dominance or ideological influence, to impose the dominant view of spatial organization on the social population as a whole. The dominant class has a stake in controlling the organization of physical space because, as we saw in the last section, that organization plays a role in the reproduction of social relations. It is in therefore in the best interests of the dominant class to reinvest some of their capital gains, whether economic or cultural, in the production of physical spaces that uphold the status quo.

Bourdieu's discussions of the translation of social space into physical space focus on the distortions that take place. These distortions are a result of the fact that, as mentioned above, physical space is not simply reified social space, but is also itself a means of exercising control over social relations. Thus, while it is true that innumerable homologies can be found between social space and physical space, i.e., the clustering of groups together in a region that is opposed to other regions external to it occupied by distinct groups, these homologies are merely topological, and not proportionate in terms of distance, area or volume. The fact that physical space is itself a commodity, a scarce resource, valuable not only economically, as land for cultivation or development, but also on the market of symbolic goods, as something to be occupied to the exclusion of others, as well as for its connection, by inclusion or proximity, with other scarce resources. Thus the most important distortion of physical space from its pure objective expression of social space is the disparity between the distribution of agents and the distribution of goods and services. The tendency is towards "a concentration of the rarest goods and their owners in certain sites of physical space (Madison Avenue or Fifth Avenue in New

York, the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honore in Paris),”³¹⁰ along with an absence of valuable goods and services in areas occupied by the dominated classes, for example the absence of quality schools, hospitals, places of employment and sites for networking in urban ghettos. To this might be added the fact that the disparity in resources tends to have immediately visible effects on the shape and appearance of the physical spaces occupied by different classes. Semiotic qualities, such as the cleanliness of the sidewalks or the care taken in the arrangement of flower boxes, are a result of this, as well as the presence, depending on the specific context in question, of characteristic architectural styles, such as the high-rise housing projects associated with the Parisian “problem suburbs” or the ultra-modern warehouse lofts associated with American urban gentrification. At this level, the semiotic qualities give way to kinesthetic ones, since the form of the built environment is received and responded to by the body regardless of the agent’s conscious responses to a place.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Bourdieu identifies a number of other distortions of physical space, all connected with the accumulation of what might be termed “spatial profits” or “spatial capital.”³¹¹ The “profits of localization,” “profits of position or rank,” and “profits of occupation” are associated with “proximity to rare and desirable goods and services,” “monopolistic occupation of a distinctive property,” and the simple “possession of physical space,” respectively. To these I would add a number of other profits that depend on particular *arrangements* of space, namely the profits of encounter-

³¹⁰ Bourdieu, “Site Effects,” 125.

³¹¹ This term, of my own coinage, refers to any form of capital objectified in physical space that is in principle exchangeable for other forms, and which constitutes a scarce resource within a society. Sundin employs a similar term, “spatial symbolic capital,” which may imply a narrower signification.

density and visibility. It is essential to recognize that the types of spatial profits that Bourdieu identifies are not universal types. They can be said to apply in broad measure to urban space in “advanced” societies, but it should be noted that there are societies in which these specific phenomena do not appear. Traditional Hopi settlements, for example, obeyed a spatial logic that dispersed different clans more or less randomly throughout the village.³¹² This organization produced a public space that increased the likelihood of encounters between members of different clans, and therefore also of social contacts and the potential for inter-clan marriages. This arrangement might be said to produce profits of encounter-density. The Hopi settlement thus exemplifies a division of space that distributes its specific form of spatial capital evenly, rather than accumulating it in the hands of one clan or another. Shifting back to the modern metropolis, the same kind of profits may be, and frequently are, concentrated among a single class or group because of the arrangement of public space in a particular region or district. It is associated, for example, with city sections that are highly integrated at a local level, but segregated from surrounding districts.³¹³ This kind of spatial arrangement has long been assumed to be productive of Durkheimian social solidarity within that class or group, and therefore also against opposing groups. The profits of encounter-density are thus necessarily tied to the profits of localization, and produce some of the same social affects (a similar distribution of groups in social space), but have a different spatial basis. Encounter-density would also be expected to correlate with social capital, in that encounters in physical space are one way to participate in social networks. Similarly to

³¹² See Hillier and Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space*, 250-254.

³¹³ In Hillier and Hanson’s space syntax, highly integrated spaces are “ringy” and highly segregated zones appear as the termini of “tree-like” structures.

the types of profits identified by Bourdieu, concentration of a specific form of spatial capital by one class or group implies withholding it from others. This can be seen in the dramatic reduction of encounter-density in the interior, as well as the exterior spaces of high-rise urban housing projects. Individual housing units are accessible through few exterior entrances, the paths to each individual unit are prevented from intersecting, and the public interior space is minimized and divided by vertical stacking.

There are also profits of visibility, by which I mean the arrangement of space to either encourage or prevent the visibility of places, paths and people. As Hillier and Hanson note, however, visibility serves very different social functions in different types of physical spaces. In disciplinary or institutional buildings, for example, visibility tends to endow the observers with power over the observed, as has been frequently noted following Michel Foucault's analysis of the *Panopticon* of Jeremy Bentham.³¹⁴ In cases of this kind, power is created and maintained by means of physical spaces that provide for unequal conditions of visibility, depending on the position one occupies within the building. As mentioned above, certain buildings, most notably prisons, schools and hospitals, are designed around the central function of the surveillance of their inhabitants, not only so that those in control of the institution can see the inhabitants, but also so that the inhabitants themselves are made aware of their being surveilled. In such "panoptic" structures, power relations are created and maintained not so much by the actual surveillance of the inhabitants, but by the constant exposure to the possibility of surveillance, which is created by the lines of sight created by the organization of the physical space of the building. It is true that buildings of this kind constitute a special

³¹⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 195-228.

case, and by no means constitute a common type of building organization. A related phenomenon is much more widespread, however, and can be said to characterize much of the built environment in contemporary society, namely imposition of long, wide axial streets into older, less clarified urban fabric of medieval European cities, as well as the highly rational grid-system characteristic of many later western cities.

The “rationalization” of the European city, beginning with the Baroque period, transferred the principles of the panoptic organization of space to the city as a whole, resulting in what Lewis Mumford called a “geometric clarification of the spirit.”³¹⁵ The historical conditions that made these developments possible are highly complex, and range from the ascendance of mathematical ideals in town planning, to the aim of mapping and accounting for urban populations for purposes of taxation and the distribution of services, to the heightened demand for intra-urban transport and commerce. It is well known that the aesthetic motivation behind the boulevards that Haussmann created in Paris was coupled with the political aim of preventing the construction of barricades. According to Benjamin, “The institutions of the bourgeoisie’s worldly and spiritual dominance were to find their apotheosis within the framework of the boulevards.”³¹⁶ Boulevards, promenades and orthogonal squares are panoptic spaces, spaces where the profits of visibility are concentrated. In showing that such spaces “normalize” the subject, Foucault was elaborating on Althusser’s idea of a social institution, here the institution of urban planning, functioning as an “ideological state apparatus.” Foucault’s development of the notion importantly identifies the body as the

³¹⁵ Mumford, *The City in History*, 348.

³¹⁶ Benjamin, “Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” 41

site of the application of the ideological apparatus, since it is the body that is visible in panoptic space, and the body that responds to its visibility. For Foucault, the development of such techniques marks a distinctive historical shift from addressing ideological injunctions to “the soul,” since, in addressing them directly to the body, the opportunity for conscious resistance does not arise.³¹⁷ Thus for Foucault, the body is re-appraised as a locus for social power relations. Aside from Foucault’s specific historical narrative, this view is more or less consistent with the Bourdieuan account of social power, insofar as panoptic space enlists individual bodies in imposing the dominant vision of society.³¹⁸

It would be inconsistent with the Bourdieuan view, however, to insist that the profits of visibility are evenly distributed. The ideology of visibility aims at the normalization of what would otherwise, it is feared, become criminal or subversive subjectivities. Thus we would expect to see the panoptic spaces instituted in the regions of physical space inhabited by the dominated classes. In European cities, however, offices and residences fronting the Boulevards tend to be occupied by members of the dominant class, whereas the most dominated classes are relegated to the suburbs, the spaces of which tend to be designed for decreased visibility, because of their location at the margins, and because of the spatial organization of the street layout. Similarly, in American cities, city loft apartments with a “commanding view,” command a high rent as

³¹⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 11.

³¹⁸ Hillier and Hanson note that the social function of visibility in physical space is not a one-way street. In addition to the subjugation of observed individuals, visibility is also linked to safety, as a deterrent to criminal activity. Jane Jacobs emphasizes the importance of having “eyes on the street” in urban communities, in the form of shops and residences with windows facing the street. In this context, visibility contributes to the spatial value of an urban neighborhood, since crime rates and the perception of safety produce economic capital in the form of real estate values.

well, and are associated with what Richard Florida calls the “creative class,” whereas the poor are relegated to out of sight districts, far from major traffic arteries and symbolic centers. The concentration of zones of high visibility in the spaces controlled by the dominant class has its origin in the historical conditions for the creation of these spaces. Transforming the medieval cities of Europe was an expensive enterprise, and its most monumental instances were intended to showcase the state’s best vision of itself, which was of course coincident with the spaces of the dominant class. The uneven distribution of panoptic space can also be seen in the distribution of what Mumford calls the “the most representative symbol of Baroque design,”³¹⁹ the formal garden park. Formal parks and squares were spaces that perfectly embodied the aesthetic ideology of visibility: they transformed spaces that originally had a mercantile function (medieval market squares) into spaces whose sole function was the visibility of nature, transformed by the peculiar logic of the garden park in to a purely aesthetic, geometric visibility. These spaces of heightened visibility, which existed only for seeing and being seen, were unsurprisingly the sole province of the dominant classes, not only by their use by those classes, but also by their spatial proximity to their homes. Such spaces, which may be compared especially to art museums today, are sites of the convergence of several forms of capital, and effect, through spatial separation, the cultural distinction of the aesthetically refined classes.

Innumerable additional forms of spatial capital could be specified, each depending on the social and spatial conditions prevailing in the relatively closed-system

³¹⁹ Mumford, 394.

constituted by that particular society, but many too that could be shown to operate in a wide range of contexts.

What is particularly challenging about specifying the influence of physical space upon social space, and as geographers and urban theorists know well, is the complex array of intermediary agencies that guide the shaping of physical space. What gets built, what gets demolished, and the relationships between new and existing physical spaces are only rarely the result of a singular authority. More often than not, they are the result of a long process of deliberation and negotiation. In American cities, the process looks something like this: Real estate developers and investors provide the capital for the project, and are interested that the resulting space will achieve the desired form of success such that they will receive a return on their investments. To do so, however, they must work with architects who, depending on the project, will contribute their own set of technical constraints, and perhaps their own aesthetic vision. All of these parties must also work with officials and committees at various levels of government, as well as independent organizations, addressing issues of zoning (which alone functions as a powerful constraint on architectural and urban form), contributions to the local economy, compliance with housing initiatives, etc. Numerous additional constraints must be taken into account, such as the demand for parking, local geography and climate, accommodations for the disabled, and on and on. In a Bourdieuan model, many of these intermediaries can be brought within the overall field theory, since they can be regarded as semi-autonomous fields, struggling with one another, in part to ensure their own continued autonomy. The most obvious of these in advanced capitalist societies is the role of the economic field, which can be regarded straightforwardly as converting

economic capital into spatial capital (which may take any of the forms outlined above). The resulting physical space then yields a return in the form of economic capital, as well as symbolic or cultural capital for the inhabitants and users of the space. In terms of the architectural field, firms compete largely on the basis of their possession of non-economic forms of capital, their mastery of a certain aesthetic, as well as their connections with developers and political leaders (a form of social capital), which is converted, through their products, into economic capital, as well as, potentially, a profit in cultural and social capital, depending on the reception of the project within their field.

The principle of exchange is therefore crucial to the production of a structured physical space, since the agencies contributing to its formation are members of specific semi-autonomous fields. The individual habitus of these members are thus not only a product of their exposure to specific social structures recorded in physical space, but also of the roles they play within their particular fields. The physical spaces that they collaboratively produce, by working with (or sometimes by imposing their dominant vision on) members of other fields, are thus the result of a struggle, a compromise or a victory, that is contingent on the rates of exchange within and across these fields. Moreover, imperfections in the mechanics of exchange demand that what Delanda, following Robert Crosby, calls “transaction costs” be taken into account. These imperfections are the result of “limited rationality, imperfect information, delays and bottlenecks, opportunism, high-cost enforceability of contracts, and so on.”³²⁰ A rigorous objectivist analysis of such a process would require a further elaboration of Bourdieu’s field theory, one that could handle the complex dynamics that arise from the

³²⁰ Delanda, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, 19.

simultaneous interactions of multiple semi-autonomous fields and the inherent “fuzziness” in their mechanisms of exchange. Such an analysis would be extremely data-heavy, but could be performed using existing mathematical modeling techniques. While Bourdieu does hint that this form of analysis is what he has in mind when considering the interactions between fields, his own contributions do not move beyond the identification of homologous structures and the kinds of distortions he talks about with regard to the social transformation of physical space.

Synoptic and Narrative Illusions

By way of conclusion, I would like to return to the table and flow-chart presented above. These diagrams run the risk of perpetuating the synoptic illusion because they represent as synchronous processes that are only realized in practice. The addition of temporal indicators (arrows) in the flow-chart does not go far enough in eliminating this error, since the time of practice is radically different from the time of the timeline or the chronometer. What’s more, they both represent as separate and distinct categories that are in practice blurred and continuous. Like Bourdieu’s synoptic diagram of oppositions in the Kabyle society, which had the effect of covering up the “similarity in difference” that related the sets of oppositions to one another, the above chart covers up the fact that, in practice, there is no strict differentiation between social space and physical space, as well as the fact that it is only objectivist meta-analysis that posits a distinction between subjectivist and objectivist points of view. If diagrammatic representations do not preserve the structures of practice, however, then neither do narrative representations.

The processes presented in the last two sections, namely the transmission of physical space into social space and the translation of social space into physical space, cannot finally be regarded as separate processes. In practice, they overlap completely, not only because they occur simultaneously, but also because, at the level of the habitus, the distinction between the social and the physical in terms of which we have organized our narratives does not exist. The absence of this distinction is, as mentioned above, the condition for the habitus' ability to function as an analogical operator between social and physical structures. What the narratives do preserve, however, is the *irreversibility* of practical processes, which is what makes the history of the system embodied in the habitus effective upon the prevailing structures of the moment. Irreversibility is the form of temporality appropriate to practice. Moreover, even the objectivist moment of research must accurately represent processes whose progression is governed by their irreversibility, such as the concentration and dispersal of social classes and housing types.

Nonetheless, momentarily separating the two “directions” of the dialectic reveals similarities and differences in the two processes. In general, both directions are characterized by a naturalized encounter between the habitus and a pre-structured space, followed by the expression of that habitus in the individual's behavior. Only at the level of the total population can the expression of habitus be observed to produce a differentiated social or physical space. The key differences between the two directions are the different modes of mediation through which collective action structures space. Social space, on the one hand, is differentiated by the individual agents' selection of articles of taste, levels of behavioral refinement, the choice of occupation, and so on. In Bourdieu's discussions of this process, a considerable role is given to the function of the

habitus, although it is clear that the material conditions that give rise to the habitus, and which provide the habitus with its context, cannot be ignored. Physical space, on the other hand, presents in many ways a more complicated problem. While the habitus must certainly be regarded as effective in the differentiation of physical space, other mediating processes are equally important, many of which are linked to specialized forms of professional and institutional habitus. It is in this territory of mediation that one must consider the individual, semi-autonomous fields which contribute to the eventual organization of physical space, i.e., the architectural field, the field of civic politics, and, increasingly, the global economic field.

These warnings aside, the point of central importance here is that social space and physical space may be sensibly and profitably understood as engaged with one another in a dialectical process of interaction, and, further, that this dialectical process is not to be divided along any of the traditional metaphysical or epistemological dichotomies, e.g., objective/subjective, external/internal, noumenal/phenomenal, or any other such division. Instead, social space and physical space should be regarded as apprehensions of different aspects of the world, which may be formalized, objectified or ontologized by the scientific observer and the lay-agent alike, appearing variously as visions, representations, models, or concrete experiences. For the social scientist they may be heuristics. For an interested social agent they may be the law of the jungle. But any such distinctions are the result, not of essence, but of one's point of view. Whereas Durkheim sought a social grounding for the Kantian categories, Bourdieu shows that those social conditions are themselves the product of a process of structural division, which in turn has its roots in

the basic topological facts of corporeal existence. This is not a return to Kant, however, because the content of social structures remains subject to future restructuring. The logic of space serves merely to constrain (and therefore also to enable) the process of social reproduction, not to determine it. In sum, it is neither a subjective form of intuition nor a pure and objective geometry that lies at the bottom of our apprehension of space, but a process that implicates both of these philosophical creations, but comes to rest in neither. A Bourdieuan philosophy of space is thus wholly dynamical, recognizing that neither the most malleable convention of its use nor the most enduring law of its form ever crystallizes.

CHAPTER 5

CREATIVE DESTRUCTION IN THE URBAN CORE

Introduction

This chapter and the one that follows it should be read together as showcasing different but complementary aspects of the Bourdieuan theoretical framework that has been synthesized over the last four chapters. The aim of both chapters is to bring that framework to bear on specific topics in the social world, specifically with topics in which the social order and the built environment are both of central importance. Whereas Chapter 6 addresses a case in which social structures reveal a remarkable stability in the face of deliberate and concerted efforts to change them, the present chapter deals with a case where social structures (along with their counterparts in physical space) are successfully transformed. This chapter, then, employs aspects of the framework to explain the transformation of a specific district common to a great number of cities: the boundary zones between the relatively self-contained areas in which modern corporate office towers are clustered and the more traditional business and residential districts, characterized by more vernacular architecture and function. These boundary zones constitute a physical space that is transformed—one might say consumed—on the basis of its spatial and visual properties. I will show how these zones function simultaneously as physical environments that structure and are structured by social agents, and as

symbolic goods that locate their owners and users in social space, and with which those owners and users are eminently concerned.

The Scene

Philadelphia's orthogonal street grid serves as the first means of orientation for the visitor. The axes of Broad and Market Streets meet at City Hall, dividing the city into quadrants. Architectural styles, and the urban space they produce, differ along these axes by perceptible degrees. The most striking variation occurs along the north-south axis. Beginning at the southern tip, uniform blocks of two story row houses stretch on for about a mile and three quarters, or approximately twenty blocks. This is an overwhelmingly residential landscape, business occupying only the corners at street intersections. Moving northward three story houses begin to appear around Washington Avenue and gradually gain in frequency until they outnumber the two story ones. Suddenly, at the threshold of South Street, the average building height reaches four stories, and taller residential buildings become common. Continuing north, the scene changes radically again upon arriving at Walnut Street, which, along with Chestnut Street one block to the north, forms the vernacular backbone of commercial Philadelphia—prewar buildings housing restaurants, retail shops, laundries, and other urban enterprises. The most abrupt transition of all, however, occurs just one block north of this traditional district, at Market Street, where one is suddenly confronted with an exponential rise in building height, and a complete break with vernacular architectural styles. This is the corporate office tower district (henceforth the COTD, a sub-district of the CBD or central

business district), a dense but homogenous zone of blank-walled towers, mostly of recent design, comprising a stratum along Market Street and John F. Kennedy Boulevard. Exceptions are present, of course—notably City Hall itself—and the towers do tend to thin out towards the eastern edge of town, in Old City, but for many blocks the landscape is dominated by imposing monoliths faced in reflective glass, polished mock stone, and reinforced concrete. Banks predominate, along with financial services companies, large corporations and a liberal smattering of law offices. The district is given over almost entirely a single use—commerce—and to a single commercial function—management. At street level there are far fewer business-fronts—and a far greater distance between them—since these office towers tend to have a much larger footprint than the vernacular buildings further south, and tend not to incorporate diversified functions on their ground floors. The COTD ends as abruptly as it begins, bounded on the north by the cross-town Vine Street Expressway. Beyond the expressway lie loft-converted warehouses, interspersed with surface parking lots, giving way gradually to traditional residential districts, once again diminishing in height, and then vanishing into the thinning sprawl to the north and west.

What is striking about Philadelphia’s urban core is the presence of hard edges, namely the boundaries of the COTD, the edges where it abuts zones of vernacular architecture and pedestrian use. Cities are more often remarked upon for the fluidity of their internal and external boundaries, the subtle shadings of quality that are all but imperceptible to the casual observer. The soft edges of urban districts are behind the long tradition of organic and biological metaphors for the city, as well as recent efforts to

model city growth using fractals.³²¹ Soft boundaries are what we expect when we look for the transitions from blighted areas to gentrified ones, for example, or from urban to suburban neighborhoods. But in the urban core of many cities, the abrupt boundary of the COTD stands as a glaring exception, and calls out for explanation. The presence of hard edges around the COTD is not unique to Philadelphia. In fact, a similar pattern can be observed on a greater or lesser scale in every major American metropolis. More telling, however, is the similarity of this pattern to the growth of COTDs in so-called “global cities”³²² around the world, such as the Bankenviertel in Frankfurt or Canary Wharf in London. This is due to the fact that the entities that supply the economic conditions for the viability of office towers as a building type, the companies that own them, that commission their design, and that occupy or lease out their space, are deeply engaged with the global economy. Moreover, the symbolic capital generated by these structures, which is more than anything else their *raison d'être*, is primarily intended for recognition within an increasingly globalized corporate culture.

While the capital is increasingly global, the skyscraper as a symbol of financial dominance is rooted in the American building tradition. As the architect Anthony King notes, “for reasons apparently mimetic of the United States, the spectacular high rise building has become a metaphor for modernity, if not worldwide, at least in some

³²¹ See Batty.

³²² The term was coined by the sociologist Saskia Sassen in *The Global City* and is current to debates in geography and urban studies. Sassen defines global cities: “first, as highly concentrated command points in the organization of the world economy; second, as key locations for finance and for specialized service firms, which have replaced manufacturing as the leading economic sectors; third, as sites of production, including the production of innovations; and fourth, as markets for the products and innovations produced.” This definition refers as much to the reality of dominant global cities as to the position coveted by cities on the periphery of the global economy.

postcolonial or ‘emerging’ nation states.”³²³ As more international cities have entered the US-dominated global economy, they have followed the stylistic lead of already successful cities. According to the geographer Kris Olds, “their model Central Business Districts (CBDs) were Manhattan in New York, Central in Hong Kong, Shinjuku in Tokyo and La Defense in Paris.”³²⁴

Entering the corporate office tower district from any of its contiguous zones, one is aware not only of a radical change in the physical environment, but also of a distinct alteration in the sense of one’s social position: either a conflict or a confirmation, a relief or a riposte. And although this activation of habitus has widely varying significance for different individuals (depending on their social position), its occurrence marks the resident as a member of the culture that produced the city—it separates him or her from the tourist, the visitor who has nothing at stake here. The variation in the different dispositions the COTD awakens in different agents is the result of a complex process involving numerous interested players. In order to explain how it has come about, and more generally in order to give its conditions for possibility, it will be helpful to start where most conventional approaches start, with an economic account. I will begin, therefore, with Joseph Schumpeter’s concept of creative destruction. In order to accommodate the full complexity of the phenomenon, though, it will then be necessary to expand Schumpeter’s idea via Bourdieu’s notion of social space, and finally, to situate the phenomenon within the theory of socio-physical dialectics that I have been drawing from Bourdieu.

³²³ King, *Spaces of Global Cultures*, 12.

³²⁴ Olds quoted in King, 17.

Creative Destruction

The economist Joseph Schumpeter coined the term “creative destruction” to characterize the way entrepreneurial innovation tends to revolutionize markets. Schumpeter defines creative destruction as an “industrial mutation” that “incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure *from within*, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one.”³²⁵ The process of creative destruction is not an exception to the normal progress of capitalism, however, but is actually “what capitalism consists in.”³²⁶ On Schumpeter’s account, entrepreneurial competitors gain market share (or, more accurately, they create new markets) not by simple, direct competition with the established producers, but by creating new products that shift demand away from established ones. Eventually the entrepreneurial producers become the dominant producers in the market. Schumpeter asserts that such “revolutions” in supply and demand are normal for a capitalist economy. Replacing the products of an established market with products of a fundamentally different kind, which nonetheless reduce demand for the established products, opens up new markets. Creative destruction thus recognizes that economic competition proceeds by non-economic means, and evokes a world in which price is not the sole means of competition. Bourdieu’s notion of social space gets started by elaborating on this observation. Social space maps the way economic and cultural factors influence one another in a market, which is reconceived

³²⁵ Schumpeter, 83.

³²⁶ Ibid.

more broadly as an arena of social struggle. (Schumpeter's notion in and of itself is a one-way street, leading from social innovation to economic dominance, but not the other way.)

Once creative destruction is identified in an urban context, it quickly becomes apparent that the transformation of physical space is anything but a pure expression of market forces. In his account of the creative destruction of Manhattan in the early twentieth century, the architect and historian Max Page concludes that the transformation of Fifth Avenue from a low-density row of suburban mansions to a corridor of high-rise commercial and residential structures cannot be explained simply by the higher rents that could be charged by redeveloping the avenue in that fashion. On the contrary, an enormous contribution to real estate values on Fifth Avenue was the symbolic value of the location as the "spine of Gotham."³²⁷ A District that was originally prized by the wealthy as a refuge from the congested conditions of the districts where their wealth was produced itself became a symbol for money and power, and consequently a generator of profits in its own right. The near-total liquidation of the avenue's original architecture, however, resulted in a cultural backlash in that businesses and investors began to see the need to protect their investment in the symbolic value of the district, resulting in the first laws regulating the form (architecture) and function (zoning) of urban space. As Page says, "even as it was seen as a symbol for nothing less than America's wealth generated by "free" capitalistic entrepreneurship, Fifth Avenue was the birthplace of modern city planning and some of the most far-reaching efforts at controlling the capitalist market in

³²⁷ Page borrows this term from a 1930 poem about Fifth Avenue by Fred Rothermell.

space.”³²⁸ As a result, Fifth Avenue remains synonymous with wealth and power, but it is also now associated with a very different architectural style: the early skyscraper. This kind of mutual transformation of space and society suggests the viability of “spatial dialectics” as an explanatory framework, since here the physical environment both orders and is ordered by structures of economic and symbolic capital.

The geographer David Harvey places urban creative destruction in a more complex historical context, as arising not only out of the capitalist mode of production, but also out of modernity more generally. Modernity, on Harvey’s account, is the shift in worldview in response to the failures of the Enlightenment project. This shift philosophically underwrites the capitalist sanctioning of destructive entrepreneurialism, to the point that it seems, if not exactly desirable, at least somewhat inevitable. For Harvey, creative destruction is emblematic of the fragmentary and ephemeral character of the modern world, the world that Nietzsche was anxious to usher in, and that horrified writers like Kafka. That both modernity and capitalism find their most concentrated expression in the industrial city of the nineteenth century is reason enough to consider the geographical aspect of creative destruction. Harvey cites Hausmann's transformation of Paris and Robert Moses’ transformation of New York as all-too-obvious examples of creative destruction in the city. If this is to be anything more than a vacuous assertion of resemblance, however, the links between the economic and symbolic investments and what happens on the ground must be made clear. In what follows I will characterize the process of creative destruction that produces the hard edges between the COTDs and vernacular CBDs as the physical product of the competitive behavior of corporate

³²⁸ Page, 25.

investors, architects and governments in social space. Most generally, these edges can be said to come about through the corporate culture's struggle for economic and symbolic dominance. This struggle necessarily sets the field of corporate architecture against the economic world—it must distinguish itself from economic interests in order to secure its autonomy—and yet this very autonomy results in economic profits for the interested participants.

Symbolic Capital in the Urban Core

The architect Kim Dovey has employed Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital to analyze the function of corporate office towers within the "symbolic discourse of corporate culture."³²⁹ Dovey proceeds by scrutinizing advertisements for office towers, documents produced by architects and designers and aimed at their corporate clients. These advertisements summarize the symbolic capital promised to the corporation in return for their economic investment. This is a sound strategy, for as Bourdieu himself notes in a discussion of housing advertisements in France, "like all symbolic action, advertising is most successful when it plays on, stimulates or arouses pre-existing dispositions, which it expresses and provides with an opportunity for acknowledgment and fulfillment."³³⁰ The trend is for this symbolic capital to bestow *distinction* upon the firm, primarily in the form of a singular iconic image that will, it is claimed, stand out against the background of the city skyline. The ads that Dovey looks at make explicit

³²⁹ Dovey, 107.

³³⁰ Bourdieu, *The Social Structures of the Economy*, 55.

appeal to the uniqueness of the corporate image that they will provide, as well as its authority. One representative ad proclaims a building “designed to dominate.”³³¹ Dovey appeals to Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic capital to explain the struggle that architects engage in to win the recognition of their buildings as icons. Bourdieu’s definition of symbolic capital is instructive here:

Symbolic capital is an ordinary property (physical strength, wealth, warlike valor, etc.) which, perceived by social agents endowed with the categories of perception and appreciation permitting them to perceive, know and recognize it, becomes symbolically efficient, like a veritable *magical power*: a property which, because it responds to socially constituted “collective expectations” and beliefs, exercises a sort of action from a distance, without physical contact.³³²

Bourdieu thus refers to the power of recognized symbols, including architectural ones, to direct injunctions to the minds of agents, although in an immediate, pre-critical way, such that obedience is automatic, rather than freely chosen in each instance. He is also alluding to Weber’s notion of charisma. Like Weber’s sociology of religion in Bourdieu’s interpretation, the competition among architectural works for recognition as icons must be conceived as a space in which each contender offers a slightly different array of symbolic goods, always in response to the offerings of its competitors, in this case the other buildings, and particularly the other office towers, that make up its physical context. The office tower performs a kind of silent “speech act,” in its height and in its form,

³³¹ Dovey, 109.

³³² Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, 102.

which borrows from the cathedral its symbolic identification of height and upward movement and with authority and potency.³³³ The case of the office tower differs importantly from the cathedral, however, in that the recognition of its iconographic status is not guaranteed by a stable and agreed-upon system of significations (due largely the chaotic idiom of postmodernist architecture). Nor does the office tower hold a symbolic monopoly on the recognition (or misrecognition) of power, since it most often appears clustered among buildings with parallel symbolic intentions. In this respect it is very like the Weberian purveyor of religious salvation, vying with its would-be usurpers, its rival magicians and prophets, for dominance and legitimacy. The office tower's place in the symbolic space of corporate culture is thus always in jeopardy. Dovey himself notes that corporate office towers can typically hope for only a very brief period of symbolic profitability, a matter of years or perhaps months, before their dominant place in the hierarchy is overtaken by a newer, flashier construction.

Office towers are sold, according to Dovey, not only on the basis of iconographic distinction, but also on the basis of their location in the city, usually their proximity to older business districts characterized by vernacular urban design. Photos in architectural brochures for these buildings routinely depict "street life, restaurants, cafes, shops, historic streetscapes, luxury cars, elegant women and nightlife."³³⁴ This corresponds to what Bourdieu calls a profit of localization, the proximity of the new buildings to the fixed site of a scarce urban resource. In Philadelphia, this resource is the vernacular commercial district south of Market Street and the upscale district surrounding

³³³ This identification is apparently peculiar to Western culture in general. See, for example, Anthony King's analysis of Beijing's Forbidden City as a horizontal display of power. King, 18-19.

³³⁴ Dovey, 112.

Rittenhouse Square, a traditional garden park dating from the city's founding, also a prestigious residential address. Proximity to the central transit terminals also contributes to a building's profits of localization. In fact, in many cities access to rail transit serves an almost entirely symbolic purpose, since it has become standard for many office buildings to include automobile parking. Parking structures are included underground, on the lot adjacent to the building, or, very frequently, the building itself is constructed on top of a multistory parking structure. This design feature has an enormous effect on the symbolic function of the building at street level, since it accentuates the break that the building makes with the vernacular design of surrounding streets. Perhaps the most emblematic form taken by the struggle for profits of localization is that of the "façade-ectomy," in which all but the façade or outer walls of an existing vernacular structure is demolished, and then joined to a new building, usually a glass and steel office tower. This usually implies the negation of the original function of the façade, which consequently becomes purely symbolic.

What I have called the *profits of visibility* also play an important role in the symbolic marketing of office towers, since one of their major selling points is their possession of "commanding views." Demand for such views influences the form of the building in terms of its height (which is also key to its iconographic value), and also in the division of the interior space between modular, functional workspace and prestigious corner offices. Dovey indicates that the optimal situation for a new corporate office tower is to be a high-rise building in a low-rise district, so that the tower clearly stands head-and-shoulders above the surrounding buildings, and also so that the views from the upper floors take in as wide of a vista as possible. The greater the extent to which the view

takes in symbolically rich, traditional urban infrastructure, the less the symbolic dominance of the tower over the landscape is challenged. Once competing towers begin to move in, however, the resource of visibility begins to be diminished.

Dovey is also aware, although he does not devote specific attention to the fact, that the interior space of corporate office towers is highly hierarchized in terms of what I have called the *profits of encounter-density*. From a space syntax point of view, an office tower is essentially “a long thin building serviced entirely from one tip.”³³⁵ The building’s height therefore contributes to its symbolic capital not only through the iconographic distinction and the special conditions of visibility it provides, but also by creating an internal differentiation of space that concentrates the building’s symbolic capital in the upper stories (as well as in the foyer). Encounter-density among the elites—the highest ranking and most important executives—is concentrated in these areas of privileged access, while those of lesser rank are physically cut off from them, quarantined to areas where only lateral contacts are possible. As a form of social capital, encounter-density is vital to the reproduction of the division of labor since the physical division of the workspace enforces the social distinctions it produces.

Dovey’s study suggests that the notion of “creative destruction” can be instructively expanded to include not only economic entrepreneurship but also the parasitic replacement of symbolic markets. The term aptly describes the effect of corporate office towers on the city because of the contradictory way they relate to their surroundings. According to Dovey, office towers embody “dominant contextualism,” in that they strive to achieve, with a single spatial form, a building that both distinguishes

³³⁵ Ibid., 107.

itself from, and blends harmoniously with, its urban context. The result is that office towers make largely facile gestures towards integration with the urban fabric while remaining distinctly “anti-urban.” This pattern is typified by the “tower and podium” form of many office towers—an iconic tower set atop, and slightly back from, a podium intended to establish continuity with the vernacular street pattern—a form which in many cities is encouraged by zoning laws. Despite the podium’s intended function of blending in with its urban context, it rarely contributes to that context, its street frontage most often being given over to a large, symbolically impressive foyer, or to a “thinly disguised parking garage.”³³⁶

Because it is symbolically advantageous to situate corporate office towers within or closely alongside vernacular business districts, many office towers compete for the same finite profits of localization, and, because they do not contribute to the available stock of “contextual” symbolic capital, those resources are quickly exhausted:

To sell the locational advantages, the advertising shows photographs of human scaled streetscapes, sunshine, trees, street life and traditional buildings. This is the character of the neighborhood which lends the location symbolic capital. Yet this character will eventually be destroyed by the addition of tall buildings. City districts with an attractive urban character then attract their own destruction at the hands of the corporate tower, a process not dissimilar to what Jacobs (1965) long ago called the self-destruction of urban diversity. Each new tower in a given district contributes to the collective decline in symbolic meaning until such time as the character has been transformed, its symbolic

³³⁶ Ibid.

capital consumed.³³⁷

The clustering of corporate office towers together thus leads to a threefold decline in symbolic capital: a decline in the profits of localization, since the increased number and large footprints of office towers consume and block access to, but do not reproduce, the vernacular design of adjacent older districts; a decline in iconographic recognition, since many “signature” towers must jostle for dominance of the skyline; and a decline in the profits of visibility, since the accumulating towers get in the way of one another’s views while increasing the overall supply of such views.

The Process

On the edges of COTDs, transformations of physical space produce and are produced by transactions in social space. The physical spaces thus transformed—the boundary zones between old and new commercial districts—are sites where capital is converted from one objectified form to another. The urban core of most American cities, as well as a growing number of global cities, is increasingly dominated by the COTD, and is experiencing a decline in the adjacent districts, characterized by traditional, mixed use structures, vernacular urban planning and lively street life. The boundaries of the COTDs continue to expand, to push back the vernacular districts along a hard edge, and to transform them from lively, symbolically complex areas to landscapes of monotonous corporate iconography.

³³⁷ Ibid., 118.

Several broad components of this process can be identified:

1. The symbolic space of the nineteenth century city, itself a product of industrial economic forces, favors mid-rise commercial districts with small lot sizes and a high density of diverse uses, including finance, manufacturing, the sale of locally-consumed goods, restaurants and dwellings.
2. The objectified capital of this symbolic space no longer yields economic profits after the decline of on-site industrial manufacturing and the expansion of markets overseas. It does continue to yield symbolic profits, however, as old commercial districts continue to be associated with spatial concentrations of wealth and power. Following the modernist movement in architecture in the early twentieth century, these districts acquire additional symbolic value from the traditional way of life they represent, which is increasingly regarded with nostalgia.
3. New forms of physical space are introduced by the fields of architecture and planning, enabled by the repudiation of traditional design in the internal discourses of these fields as well as by advances in materials and construction technology.
4. The prestige and nostalgia associated with the vernacular commercial district is transferred to the corporate occupants (and also to the architects and designers) of office towers constructed in zones adjacent to vernacular districts. This is enabled in part by the availability of real estate in the urban core following the clearance of large areas for redevelopment in the 1960s and 1970s, but mostly by the

demolition of existing vernacular structures, also implying the liquidation of their symbolic capital.

5. A catalyst is provided by the availability of economic incentives for making relocation to urban centers more attractive to large corporations. Cities transition from engagement primarily with a national economy to engagement primarily with a global economy.
6. Corporations seek to improve their position in the global economy by objectifying their capital in the symbolic space common to the global corporate culture, rather than in the outmoded symbolic space of the old city. Its built form must meet the expectations of the community of international commerce, which accepts the iconographic conventions of the most up to date international architecture.
7. The commercial office tower district is produced. The symbolic space that it occupies, as well as the physical space itself, structurally prohibits the reemergence of the symbolic and physical resources that made it possible, and on which it still depends.

Physical Space: Corporate Office Tower Districts in Context

What matters most with respect to the creation of COTDs are their edges: the zones of contact between them and the vernacular urban fabric that they consume and transform. In this sense, the phenomenon of COTDs is not unlike, and is indeed closely related to, the familiar process of residential gentrification. In fact, one might think of the former as the commercial analogue of the latter. In his Bourdieuan analysis of the

“strategy” of gentrification, Gary Bridge comments, “Central city space is redefined as desirable and a mark of distinction, recapturing an older tradition of the elite centre of the city prior to industrial capitalism. This re-ordering of the symbolic significance of central city space is set against working class history as well as middle class suburbia. The symbolic ordering of space becomes a new set of class dispositions.”³³⁸ The major difference of course is that gentrification leaves a much different physical mark on the landscape than does its corporate cousin. In addition to constructing new dwellings, gentrifiers also reuse existing housing stock or convert commercial buildings to residential use.³³⁹ Spatially, gentrified districts tend to be situated just outside the CBD, between it and more highly stigmatized neighborhoods further out. Gentrifiers attach themselves, typically, to the “other side” of the remaining vernacular commercial districts of the old CBD. They do not directly compete with groups investing in the COTD, however, since those groups are largely seeking profits of localization by their proximity to the vernacular commercial districts, while gentrifiers are after profits of occupation, to push undesirable districts away with their bulk. Gentrification is, of course, also a response to the availability of profits of localization, but its behavior in this respect seems to be directed toward the CBD thought of as a whole, and not simply the vernacular CBD.

The distribution of classes in physical space, as well as the movement of those classes through the city, is very important to understanding present patterns of urban transformation. Historically, the industrial city organized itself into stratified zones,

³³⁸ Bridge, “Bourdieu, Rational Action and the Time-Space Strategy of Gentrification,” 213.

³³⁹ See Zukin, *Loft Living*.

differing by function and the class of residents. Friedrich Engels was among the first to remark upon what Ernest Burgess would later formalize as the “concentric zone model,” and to perceive a connection between the distribution of classes and the arrangement of space for efficient capitalist accumulation. In the following passage, Engels describes the organization of the city of Manchester:

Manchester contains, at its very heart, a rather extended commercial district, perhaps half a mile long and about as broad, and consisting almost wholly of offices and warehouses. Nearly the whole district is abandoned by dwellers, and is lonely and deserted at night; only watchmen and policemen traverse its narrow lanes with their dark lanterns. This district is cut through by certain main thoroughfares upon which the vast traffic concentrates, and in which the ground level is lined with brilliant shops. In these streets the upper floors are occupied, here and there, and there is a good deal of life upon them until late at night. With the exception of this commercial district, all Manchester proper, all Salford and Hulme, a great part of Pendleton and Chorlton, two-thirds of Ardwick, and single stretches of Cheetham Hill and Broughton are all unmixed working-people’s quarters, stretching like a girdle, averaging a mile and a half in breadth, around the commercial district. Outside, beyond this girdle, lives the upper and middle bourgeoisie, the middle bourgeoisie in regularly laid out streets in the vicinity of the working quarters, especially in Chorlton and the lower-lying portions of Cheetham hill; the upper bourgeoisie in remoter villas with gardens in Chorlton and Ardwick or on the breezy heights of Cheetham Hill, Broughton and Pendleton, in free, wholesome country air, in fine, comfortable homes, passed once every half hour or quarter hour by omnibuses going into the city. And the finest part of the arrangement is this, that the members of this money aristocracy can take the shortest road through the middle of all the labouring districts to their places of business, without ever seeing that they are in the midst of the grimy misery that lurks to the right and the left. For the thoroughfares leading from the Exchange in all directions out of the city are lined, on both sides, with an almost unbroken series of shops, and are so kept in the hands of the middle and lower bourgeoisie, which, out of self-interest, cares for a decent and cleanly external appearance and *can* care for it. True, these shops bear some relation to the districts which lie behind them, and are more elegant in the commercial and residential quarters than when they hide grimy working-men’s dwellings; but they suffice to conceal from the eyes of the wealthy men and women of strong stomachs and weak nerves the misery and grime which form the complement of their wealth.³⁴⁰

The spatial division of labor that Engels describes can still be recognized in the contemporary city, although some of its features have changed. The omnibuses have been replaced by primate automobiles or commuter trains, the thoroughfares by freeways or

³⁴⁰ Engels, 53.

railways, and the ghettos have been pushed back from their old locations immediately adjacent to the CBD to make room for gentrified residential zones, the overall pattern persists. There remains a “red belt” around central Paris, a “black belt” around central New York, and commuters from the suburbs still bypass these districts with a bare minimum of contact and recognition.

As economic conditions changed following the Second World War, however, the industrial city transitioned into what the architect Paul Walker Clarke calls the “corporate city.” From an economic point of view this transition amounts to a replacement of the city’s manufacturing function with financial services and corporate management. But demolition takes time and money, and so from a physical point of view, the corporate city does not replace the industrial city completely, but replaces only parts of it, leaving voids, which are no longer zones of manufacturing, and which are either forgotten (as the homes of populations no longer seen as legitimate) or else come to be looked upon with nostalgia by the descendents of their abandoners. A great deal has been written about the divergence in the ways that segments of society have responded to the fate of this “inner city,” much of which underwrites idea that the divergence signals a distinction between fundamentally opposed types of habitus. Residential gentrification represents the convergence of in physical space of groups that are widely separated in social space. Without the physical proximity of the COTD, and the surrounding “co-opted” CBD, the discomfort produced by this collision of opposed classes might have proven unsustainable. In the light of the mutual distrust and suspicion that produced the spatial segregation of dominant and dominated classes in the first in the first place, and which

remains durable due to the effects of habitus, residential gentrification and the rise of COTDs should be seen as structurally linked and mutually enabling.

Beginning in the late 1950s, large-scale redevelopment projects irreversibly transformed the urban cores of most American cities. In many cities, large tracts of industrial land were cleared and either left vacant, awaiting investment from the private sector, or they were redeveloped with state and federal assistance along the lines of the modernist architectural ethos of the pre-war period. This modernist paradigm was derived from architects and theorists, like Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius, who urged the abandonment of traditional urban forms like streets and squares and emphasized homogeneity and repetition instead, as well as transparency with respect to the structural function of materials. The degree of collaboration between city officials, industrial investors, architects and designers on the large-scale initiatives of this period was made possible largely by the presupposition that these different actors held in common, what might be thought of as the *illusio* of urban redevelopment. Clarke identifies this with the belief, largely justified by the trend toward the regional dispersal of industry, “that cities will atrophy if not redeveloped to facilitate and reinforce capitalist production and consumption. Otherwise investment will move elsewhere.”³⁴¹

Despite these efforts, however, investment did not return to the urban cores in the expected waves. The reasons for this are structurally linked to the rapid growth of suburbanization. Clarke outlines some of the economic and cultural factors contributing to this phenomenon:

³⁴¹ Clarke, 49.

First, federal policies, the zoning practices of the politically fragmented, metropolitan regions, the uneven, geographic investment patterns of banking institutions, the real estate developers and the construction industry all contributed to the creation of sprawling, extensive, single-family housing developments in the 50s and 60s. The massive increase in single-family homes intensified the isolation and separation of individual families from their communities and class. The consequence of this was that the search for identity was collapsed into innumerable consumer choices ranging from the prestige value of house and neighborhood to “better schools for the children.” Architectural images were just one mode of these distinctions. New enclaves of class exclusion and racial segregation underwrote the suburban dream.³⁴²

The process of suburbanization is intimately related to the rapid growth of the COTD in the 1980s, when investment did return to the urban core. As suburbanization segregated populations along lines of race and class, it also separated members of the same class from one another. Suburbs are poor repositories of social capital, since they function as zones of low encounter density. The profits secured by the dominant class (in fact, largely the dominated portion of the dominant class) would have to be maintained elsewhere, and the redevelopment of the central cities did not yet meet the spatial prerequisites for this to occur. The entrepreneurial move made by the alliance of corporations, architects, investors and city officials in the 1980s capitalized on the demand—as yet untapped—for zones of increased encounter density and helped produce a concentrated and exclusive region, both in physical space and in social space. The COTD thus became the locus of a relatively hermetic “club effect,” a kind of exclusionary social solidarity that “comes from the long-term gathering together... of people and things which are different from the vast majority and have in common the fact that they are not common, that is, the fact that they exclude everyone who does not present all the desired attributes or who presents (at least) one undesirable attribute.” Bourdieu formulates this notion in reference to fashionable neighborhoods, but it applies equally well to the COTD as the most desirable

³⁴² Clarke, 52.

business district for a company to locate itself and for an individual to work. Scott Lash and John Urry take note of the club effect as well, in connection with global cities and their concentrations of economically dominant producer services providers.³⁴³

The physical separation of residence and occupation for a large portion of the dominant class is highly inefficient. That a journey of up to an hour or more should be necessary to link two physical spaces in which a given agent's habitus is "at home," indicates that a definite return in social benefits is expected in exchange for making the effort. But the gap between occupation and residence is not the only inefficiency occasioned by this type of organization. When a large number of companies decide to centralize their management and service functions in the same district, this also implies separating those functions from the companies' other concerns, such as manufacturing, distribution or the provision of services.³⁴⁴ Although the economies of many American post-industrial cities focus increasingly on "producer services" (a diverse economic sector including "business and professional functions such as advertising and market research, and much banking and insurance"³⁴⁵) many of the companies involved have other divisions that still engage in more traditional forms of production, or else depend strongly on other companies that do. And although the increased efficiency of communications technology has done much to bridge (and, at the same time, to enable) this separation, the improvements in the circulation of information alone do not justify the significantly higher rent and transportation costs. What have attracted corporations back to the urban core, what has driven international investment in architectural

³⁴³ See Lash and Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space*.

³⁴⁴ See Clarke, 52.

³⁴⁵ Massey, 169.

infrastructure, have been the symbolic gains derived from a variety of sources, from the profits anticipated from iconographic architecture and localization in proximity to symbolically rich vernacular districts.

Before returning to symbolic considerations, I would like briefly to address a potential challenge to my Bourdieuan interpretation of the creative destruction of the urban core. This challenge is implied by some of Fredric Jameson's comments on postmodern architecture. Since corporate office towers, especially since the 1980s, have presented themselves as showpieces of the emerging postmodern architectural style, his comments on the social significance of that style bear directly on my concerns here. Specifically, Jameson associates postmodern architecture with a weakening of historicity. Postmodern buildings fail, he claims, to embody history in the way that earlier building types, even modernism, did as a whole. By "sampling" from a historical grab bag for their ornamentation, postmodern buildings express only a disorienting collage of history, rather than standing as products of a reliably identifiable historical style. This would seem to disallow the status of buildings as objectified history in the Bourdieuan sense that is so important for our understanding of their role in social and spatial reproduction. Since corporate office towers are postmodern buildings *par excellence*, if Jameson is right about their cultural significance as being peculiarly ahistorical, shouldn't the dialectical processes of social space and physical space break down in precisely this case? I think, however, that Jameson's declarations as to the ahistoricity of postmodernist buildings are a trifle premature. Unarguably, they bear a different relationship to history than previous building types had. But a couple of decades of hindsight reveal that even postmodern office buildings can be periodized, and are routinely apprehended as

historically situated constructions. In Philadelphia, for example, the Commerce Square towers are frequently described as “very 80s” because of their extensive use of polished artificial stone and their characteristic “ears” with square-shaped cutaways. By comparison, the recently completed Cira Centre, just across the Schuylkill River, seems positively cutting edge—figuratively and literally. This austere glass-skinned shard eschews the “sampling” of early postmodern experiments and returns instead to an updated form of high modernism (unless this, too, is simply an extensive quotation of that style). Both Commerce Square and the Cira Centre share, however, a common stylistic feature, which has been a constant in architectural design since modernism, that form is ultimately dictated by what is technologically possible. Materials science and engineering have created the possibility for, say, the curved forms of a Frank O. Gehry building, which is sufficient justification for designing buildings that way. This imperative has constrained the ways in which the body interacts with postmodern buildings in a variety of ways, from altering our expectations as to door and window placement, to our fundamental ability to orient ourselves within the building, and its urban context.

Jameson himself bemoans the tendency for postmodernist structures to be disorienting, and sees it as an expression of the postmodern subject’s ill-fated effort to orient herself in the monetary and communicative networks of international capitalism.³⁴⁶ Jameson suggests that, as an antidote to this condition, a science of “cognitive mapping” should be developed, aimed at creating models of these networks within which we can rediscover our positions and orientations. In fact, Bourdieu’s social space model can provide many of the anticipated benefits of Jameson’s hitherto non-forthcoming science.

³⁴⁶ Jameson, 38-54.

And in fact, the COTDs that suggest the problem of disorientation to Jameson themselves illustrate the aptness of the Bourdieuan model. The symbolic effects of corporate office towers on a social space of distributed individuals and groups are apprehended, not only visually, but bodily as well. I will return to this point again in the next section, as I consider it to be a fact of major sociological significance and much overlooked by conventional postmodernist and critical theory analyses. The fortress-like street fronting transforms the body's engagement with the street, the sidewalk and the surrounding buildings. The views from the corner offices, or from the clubs and banquet halls on upper floors are silent commendations, while views of the towers from distant districts are silent injunctions, welcomed or resented, but in any case *received* directly by the body.

Social Space: The Symbolic Space of Global Corporate Culture

The image below represents the “global skyline”—a composite image collecting the tallest and most iconic buildings from around the world. According to Anthony King, the first images of this kind were produced in the late nineteenth century, when cities and countries first began to compete symbolically with one another on the basis of their architectural and engineering accomplishments.³⁴⁷ Images like this, whether actually compiled or simply imagined, are the closest thing to a “pure” physical manifestation of the symbolic space of global corporate culture. The salient feature is that each building strives to be the tallest and the most iconographically distinct, resulting in an array of

³⁴⁷ King, 8.

stylistically disparate structures (which nonetheless share some very important spatial features), an all-star version of what goes on in actual, spatially localized COTDs all over the world. It is important to keep in mind that this imaginary skyline represents the real symbolic space in which corporations compete by means of their architectural investments. The physical sites that these buildings actually occupy are always of secondary concern.



Figure 53. Global skyline. Source: Skyscraper Page (www.skyscraperpage.com) accessed March 10, 2009

And yet, corporate office towers do occupy actual locations in actual cities, with their own historical infrastructure, and, increasingly, their own local versions or segments of this global skyline. The hard edges that have become visible in many cities between the vernacular business district and the district of corporate office towers is the physical translation of the symbolic space of global corporate culture *usurping* the symbolic space of the old national and regional economy. The new symbolic space is even more perfectly worthy of the name, since it attempts to deal almost exclusively in symbolic capital, and specifically in iconographic capital. Guy Debord's insight that "the image has become the

final form of commodity reification”³⁴⁸ has become manifest in urban architecture in ways he could not have foreseen. The emergence of postmodernism as a dominant perspective in the architectural field supplies ample evidence of this. Sharon Zukin characterizes the recent changes in the city as the consumption of the “vernacular” by the “landscape of power.”³⁴⁹ In symbolic terms, her analysis suggests that vernacular districts come to function almost purely as signs *of* the vernacular, rather than as vernacular *signs*. The traditional uses of vernacular districts, and the perception of them that is generated, is in fact much different within the global city structure—they become retail consumption points for the moneyed classes.

But in spite of their aspirations, postmodern office towers are more than just image. Their lack of integration with the vernacular street plan is felt. The cheapness of the materials is felt. And, although it is crucial to keep in mind that these non-visual features are not felt universally, and that variations in *who* feels them and in just what way they do are central to their social effect, it is nonetheless a broadly recognizable trend that what counted towards architectural refinement in past generations—the inheritance of traditional forms and the skilled working of materials (all that falls under the classification of “handicraft”) has been replaced by a new standard, the production of striking, utterly unique images, which must at the same time paradoxically claim to be “timeless” triumphs of aesthetic creativity. These new conditions of success place constraints on the architectural field to produce a new kind of architect, who visualizes the conditions of success within their field precisely as the ability to produce striking and

³⁴⁸ Debord quoted in Clarke, 55.

³⁴⁹ Zukin, “The City as a Landscape of Power,” 197.

original images. Zukin summarizes it this way: “The primacy of visual consumption in the twentieth century fosters the social production of the image-makers, whose imagination is ruled by the economic value of both public and private display.”³⁵⁰

Clarke notes that deindustrialization and “the full flowering of the professionalization of architecture” are “not unrelated phenomena.”³⁵¹ This observation is of great significance. Once industrial production ceased to provide sufficient economic incentive for large-scale building projects, the architectural profession gradually learned to protect itself. The first way that it did so, following the flurry of classically modernistic building of the immediate postwar period (“redevelopment”), was to reject the paradigm of an international style, to expand the notion that form must follow function to include highly divergent understandings of function, and to bolster the autonomy of the discipline by producing an almost genealogical line of “name architects,” (Pei, Gehry, Libeskind, etc.). As I suggested above, we should resist Jameson’s interpretation that postmodernist architecture is completely unresponsive to any kind of traditionalism. Tradition is sustained in postmodern architecture, and thus in corporate office towers, not by the continuation of a vernacular idiom, but by the structural constraint that the space of global corporate culture is unconcerned with the internal revolutions of architecture, and demands a product that is, paradoxically, *recognizable* as revolutionary. The architectural field thus produces a great number of structures, designed by “non-masters”³⁵² which ape the visual impact of one or another of the name architects. And while being designed by a

³⁵⁰ Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 54.

³⁵¹ Clarke, 50.

³⁵² This is Garry Stevens’ term.

name architect certainly buys a great deal more cultural capital for a company, *looking* like it was is still the next best thing.

The prevailing contradictory state of affairs, that is, the coupled occurrence of the drab sameness that prevents the formation of a strong sense of place (known to geographers and urbanists as low “imageability”³⁵³) of the postmodern city on the one hand, and its attempt to become pure image on the other, is thus the result of at least two conditions: (1) the failure of postmodernism to overturn the non-visual features of modernism, and (2) of the intimate ties between the corporate and architectural fields, ties that simultaneously enable and undermine the autonomy of the architectural field. Clarke explains the first of these causes as continuity between modernism and postmodernism: “postmodernism has a legacy from modernism it has yet to contradict. The current fabrications of architects are solitary objects divorced from their subjects. We may no longer be talking of the unadorned cube as the aesthetic model, but still remaining are fragmented social relationships, different and yet similar to those of modernism.”³⁵⁴ Fragmentation allows for competition among architectural products—not possible for the identical towers envisioned by Le Corbusier, Pei, Mies, and built by Robert Moses, but this competition remains purely visual because of the continued rejection of vernacular urbanism as regressive. Jameson provides the example of the Skidmore, Owens & Merrill designed Wells Fargo Building, which is visually striking because of its unusual razor-like form and sharp angles that prevent one from successfully estimating its shape. As I suggested above, however, this replacement of the reference to the body with reference to

³⁵³ See Lynch, *The Image of the City*.

³⁵⁴ Clarke, 55.

vision can only be a *de jure* replacement, and never *de facto*, since the engagement between the body and its space cannot be designed away. Jameson argues that “we ourselves, the human subjects who happen into this new space, have not kept pace with [its] evolution; there has been a mutation in the object unaccompanied as yet by any equivalent mutation in the subject.”³⁵⁵ Jameson’s solution is to try to develop such a mutation, what he calls “cognitive mapping,” which will help us orient ourselves in the fragmentary postmodern landscape. Jameson misses something crucial, however, in that he overlooks the adaptive role of habitus with respect to the built environment, and the degree to which our knowledge of it is bodily knowledge. While Jameson is surely right that the postmodern city fails to produce a vivid and reliable image in the minds of its inhabitants, he misses the crucial fact that we quickly acquire, through kinesthetic adaptation, a practical knowledge of even the most Gehry-esque structures.³⁵⁶

As for the second condition, the strength of the ties between the corporate and architectural fields, it is worth considering the sense in which the architectural field is semi-autonomous with respect to the larger social space in which it is embedded. First of all, it is semi-autonomous because the conditions for success and failure within it are not wholly dependent on a monetized economy. Postmodernist structures that are selected for museums or memorials are assumed to succeed on a wholly aesthetic level, while buildings that labor purely for the economic benefit of a company and not for any symbolic rewards (such as office parks hidden away in the suburbs) are purely functional. Corporate office towers lie somewhere in between, as works of art and as productive

³⁵⁵ Jameson, 38.

³⁵⁶ This point will be revisited in Chapter 6.

workspaces. In office towers, however, architecture truly becomes an “economic world reversed,” since it is in them that the symbolic value won by the autonomous wing of the architectural field are sold to the corporate world in return for cash (as well as increased visibility).

Examples of Actor Groups	Habitus Grounded In
Local politicians	Public socialization through past party or community activism or machine politics; common sense based on political deal making and “fixing” or grassroots support and legitimacy
Private sector business managers	Socialization associated with entrepreneurialism, being businesslike, “getting things done,” ends justifying means, profitability, local embeddedness, business and property security; different values dominate in different sectors and vary with firm size and ownership relations
Public sector professionals (e.g., urban planners, accountants)	Codes of professional conduct; procedures heavily influenced by norms and expectations generated in the process of professional training and accreditation; common sense based on detachment, objectivity, and public service
Public sector bureaucrats	Bureaucratic knowledges; norms associated with accountability, hierarchy, record keeping, and surveillance; means predominate over ends; maintenance of organizational structure
Unelected public bodies (e.g., U.K. local Quangos)	Knowledges imported (mainly) from private sector, though with some public service elements; ends predominate over means; culture of confidentiality; culture of formal, legal (rather than democratic) accountability; common sense based on getting the job done
Community organizations	Quite variable but can include knowledges based in combination of concrete experience and abstract ideals; common sense frequently based on “us-them” or “David-and-Goliath” metaphors; cultures of self-help coupled to rhetorics of civil and social rights
Voluntary sector	Varied; frequently grounded in notions of charity or self-help; rhetoric of “serving the community”; knowledge base varies with size and type of

organization from amateurism and “muddling through” to highly professionalized

Figure 14. Painter’s summary of the habitus of Different Actor Groups in Urban Governance.
Source: Painter, 138

As discussed in Chapter 5, the dialectical interaction between social space and physical space is extensively mediated. Social space is translated into physical space only by the collective actions of a diverse array of players, from architects to developers, from corporations to zoning boards. Zukin suggests that one of the enabling factors in the creation of “landscapes of power”—among which we may count corporate office tower districts—is the creation of “public-private linkages,” *quid pro quo* arrangements between decision making parties such as “community representatives, developers’ attorneys, and staff members of city agencies and elected officials.”³⁵⁷ The successful negotiation of agreements between such diverse agencies is more easily comprehensible, however, when their particular habitus are identified. The habitus, which Bourdieu describes as the *modus operandi* of a social agent, is acquired by exposure to a given region in social space, and as such, it provides a clue to the ease or difficulty with which collective decisions are made. One might attempt to explain the creation of COTDs, and the edges they create with vernacular office districts, by appealing to a convergences and divergences among the specific types of habitus involved. Joe Painter provides a suggestive comparison of typical habitus characteristics among decision makers involved in urban development (Figure 2). Clearly the professional knowledges and common sense understandings of these different actor groups are widely divergent. The most familiar divergence is perhaps the predominance of ends over means for private sector business

³⁵⁷ Zukin, “The City as Landscape of Power,” 209.

managers versus the predominance of means over ends for public sector bureaucrats. Knowledge sets are also imported from the divergent sources of professional training, the private sector and concrete experience. But despite these sources of conflict, the most powerful actor groups involved share an enormous commonality of habitus. Virtually all of them have received a great deal of professional training and share a similar common educational background up to the point of specialized postgraduate studies, meaning that they are not nearly as distant in social space as they are from the vast majority of agents *not* involved in the decision making process. This proximity in social space, along with the widespread acceptance of something akin to the redevelopment *illusio* mentioned above, enables public-private linkages despite divergences of specific habitus. These “deeper” structures of the habitus are highly relevant to the decision making process of urban development, since often times the “real” negotiations occur apart from the details of official agreements, in the ability of different professionals to cooperate casually with one another. The only group with major stakes in the autonomy of architectural and design aesthetics are some of the public sector professionals. Otherwise, questions of architectural form may be largely dictated by the internal dynamics of the architectural field, leaving those in charge of actually producing the COTD the “objective” point of view necessary to select projects based on a confident assessment of their symbolic capital.

Center City Philadelphia: Position and Trajectory

I began this Chapter with a description of the edges and transitions between districts in Philadelphia. I'd like to close it by returning to them, now with some new theoretical tools. Philadelphia may seem a curious choice for studying a process so closely tied to the global economy and the global cities phenomenon. After all, Philadelphia is hardly recognized as one of the major players in international commerce and finance. There are a number of good reasons for the choice, however. One reason is that, despite the fact that Philadelphia does not dominate the global economic space, it does hold a definite position in that space. Philadelphia is a dominated city in the hierarchy of global cities, struggling for recognition by the major players, and as a consequence it has been actively producing physical and symbolic spaces that are aimed at satisfying the conditions of entry into the small world of dominant global cities. The most obvious example of this is the Liberty Place towers, which reference the iconic forms of the Chrysler and Empire State buildings in Manhattan. So, while Philadelphia is not a dominant city in the global corporate culture, it does aspire to be one, and thus possesses a determinate position, both an ideal and an actual trajectory, in that social space. Philadelphia's place on the fringe of global corporate culture makes it particularly interesting in terms of its effort to master the economic and symbolic conditions of entry into that specific game. Thus, whereas in fact foreign investment in Philadelphia is spatially distributed throughout the greater region (this is due to a popular strategy among second-tier cities to improve their marketable identity)³⁵⁸ foreign investment in symbolic capital is almost entirely concentrated in Center City.

³⁵⁸ See Hodos.

In a deeply insightful article, Clarke argues that “the shift in architectural philosophy from modernism to postmodernism reflects a profound transition in advanced capitalism and accordingly in the production and control of space and space relations.”³⁵⁹ Clarke identifies creative destruction as an urban process characteristic of the convergence of postmodern architecture, the investment of city governments in redevelopment following the decline of the industrial city, and the growing competition of cities for recognition in the culture of global capitalism. Combined with the Bourdieuan outline of creative destruction above, we can distill its essential properties in to the following formula: the symbolically potent (the investors hope) building type—skyscrapers with large footprints and typically a single-use ground floor—encounters the economic conditions (provided by the city) as well as the material symbolic conditions (provided by the existing urban context) for gaining access to a dominant position in the social space of global capitalism, which can then be exchanged for, or used to secure, economic dominance. This strategy is being played out on the ground in many cities that lack the prior status as commercial and financial centers that would allow them to benefit from connectivity within that network. So instead, they adopt the symbolic structures associated with it, hoping that recognition of those structures will result in a trajectory towards a more diversified asset structure in the social space of global corporate culture. This is the strategy that investors in Philadelphia’s urban infrastructure have in mind.

Like many American manufacturing cities, Philadelphia steadily declined as an industrial center following the Great Depression. Since the establishment of the Redevelopment Authority in 1946, a variety of plans to revitalize the city have been

³⁵⁹ Clarke, 48.

implemented, usually concentrating on the downtown area (“Center City”). These plans became increasingly geared towards redefining Philadelphia as a service-based economy rather than a manufacturing-based one.³⁶⁰ In 1961, city planner Edmund Bacon and architect Vincent Kling designed Penn Center, an assemblage of office towers and (mostly underground) retail shops adjacent to City Hall. This project was explicitly aimed at luring companies back from the suburbs to the center of town.³⁶¹ Bacon also designed a similar project at Market East, on the other side of City Hall. Both plans were guided by Bacon’s design ideology, which “mixed the bulldoze-and-rebuild philosophy of urban renewal with the tentative beginnings of the historic preservation movement.”³⁶² The major spike in investment in the corporate office tower district came in the 1980s, however, with the implementation of the projects of the city planning commission under Major Wilson Goode. Robert A. Beauregard describes that building boom:

West of City Hall, new office construction exceeded in scale any office development that had previously occurred (Marlowe 1984). Low-rise commercial buildings were purchased for exorbitant prices and replaced by high-rise offices. From 1976 to 1984, approximately 8.5 million square feet of office space was added to the city's stock, 29 percent of the 1976 inventory. Almost all this space was located in Center City. An area of three- to six-story buildings was being replaced by twenty- to thirty-story structures, including a competition to dominate the skyline and at least equal the height of One Liberty Place, the tower that set off the Penn's hat controversy.³⁶³

While the bulk of new building occurred along and around the Market Street corridor, isolated towers rose elsewhere in Center City, opting for a monopoly on local symbolic capital, rather than participating in the profits of occupation offered by the core of the

³⁶⁰ See Adams, et. al., *Philadelphia*, 3-29.

³⁶¹ See Artigas and Wang website, “Vincent Kling and the Penn Center”

³⁶² Paul Goldberger quoted in Pogrebin.

³⁶³ Beauregard, 227.

corporate office tower district. The Penn Mutual Insurance Company tower, for example, became the only high rise building in an otherwise mid to low-rise district, thereby securing for itself a great deal of unshared symbolic capital. Interestingly, this building is also Philadelphia's most visible façade-ectomy, incorporating the 1838 façade of the Pennsylvania Fire Insurance Co. building that it replaced. A later outlier is the Cira Centre near 30th Street Station, which maximizes its considerable iconographic appeal by placing itself near the Margin—but undeniably apart from—the core of the office tower district.

These buildings are rare exceptions, however, and the majority of construction in Center City Philadelphia adheres well to the cautious core-to-periphery movement noticed in other COTDs. Older, core towers such as the original Penn Center buildings are now overshadowed by much taller, much less dated-looking structures, and surrounded by them on all sides. Newer towers position themselves at the edges of the established corporate office tower district, penning in the older ones and attempting to monopolize proximity (and, when possible, adjacency) to vernacular district. Two Liberty Place, for example, pushed the COTD south to Chestnut Street. More recently, the Comcast Center has pushed the northern boundary to Arch Street where it abuts alongside the historic Arch Street Presbyterian Church and stands adjacent to a rare surviving art deco skyscraper. In many cases, the symbolic efforts of these developments are announced in the names themselves: Liberty Place and Commerce Square, for example, attempt to invoke both an exalted sentiment and a nostalgic sense of place and centrality in their monikers. Also obvious are the ways in which these buildings attempt to lock in their trajectory in social space by making postmodernist architectural

references to iconic and “timeless” office towers of the past: New York’s Chrysler Building and Empire State building are both mimicked by Liberty Place, and the Ziggurat form of the Bell Atlantic Tower echoes the stepped rooftops of many New York Skyscrapers (a zoning requirement that had its origins in the desire that rows of tall buildings not block out the light and hardly a requirement in Philadelphia which is rich in underused semi-public plazas).

One trend that is immediately visible is that the biggest corporate players tend to follow the symbolic capital as newer, taller buildings are constructed. If they can, companies seek to migrate to the sites where symbolic capital is most highly concentrated. Several Philadelphia-based companies have recently relocated to the Comcast Center and Cira Centre buildings from older towers like Liberty Place and Commerce Square, the dominant towers of their day. Predictably, producer services continue to be the fastest growing industries in Philadelphia, while nearly all branches of manufacturing continue to decline.³⁶⁴

An interesting complication in the pattern is the role of law firms. Although law firms occupy space in every major office building in Philadelphia, only the most prestigious firms (relative prestige as indicated by position in the Vault.com rankings, for example) rent space in the buildings that dominate the skyline symbolically. Corporate tenants occupy the lion's share of the most prized buildings, with highly prestigious law firms edging in as minor tenants. As one moves down the ladder in terms of symbolic capital, the proportion of corporations to law firms reverses, so that at the bottom of the ladder one finds office towers that are symbolically noncompetitive and are almost

³⁶⁴ Office of the City Controller, City of Philadelphia, *Philadelphia: A New Urban Direction*, 22.

wholly occupied by law firms. So it appears that while law firms are concerned with, and seek to benefit from the symbolic capital associated with an address in a dominant tower, only the most prestigious firms seek to (or are able to) "play the game" of office-tower one-upsmanship along with the corporate tenants.³⁶⁵

Until very recently, all major construction in Philadelphia's corporate office tower district was commercial, thus justifying the designation I have been giving it. The last few years have seen an upswing in residential development in the same district, however. Interestingly, these new residential buildings follow the architectural pattern of the corporate office tower to almost to the letter—they are visually indistinguishable from the headquarters of a major corporation. This trend is significant because the transformations in residential space in Philadelphia are structurally interdependent with the transformations in commercial space. Although specific inner-city neighborhoods were gentrified in the 1970s and 1980s, the majority of the residential infrastructure continued to decline. Specifically, neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the CBD were gentrified, creating a zone of middle-class residential neighborhoods separating the CBD from the blighted districts. The most recent development, the creation of residential skyscrapers within the COTD represents a spatial reconvergence of domestic and professional life, drawing together in physical space a class that has long distinguished itself in social space. The buildings that they occupy constitute an interesting addendum to the type of lifestyle spaces that Zukin analyzed in *Loft Living*. These towers contribute to the creative destruction of the urban core in precisely the same way that office towers themselves do,

³⁶⁵ It would be interesting to look at some comparative evidence of the movement rates of lawfirms versus corporations throughout the corporate office tower district.

by appealing to iconographic distinction and proximity to symbolically rich vernacular districts while contributing to a street-level sense of place entirely at odds with those districts.

Conclusion

The transitions felt (in importantly different ways) by agents traversing the landscape of Philadelphia are the effects in physical space of a very complex series of social differentiations. The most saliently felt transitions are located at the physical sites of social struggles being actively pursued. The Bourdieuan framework for understanding the social and physical spaces of the contemporary city is effective in a number of ways. In this case, the rootedness of the framework in economic models provides an appropriate explanation of the way the built environment is transformed by transactions in social space, both in terms of economic capital and cultural capital, and in terms of the conversion and reconversion of one into the other. In other words, the economic aspects of the model enable it to explain *change* in an economical (no pun intended) way. The flipside of this feature, the ability of the model to explain the *stability* of social systems will be the focus of the following chapter. That aspect of the framework is equally important here, though, since, as we have seen, the geographical distribution of habitus is effective in the production the limited collective of actors involved in decision making with respect to urban development, and through that power, reorganize physical space to reflect the social order.

The kind of transformation that we have observed in the boundary zones of the COTD is not entirely unlike what Hegelian theorists have long thought of as “determinate negation” (*Aufhebung*). The liquidation of symbolic capital cannot be fully accounted for apart from its reemergence in, or rather its conversion to, another form. Transformation—and not merely stable reproduction—is fundamental to the Bourdieuvian understanding of social dynamics. This feature of his model is frequently missed because of the importance it places on notions of stability and reproduction. It is nonetheless an essential component. More than this, however, the transformation of symbolic space must be grasped in its relation to that of the physical space that produced it and that it functions to reproduce. Along the edges of office tower districts around the world, capital is being drawn from the older streets and buildings—the preferred mode of objectification of the old national economy—and preserved in shining towers of glass and steel, a style that has become the gold standard of symbolic investment in the global age. The central point here is that the diachronic transformation of the symbolic space must be grasped in its relation to that of the physical space that produced it and that it functions to reproduce.

CHAPTER 6

DECONSTRUCTIONIST ARCHITECTURE AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

Introduction

As the previous chapter confronted an instance of social transformation, the present chapter concerns itself with an instance of social stability. The stability exhibited in this case is surprising, since it asserts itself in spite of the deliberate, concerted efforts of a group of professionals to initiate revolutionary social change, highlighting the difficulty agents and groups of agents face when confronted with structural processes of reproduction. Such structural processes are often, as in the present case, misrecognized as simple effects of ideology or tradition. Two questions motivate the present investigation. First is the question as to the status of deconstruction as an architectural style. Second is the question as to this architecture's social function, considered both as an effect of the field and as an effect of its products, i.e., architectural works. With regard to the first question, I will argue that deconstruction has, despite its adherents' adamant claims to the contrary, demonstrably acquired all of the hallmarks of a style (or, to employ the metaphor of writing favored by the deconstructionists, a genre), and occupies an elevated position in the architectural field, eliminating the need for members of the one-time architectural avant-garde to defend their design choices from attacks within the field. As for the second question, I aim to show that architectural deconstruction has failed to produce its desired social effects on any but the most limited scale, and has instead

contributed, perhaps unwittingly, to the reproduction of the existing social order. This contribution has been made through the collective practices of the architectural community as a whole, which have effected the profession itself as well as social structures more generally, and is best considered as an integrated set of field effects. It is my further claim that these two issues, that of the consecration of the architectural avant-garde and the deconstructionists distorted vision of the social effects of its actions, cannot be adequately understood apart from one another.

The first section utilizes Bourdieuan field theory to argue that deconstruction has the disciplinary status of a fully legitimized style, to identify the structural properties of the architectural and related fields that made this consecration possible, and to identify the unconscious strategies employed by the deconstructivist habitus to pursue a trajectory of institutionalization. This section relies heavily on the insightful application of Bourdieuan ideas to the architectural field by Garry Stevens, as well as on some of Bourdieu's own comments about the structural behavior of avant-garde movements in general. The second section begins by analyzing the deconstructionist view of the utilization of architecture for social change, considering contributions by Jacques Derrida, Bernard Tschumi, Charles Jencks, Peter Eisenman and Daniel Libeskind. My main critique of this theory is that it fails to take an adequately reflexive view of architectural practice, and therefore inevitably produces social effects that it does not recognize, perhaps justifying its negative reception by architectural and lay critics alike. This section then proceeds to outline deconstruction's contribution to the autonomy of the architectural field, and consequently to the reproduction of social relations within the field of power and social space as a whole. The chapter concludes by considering the

consequences of deconstruction as an architectural dominant.

How Deconstruction Became a Style

Deconstructionist architects uniformly and emphatically disavow participation in an architectural style. “Deconstruction has nothing to do with style,” says Peter Eisenman, one of the principal architects of deconstruction, “it has to do with ideology.”³⁶⁶ There is a grain of truth in this assertion. In the early years of the movement, deconstructionist architects were recognized as such by their piecemeal subscription to deconstructionist theory, as well as by their experimentation with techniques of disruption, fragmentation, de-centering and de-familiarization. From a visual point of view, it may appear as though there is no evidence of stylistic unity among deconstructionist projects. And in truth the “signature styles” of the architects are observed to differ considerably from one another. Nonetheless, one quickly gains the ability, with a little practice, to reliably identify a deconstructionist building. Nikoli Salingaros suggests that what unites the deconstructionist style is its high degree of disorganized complexity (as opposed to the organized complexity that Charles Jencks attributes to it). What makes deconstruction a style, what separates it formally from all previous architectural styles and what its instances share in common, is the willful distortion, fragmentation and inversion of traditional forms. Thus the visual similarity between a Frank Gehry and a Daniel Libeskind building is noticed not simply through the direct comparison of the two buildings with one another, but by taking note of the similar

³⁶⁶ Eisenmann, “An *Architectural Design* Interview by Charles Jencks,” 57.

results of attempting to contextualize them within the full range of historical and contemporary architectural products. To see that styles are historical categorizations, it is sufficient to realize that, within the period of Art Nouveau building, two designs might appear to have little in common, but are today readily recognized as belonging to the same style. It is not the existence of specific similarities between them that suggests their belonging in the same category, but rather the specific differences between the two buildings, taken together, and other (prior, subsequent and contemporaneous) building types. Stylistic coherence is not purely a function of common formal elements, but of conventional categorization and historically developed ways of seeing. It would not be an indefensible view to suggest that there is in fact more variation within a given style than there is between that style and another style.

The proof of deconstruction's unity as an architectural style, however, does not rest entirely on our ability to recognize its instances as such, but depends also on the temporal and professional proximity of its practitioners. Most of all it depends the concerted behaviors of those practitioners and the patterns of response elicited in the architectural profession as well as in society as a whole. The deconstructionist style is introduced, then, as an explanatory substrate, necessary in order for critical and theoretical discourse about it to proceed. Even if it cannot be agreed upon at the present moment that deconstruction constitutes a style from a formal or visual point of view, it demonstrably constitutes an *effective unity* from a sociological point of view. I am convinced, moreover, that once deconstructionist architecture's social effects—that is, its revolutionizing of the architectural field and its consequent stabilization of social space as a whole—are recognized, the formal and visual similarities among its products will

become apparent. Apart from the theoretical unity among its members (which is nonetheless categorically denied by the members themselves and re-phrased in analogous terms) deconstruction as an architectural style can best be understood by tracing the trajectory it has followed through the architectural field. It is the coherence of this pattern of behavior, with its several identifiable strategies, that provides the best argument for the existence of a deconstructionist style.

Deconstructionist architects routinely declare that their work is entirely personal, that they do not pay attention to popular or critical opinion. Of course, architects are by no means unique in their vocal declarations of nonconformity. As in any artistic field, regardless of what alliances and oppositions contribute to the discourse of practice, there remains an overarching need to distinguish one's own projects valuable for wholly intrinsic reasons. Thus, paradoxically, Peter Eisenman expresses a universal truth of architecture when he asserts, "Architecture is made by architects, for themselves—I do my work for me; there are no other 'people' for the architect."³⁶⁷ The attitude among architects has not always been quite so solipsistic, of course. An explicit and at times heartfelt humanism has been a major component of architectural discourse from Geoffrey Scott to Le Corbusier, and can be found throughout the writings of the deconstructionists, as we shall see below. But increasingly the humanistic impulse has been stifled, sometimes against the primary instincts of the architect, in the interest of establishing and maintaining artistic distinctiveness. This is most easily seen in the frustrations and refusals of architects when confronted with the demands of external collaborators, from civic organizations to developers. The partial eclipse of humanistic and cooperative

³⁶⁷ Cuff, "Seven New York Architects and their People," 65.

concerns by solipsistic individualism is certainly grounded in eighteenth century notions of creative genius, and was given a major boost in the discourse of iconoclasm associated with the modernist movement. The sociologist Herbert J. Gans has dubbed this proclivity of architects to subordinate the concerns of clients and collaborators to their own complete creative control the “fountainhead syndrome,” after the Ayn Rand’s novel extolling radical individualism. This mentality combines the architect’s “urge to remake society through building”³⁶⁸ with the belief that only the self-determined architect knows best how to do so. There are great symbolic profits to be secured by establishing one’s own work as a world unto itself, which can therefore legislate the aesthetic norms of the profession. Frank Gehry’s ongoing project of developing a “new language for architecture” is a case in point. Such iconoclasm would seem to preclude the possibility of participation in a widespread architectural movement. And indeed, deconstructionist architects routinely characterize their work as more than just the architectural expression of deconstructionist philosophy, and claim not to see any similarities between their own work and the work of other architects labeled deconstructionists. The virtue of a sociological approach to the movement, however, is that the conscious intentions of the players need not be mobilized as evidence or invoked as causes. It would be difficult to fix exactly to what extent the emergence of deconstruction as a dominant architectural genre is the product of conscious strategizing on the part of architects. The most theoretically engaged participants, such as Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi, explicitly ally themselves with the deconstructivist movement in philosophy. But external contributors to the architectural discourse, i.e., architectural critics and exhibition curators

³⁶⁸ Gans, 304.

such as Charles Jencks and Philip Johnson, perform much of the work of creating such alliances. One effect of these contributions is that the work of architects discussed and promoted becomes part of the alliance without the explicit declaration of the architects themselves.

The architect-turned-sociologist Garry Stevens has performed a large scale Bourdieuan study of the architectural profession in the United States. I will be relying heavily on his work in my discussion of the trajectory and related field effects of deconstructionist architecture.

As a field of cultural production, the architectural field forms a subcomponent of the dominated portion of the dominant class. It is thus a part of the field of power, standing in a relation of dependant opposition to the money economy. It maintains its position in the field of power by distinguishing itself from related activities and occupations, such as building, surveying, engineering, and so on. For the most part, architecture achieves the desired distance from these activities by allying itself with the arts: what makes a building a work of architecture rather than a mere construction is its embodiment of some form of artistic or cultural signification.³⁶⁹ To say that architecture is an art, however, is not enough. In addition to identifying the boundaries of the field with respect to related activities, the architectural field is also defined “by its position in the hierarchy of the arts.”³⁷⁰ In fact, it is typically counted as one of the more prestigious of the arts, more so, for example, than film or photography.

³⁶⁹ Stevens notes that architecture as a profession means very different things in different countries, and its boundaries with respect to building, surveying, etc., which is to say its jurisdiction within the practice of building, varies considerably geographically. See Stevens, 27-31.

³⁷⁰ Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production,” 328.

Despite its alliance with the arts, architecture is traditionally counted among the professions as well, and so is also constructed as a field in terms of its position in the hierarchy of professions. Here, architecture is near the bottom of the hierarchy, architects being more lowly regarded than doctors and lawyers. So while architecture is dominant among the arts, it is dominated among the professions, and so finds itself in a position of unique tension as a discipline. Bourdieu divides all fields of cultural production into a dominant and a dominated fraction, called the field of restricted production and the field of large-scale production (or “mass production”),³⁷¹ respectively. Historically, the existence of this division in fields of cultural production is seen as the result of the behavior of holders of large amounts of specific cultural capital in response to the commodification of their fields following the industrial revolution. Avant-garde movements in architecture thus arose contemporaneously with the questioning of representation in painting and the “de-novelization of the novel.”³⁷² The result of this internal self-division of the fields of cultural production is that in each, there is a body of practitioners who make their living by producing products for mass consumption, e.g., pulp novels and pop music, and thus possess a higher proportion of economic capital to cultural capital, and a body of practitioners who avoid such pursuits in order to participate in the struggle to define the dominant forms of symbolic capital within the field. Architects who design shopping centers and subdivisions are thus part of the field of mass production, whereas architects who garner high profile commissions like opera houses and government centers, or who, more often, produce drawings and models of

³⁷¹ This is Stevens’ term.

³⁷² Bourdieu, “The Market of Symbolic Goods,” 22.

such projects, constitute the field of restricted production, the products of which are, in Bourdieu's words, "pure, abstract and esoteric."³⁷³ Within the field of restricted production, there exists a further division into dominant and subordinate producers, as well as a division within the dominant producers into an establishment and a "consecrated" avant-garde. Stevens summarizes this organization in the diagram below.

³⁷³³⁷³ Ibid., 13.

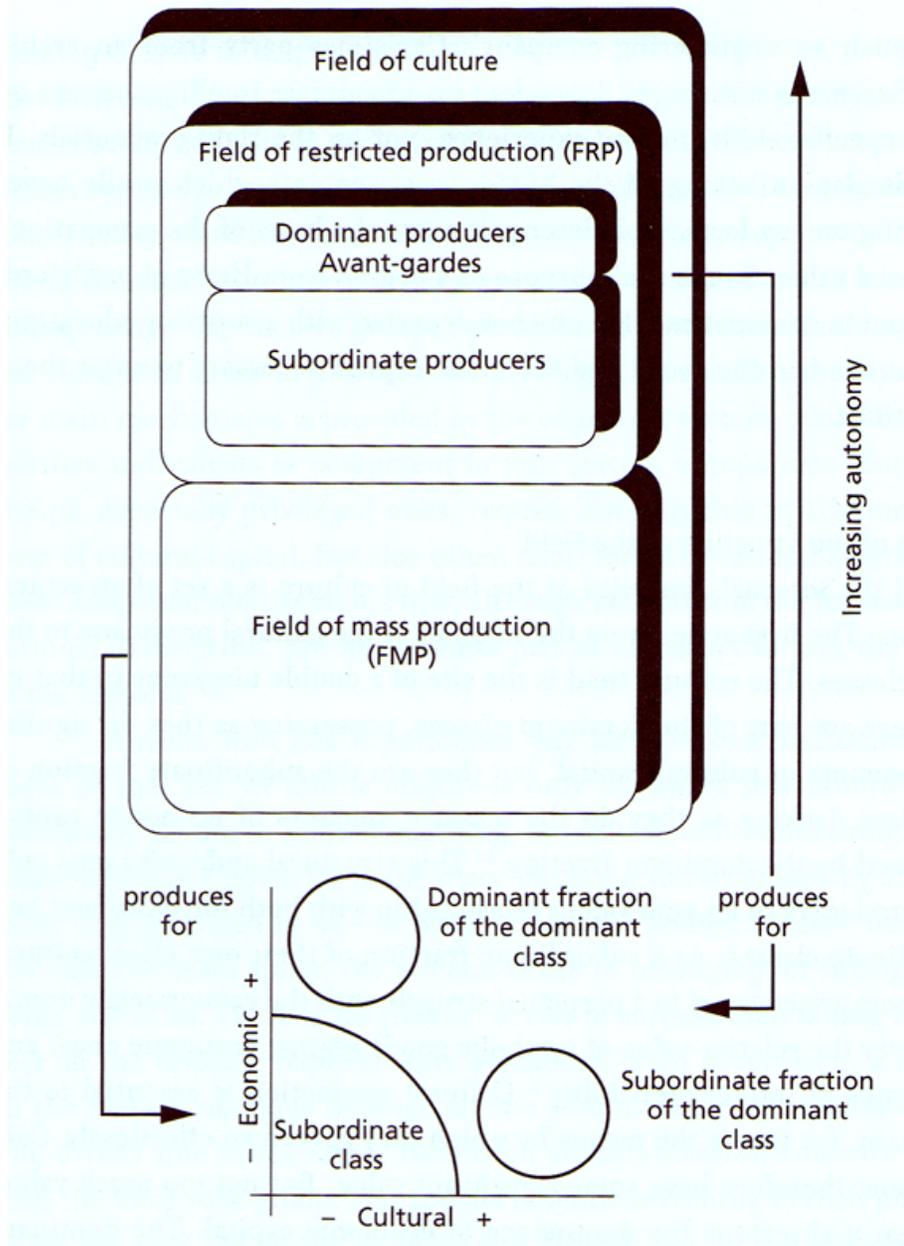


Figure 65. Stevens' diagram of the architectural field (generalized here simply as the “field of culture”) in relation to social space as a whole. Source: Stevens, 82

In a field of cultural production, patterns of typical trajectory types recur with near-periodic regularity. The most important such pattern is the typical trajectory of a revolutionary movement from a subordinate to a dominant position in the field of

restricted production. Since the avant-garde movements of the nineteenth century, it is common for this trajectory to be completed in a single generation. The trajectory itself amounts to the emergence of a style out of the eclectic, disunified avant-gardes of the subordinate fragment, followed by the recognition of that style as the “consecrated avant-garde” of the dominant fragment, and finally the style’s achievement of the status of the dominant establishment. In Stevens’ diagram, the trajectory describes an arc from the bottom left to the middle right, where it remains for the greater part of a given architect’s career, before beginning a gradual displacement towards the upper left. The two most recent iterations of this pattern in the architectural field were the displacement of the modernists by the postmodernists (Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe by Robert Venturi, Michael Graves, etc.) and the subsequent displacement of the postmodernists by the deconstructionists. Stevens’ account of the rise of the International Style in the early twentieth century is instructive for understanding the strategies of the deconstructionism, between which there exist a number of parallels. According to Stevens, the modernists were able to ally themselves with the dominated classes by asserting an explicit social program for their buildings. The ideology of functionalism, whether or not it actually addressed the needs of the users of their buildings, provided an incendiary critique of the social ineptitude of the conservative architectural establishment, associated with divisions between suburban mansions for the upper class and cramped tenements for the poor. This can be understood as one of the “uses of the people” that Bourdieu considers an important strategy in social struggles, and underlines the observation that, in the long run, concern for the autonomy of one’s field renders populist movements unpopular. Stevens cites the divided reception of Tom Wolfe’s critique of modernist architecture, *From*

Bauhaus to Our House, which was a great popular success but was vehemently opposed and ridiculed by the modernist architects themselves, who, by the 1960s, constituted the establishment. This aspect of the modernist revolution laid the groundwork, however, for the attitude of architectural authority, that if the people are dissatisfied with the products, it is the fault of the people, and not of the architecture. This attitude prevails to this day amongst producers in the field of restricted production. The Bourdieuan point illustrated here is that avant-garde revolutions are always partial, in that they never seek to undermine a field entirely, but only to replace the conditions of legitimacy and success within the field with the inherent characteristics of their own work. For such revolutions to be successful, avant-gardists from the subordinate fraction of the field must come together in a unified movement, however informal, in opposition to the prevailing authorities and terms of value.

Two properties of fields of cultural production are essential to Stevens' account of the architectural field. The first of these is the semi-autonomous status of the field, especially the sub-field of restricted production. In architectural practice, this means that, because the cultural capital that has currency in architecture is specific to the field, the success or failure of an architect depends on the recognition of his or her peers. What sets the field of restricted production apart from the field of mass production is precisely that, in the latter, buildings are designed for consumers, whereas in the former, buildings are designed for one's architectural peers, a practice which cumulatively results in the specific forms of capital relevant to the field. The autonomy of the architectural field is more precarious than in the other arts because of the interference of clients and consultants in the design process. If the "dynamics of the architectural field are driven by

symbolic concerns and the quest to achieve reputation through the production of great architecture,³⁷⁴ the symbolic capital sought after only seldom finds substantiation in built form. More often, it is accumulated in the form of designs, drawings and theoretical discourse produced for architectural competitions. The second property of fields that Stevens cites is the tendency of the dynamics of the architectural field to resemble the dynamics of the religious field as Bourdieu analyses it. Central to this resemblance is the persistence of the analogy between struggles for cultural dominance and struggles for religious dominance. In his essay on Max Weber and the religious field,³⁷⁵ Bourdieu treated charisma as a form of symbolic capital that enabled prophets to undermine the authority of established priests and institute new conditions for religious authority. Bourdieu later observed a generalized form of this strategy to govern revolutions in fields of cultural production:

In the field of restricted production, each change at any one point in the space of positions objectively defined by their difference, their *écart*, induces a generalized change—which means that one should not look for a specific *site* of change. It is true that the initiative of change falls almost by definition to the newcomers, i.e., the youngest, who are also those least endowed with specific capital: in a universe in which to exist is to differ, i.e., to occupy a distinct, distinctive position, they must assert their difference, get it known and recognized, get themselves known and recognized (“make a name for themselves”), by endeavoring to impose new modes of thought and expression, out of key with the prevailing modes of thought and with the *doxa*, and therefore bound to disconcert the orthodox by their “obscurity” and “pointlessness”. The fact remains that every new position, in asserting itself as such, determines a displacement of the whole structure and that, by the logic of action and reaction, it leads to all sorts of changes in the *prises de position* of the occupants of the other positions.³⁷⁶

Deconstruction as an architectural style thus does not imply a unified front, as on a

³⁷⁴ Stevens, 95.

³⁷⁵ Bourdieu, “Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field.”

³⁷⁶ Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production,” 338.

battlefield, so much as a diffuse displacement within the field. Its proponents are unified only in what they attack, namely the official bodies of consecration, the parts of the establishment that authorize and legitimate religious practice, since “competition for success is better interpreted as competition for consecration.”³⁷⁷ This pattern is repeated very clearly in each revolution of the architectural field. The particular form that this pattern has taken in each of the last three architectural revolutions, however, has been widely divergent. In general, it can be said that while the current generation of prophets avoid the strategies of their immediate predecessors, the strategies of *their* predecessors are fair game.

As “heresiarchs” prophesizing the coming architecture, the deconstructionists employed several strategies to secure consecration within the field. These strategies exploited the existing structure of the architectural field, as well as its relation to other fields in the field of power, usually playing on the structures of dominance and subordination within *those* fields. The deconstructionist strategies can be seen retrospectively as conditions for the possibility of the consecration of the deconstructionist avant-garde. Of course, there was never any guarantee of success. But for a small group of previously unaffiliated avant-gardists, the theoretical platform of deconstruction enabled them to establish a number of preconditions for the transformation of their field simultaneously. Stevens lists them as follows:

1. The theory had already proved effective in overthrowing an established avant-garde in another field.
2. There was an established market of cultural consumers.
3. It had the potential to enhance the field’s autonomy.

³⁷⁷ Stevens, 99.

4. Decon[structionism] originated in a field with a social structure homologous to architecture.
5. Decon[structionism] requires a substantial amount of symbolic capital to implement.³⁷⁸

The field in which deconstruction had already proven itself as an instrument for avant-garde revolution was literary criticism. Deconstructivist literary critics were able to subvert the established body of practitioners in their field—notably those associated with the New Criticism and structuralism—by revealing the propensity for a politically totalitarian logocentrism inherent in their mode of practice. The presence of Derrida and other leaders of French critical thought at a number of prestigious American universities during the 1980s, as well as the development of the Yale School of deconstructionist theorists, contributed greatly to the legitimacy of deconstruction in literary criticism.³⁷⁹

The deconstructionist revolution in literary criticism was available as a model for an analogous revolution in architecture, and its success ameliorated the risk that the deconstructionist architects would otherwise have run. As Stevens says, “most of the work of valorizing it had already been done—the architectural avant-garde merely had to import it.”³⁸⁰ Stevens’ first point, that a model for a deconstructionist revolution already existed in the case of literary criticism, is intimately connected with his second one, that a market existed for deconstructionist architecture, since it was the prior legitimization of deconstruction in literary theory that prepared the cultural consumer for the unique mode of aesthetic vision required to appreciate deconstructionist architecture. There existed a demand, then, for deconstructed works of architecture even prior to the introduction of

³⁷⁸ Stevens, 113.

³⁷⁹ See Cullen, 17-30.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

the initial products.

Stevens' third point, that deconstruction had the potential to enhance the field's autonomy, is of central importance. Since avant-garde revolutions must always remain partial, it is crucial that the aesthetic and conceptual innovations that one successfully manages to introduce stop short of subverting the basic conditions for the existence of the field. Avant-garde revolutions, whatever anti-establishment ideologies they may ostensibly embrace, nonetheless seek to amass *specific* capital, for which their specific field remains the only source. Therefore, the field's autonomy must be preserved, and even enhanced, while the field's favored version of symbolic capital is replaced. Deconstruction promised to enhance the autonomy of the architectural field by divorcing it in every possible way from commercial and practical interests. Its predecessor, postmodernism, had by the 1980s succumbed entirely to the economic lures designing large commercial projects, and the products of the field of restricted production were becoming indistinguishable from those of the field of mass production. Moreover, the reintroduction of ornament and classicism into the repertoire of design had forfeited one of the major gains that the modernists had won for the field's autonomy, namely protection from the criticism of popular taste. Postmodernism's efforts to "correct" the ascetic excesses of modernism created the opportunity for the deconstructionists to save the architectural field from itself. Their strategy was to appropriate the proven modernist strategy of promising a socially responsive architecture while withholding the tools for understanding how that architecture was to function. The theoretical discourse of deconstruction was perhaps the best possible garb in which the new architecture could be clothed, since the esoteric nature of the language and the obscurity of the concepts

protected the new form of cultural capital from becoming egalitarian and therefore devalued as capital. The discourse of deconstruction possesses a certain cult value. It is a specialist idiom, incomprehensible to the uninitiated. Highly technical aspects of the discourse, arising from structural linguistics, are combined with ordinary words that have been transformed so as to be intelligible only to those possessed of an intimate knowledge of the deconstructionist idiom (“spacing,” “difference,” “presence”). The discourse of deconstruction has the further virtue that its assertions, activities and products are never falsifiable on theoretical grounds. A building, like a text, can be deconstructed in any number of different ways, by inverting and collapsing its familiar structures. This is a less vexing problem for philosophy or criticism because one knows to look for the hallmark of a successful deconstruction, namely the uncovering of an inherent logocentrism by means of the deconstructionist technique. But in the case of architecture, the conditions of success and failure are entirely vague, and if the interpretations of the architects themselves are to be believed, a deconstructionist building is successful so long as it produces an effect of disharmony, disruption and defamiliarization. For Tschumi, a building is successful as long as it reveals to us the allegedly ubiquitous disjunction between form and function. Beyond this, aesthetic or functional criteria are irrelevant. For Eisenman, a building must exploit the “syntax” of spatial forms to produce what Thomas Patin has described as an “aporia.”³⁸¹ The confusion and discomfort that users often experience in the resulting space is taken a sign that spatially inscribed hierarchies of power are being successfully deconstructed. The upshot of these criteria is that once the deconstructionist avant-garde becomes a

³⁸¹ Patin, 92.

legitimate mode of architectural practice, it is highly protected against subversion, both from within the field and from outside of it, since dissatisfaction with a building can always be interpreted as a mark of success.

Steven's fourth point, concerning the structural homology between the architectural and philosophical fields, should be understood as referring specifically to the similarity between architecture and French, not American, philosophy. Stevens outlines the similarities between the practitioners of architecture and the typical traits of French intellectuals, and contrasts them with the traits of Anglo-American intellectuals in order to establish this homology. The major characteristics that unite the field of architecture with the French intellectual field are the emphasis on rational theorizing (as opposed to empirical "bookkeeping"), the emphasis on style as an end in itself, the highly charismatic and publicly visible nature of the fields' leaders, and the high degree of cultivation associated with the practitioners. In comparison, the Anglo-American intellectual field emphasizes empiricism, a lack of concern for style (other than transparency of meaning), possesses few charismatic or visible figures, and is associated with a lesser degree of cultivation. It therefore makes sense for architects to model their strategies on those employed by agents and groups that have been successful in dominating the French intellectual scene rather than their American counterparts. The pursuit of French philosophy by architects, as well as the enthusiasm of French intellectuals for deconstructionist architecture (including Gilles Deleuze, Paul Virilio and Derrida himself), created links of mutual support between the two fields.

As for Steven's final point, the founders of architectural deconstruction certainly had sufficient economic and cultural capital to make the risk worthwhile. It is true that

Daniel Libeskind and Frank Gehry emerged from working class backgrounds, although they are also the least theoretically inclined of the group. The rest of the prominent deconstructionist architects, including the ones closest to deconstructionist theory (Bernard Tshumi, Peter Eisenman, and Zaha Hadid) come from a families of successful novelists, filmmakers, architects and businessmen. The risk that these architects took by identifying themselves with the new genre was considerably “padded” by their ability to fall back on sizable resources of cultural and economic capital.

All aspects of the deconstructionist strategy for consecration allied them with cultural dominants, first with the dominant class, and then with dominant fractions of strongly autonomous fields. The alliance between architecture and architectural criticism should be emphasized as well. Project descriptions in architectural journals such as *Oppositions* and *Assemblage*, as well as high-gloss monographs published by houses like Phaidon, Rizzoli and Princeton Architectural (which, as Stevens notes, are often produced in collaboration with architects themselves), act as signals that an architect or movement has “made it” and should be considered important, if not inspiring. By comparison, discourse that is critical of fully canonized architectural work appears from different publishing houses, with an entirely different semiotic character. Nikos A. Salingaros’ polemic *Anti-Architecture and Deconstruction* appears to have been essentially self-published, while Stevens’ objective but unflattering study, while published by MIT, has prompted little discussion in architectural debates. The architectural press functions primarily as a reproductive medium, however. The consecrating events, all of which took place in 1988, were (1) the “Deconstructivist Architecture” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art organized by the

architects/theorists Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley, (2) the publication of Johnson and Wigley's monograph on the exhibition, (3) the Tate Modern exhibition entitled "Deconstruction in Architecture," (4) the special issue of *Architectural Design* devoted to that show, conceived by the theorist Charles Jencks and including essays and interviews from most of the founding deconstructionists. These were the critical points at which the transformation of the field became inevitable, and the trajectories of the individual deconstructionists became secure. The real authorization of deconstruction as a recognizable style, and a very important one at that, was thus given substantial help from the art world at large, and from architectural criticism especially. This type of phenomenon is familiar from Bourdieu's analyses of fields of cultural production. According to Bourdieu, "mutual admiration societies"³⁸² collect around new movements in a given cultural sphere once a variety of individuals and groups from different fields realize that promoting those movements will result in a mutually supported network of innovative cultural capital. This network helps to ensure that the specific form of capital involved does not fail to appreciate in value. There is no particular requirement of architectural critics to *like* the work they become associated with. What is important is that they recognize it publicly as a formidable power. It is thus arguable that Fredric Jameson did as much to assist the authorization of postmodern architecture than he did to criticize it, and that Charles Jenck's arguments with Peter Eisenman over the coherence of his theoretical assumptions validate deconstructionist architecture more than they call it into question.

Postmodernism, the consecrated avant-garde that preceded deconstruction and

³⁸² Bourdieu, "The Market of Symbolic Goods," 18.

that now occupies the dominant position in the architectural field, informs nearly all of the mass produced structures built in the last 20 years, with the exception of private housing. This became possible because the materials and technology developed by postmodernist architects in the field of restricted production became available to the larger body of practitioners. There are a number of indications that an analogous process is beginning to occur in the case of deconstruction. The non-traditional CAD software that facilitates the creation of deconstructed forms is becoming more widely available, as is expertise in designing for the technologically advanced materials that made deconstructionism's apparently unstable forms structurally sound. In 2003, Frank Gehry created Gehry Technologies, a consulting venture that, according to *Architectural Record*, "he hopes will raise the level of technological fluency within architectural practice, as well as cement his legacy as one of the field's foremost innovators."³⁸³ Commercial suppliers have taken notice of the more generalized interest in the look and feel of deconstructionism and have begun to specialize in supplying some of its characteristic materials, such as titanium, zinc, and to develop innovative ways of producing some of its characteristic effects, such as the use of the use of textile-based composite carbon-fiber to achieve complex folding patterns.³⁸⁴

Meanwhile, deconstruction has lately achieved a sufficient degree of success in defining the valuable types of cultural capital in the architectural field that its founders have themselves begun to make inroads into the field of mass production. The firm *Arquitectonica*, which participated in the 1988 MoMA exhibition, has implemented

³⁸³Snoonian, 12.

³⁸⁴ See Knecht.

highly commercial deconstructionist projects internationally. Likewise, the Coop Himmelblau firm recently completed the BMW Welt in Munich, a structure that BMW describes as the place “where the corporation goes into dialogue with its customers, friends and visitors.”³⁸⁵ Other projects, such as Eisenman’s University of Phoenix Stadium, Gehry’s Walt Disney Concert Hall, as well as a number of highly commercial but still self-consciously deconstructionist projects by lesser-known architects, such as a Philadelphia parking structure designed by Benjamin Wood and Carlos Zapata, signal the style’s arrival at a position of relative stability with regard to its legitimacy. Its initial strategy of displaying what Stevens calls a “distaste for vulgar money” need not be rigorously adhered to anymore. All previous iterations of the architectural avant-garde eventually leaked into the mainstream and became part of the currency of the field of mass production. If this pattern is repeated in the case of deconstruction, it would present, and perhaps has already begun to present, a highly embarrassing failure of the deconstructed spaces to resist the logic of commodification and structural control. It was pointed out to Peter Eisenman in a panel on the future of architecture that, despite his claims that his Aronoff Center for Design and Art at the University of Cincinnati failed to achieve the desired effect of being “impossible to experience casually.”³⁸⁶ I believe this failure is symptomatic of a larger failure of deconstructionist strategies to overcome the social and ideological effects that architecture is “complicitous” in reproducing by virtue of our receiving it, as Benjamin says, “in a state of distraction.” In the following section, it will be argued that architectural deconstruction contributes, through its instances in the

³⁸⁵ BMW Welt official Web site.

³⁸⁶ Peter Eisenman in interview with Charlie Rose.

built environment and through its function of enhancing the autonomy of the architectural field, to the reproduction of structures of power and authority, in spite of its explicit aims to achieve the opposite. This is because, as we shall see, practices of deconstructionist architecture as always position takings directed towards the architectural and intellectual fields to the same extent that they aim to be social interventions.

The Social Program of Deconstruction

Deconstructionist architecture has its origins in a program of social and political change. Although the name seems to suggest a purely negative operation, both Derrida himself and the majority of the original deconstructionist architects were motivated by a desire to implement architectural responses to the hierarchical structures of social power inscribed in the built environment. The task of deconstructionist architecture was to use architecture as a means of, if not resolving, at least revealing and disrupting the inertial effect that architectural space has on the social order. In order to do this, architectural deconstructions would have to go beyond the mere negation of traditional forms, but introduce some kind of positive social transformation as well. Derrida comments, in his essay on the *folies* that Bernard Tschumi's designed for the *Parc de Villette* in Paris, that

Deconstructions would be feeble if they were negative, if they did not construct, and above all, if they did not first measure themselves against institutions in their solidity, at the place of their greatest resistance: political structures, levers of economic decision, the material and phantasmatic apparatuses which connect state, civil society, capital, bureaucracy, cultural power and architectural education—a remarkably sensitive relay; but in addition, those which join the arts, from the fine arts to martial arts, science and technology, the old and the new.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁷ Derrida, “Point de folie—maintenant l’architecture,” 332.

The *raison d'être* of deconstruction is to expose, interrupt, and finally to dissolve the logocentric structures that inhere in a broad range of “texts.” As such, deconstruction views architectural practice as a kind of writing, and its products as signs in a signifying system. As has been argued in previous chapters, architecture and the built environment actively function to reproduce social relations, many of which can be regarded as relations of domination, and this process of reproduction involves the body directly, without the requiring the conscious attention of the agents concerned. Kim Dovey reminds us, with a quote from Bourdieu, that, “the most successful ideological effects are those that have no words, and ask no more than complicitous silence.”³⁸⁸ Semiotic and structuralist readings have been fruitful in explaining certain features of the human ecology of the built environment, and they have done so primarily by extending the Saussurean model of meaning systems to urban and architectural forms. This is more or less the theoretical framework that motivated Bourdieu's early studies of the Kabyle house. For this reason deconstruction, which emerged from the same tradition of structuralism, is not on the face of it an entirely untenable theoretical direction for the task of producing a socially transformative architecture. It is not my concern, however, to argue for or against deconstruction itself. My claim is not that architectural deconstruction fails on its own terms, but that even if it is a sound design technique for producing transformative encounters in the short run, it nonetheless fails, for structural reasons, to achieve its desired social effects in the long run. The issue here is ultimately one of scale: even if deconstructionist architecture “works” for individual users, it still

³⁸⁸ Bourdieu quoted in Dovey, “The Silent Complicity of Architecture,” 283.

produces effects on the level of the field and of social space that counteract and undermine any successes it does manage to achieve. The flaw in the deconstructionist technique is that, while deconstructionist architects do manage to take a structural view of their projects' effect within spatial practice (in the best cases), they do not take a reflexive view of the effect that their activities have on their own field, and consequently on social space. The status of deconstruction as an architectural style greatly enlarges the impact and importance of these effects.

Let us look briefly, however, at Derrida's theory of deconstruction. There are good reasons for thinking that the translation of Derrida's methodology into architectural practice has resulted in a corruption of the theory. In particular, it is once again the achievement of the effective status of a style that prevents architectural practice from realizing the social effects it is ostensibly after. According to the political theorist Saul Newman, Derrida's deconstruction implies "a questioning of all authority, including textual and philosophical authority, as well as a desire to avoid the trap of reproducing authority and hierarchy in one's attempt to destroy it."³⁸⁹ Deconstruction entails the displacement of social structures, never a simple reversal or subversion of them, which, Derrida argues, only reproduce their essential relations. According to Newman, from a deconstructionist perspective, "one could argue that Marxism fell victim to this logic by replacing the bourgeois state with the equally authoritarian workers' state."³⁹⁰ Deconstruction interprets this outcome as the inevitable consequence of Marxist revolutionary practice, since that practice conceives of the proletarian class only in

³⁸⁹ Newman, 5.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 3.

opposition to the bourgeois, and without a thorough questioning of this structural composition of its identity, the hierarchical ordering of the structured whole is preserved. The worry for deconstructionist architecture, then, is that it will fail to perform such a structuralist self-questioning. Without, in other words, conducting revolutionary architectural practice with an understanding of one's place in the field, and in social space as a whole, one's practice will continue to contribute to the reproduction of the hierarchical organization of the field, and of social space. This is, of course, just what Stevens' Bourdieuan analysis of the architectural field suggests is the unconscious goal of the avant-garde. This does not mean that deconstructionist architects' theorization of social change reduces to mere rhetoric, or that there is anything disingenuous about the way they practice their art. The successful domination of the architectural field may well be achieved in spite of the anti-hierarchical motivations of its most successful members.

Once deconstructionist architecture becomes recognizable as a style, it ceases to meet Derrida's (and by extension, its own) criteria for implementing acts of deconstruction. Deconstructionist practice, for Derrida, is understood as a “movement of *differance*,” which is distinguished from mere difference by the fact that the position occupied by the deconstructionist is not a position at all. It is neither inside nor outside of the structure it aims to deconstruct. As Derrida says, “there is no essence of the *differance*.”³⁹¹ As Newman explains, *differance* “does not have a stable or autonomous identity, nor is it governed by an ordering principle or authority.”³⁹² The practice of *differance* must not fully participate in the structured practices on which it acts. It must

³⁹¹ Ibid., 10.

³⁹² Ibid.

not set itself up as wholly outside them either. Instead, it must work by stealth, paradoxically weaving in and out of the structures that concern it. But in becoming a style, deconstructionist architecture has forfeited this approach, the only one that provides justification for its social program. It has become identifiable, not only in formal and stylistic terms, but also as occupying a definite, well marked and heavily defended position in the field. This is not to say that deconstruction is valid only as an exception. By itself, there is nothing to prevent the possibility, given that we accept deconstruction as a sound strategy for implementing social change, of thousands upon thousands of perfectly effective deconstructionist projects. What introduces a problem into architectural practice of this kind is the tendency for deconstructionist architecture to enhance the autonomy of the architectural field. Once deconstructionist architecture becomes a structuring force in the field--once it begins to function as a unity against which other positions in the field define and identify themselves--the buildings that it produces are transformed from objects that function primarily as movements of *differance* to ones that function mostly as symbolic capital. This remains true no matter how exceptional or widespread the practice of architectural deconstruction becomes. At a certain point--in fact, just about the time the deconstructionist avant-garde became consecrated as such--the products of deconstructionist architecture were released from the intellectual program of social critique that their creators intended for them and began to function as what they were all along, products of their creators' habitus.

Although it is true, as Stevens argues, that a large component of the deconstructionist strategy was to dissociate itself from the notion that architecture has a social function, this dissociation never amounted to a total break with that idea. This is

because deconstruction employed a number of strategies simultaneously. Not only did it seek to retreat to the “hermetic purity”³⁹³ of formalism, but it also sought at the same time to resurrect and extend the legacy of high modernism, a revolutionary movement that got its start primarily by arguing a social platform. Modernism, another architectural avant-garde that became a style by denying style, sought to democratize form by reducing it to function. Modernism was greeted as a socially responsive architecture, only to be reviled later as socially inept. It might be said that this contradiction between the social and asocial postures of deconstructionist architecture is the locus of whatever social powers it held, and it might be suggested, on those grounds, that it could be brought down through a kind of imminent critique. This line of thought, which is something like a starting point for deconstructionist architecture, is entirely fallacious. There is nothing “unstable” about deconstructionist architecture's simultaneous employment of two contradictory strategies. In fact, its success in legislating the field's symbolic values is evidence that the strategy of combining this unlikely pair of ideologies is entirely sound. The apparent contradiction between social commitment and anti-social products is illusory, because the two messages are aimed at two entirely distinct markets, the former at the public at large, and the latter at the architectural field. That the social benefits promised by modernism, and promised again by deconstruction, are theoretical benefits only, is a problem that architects are unmotivated to solve, since to do so would require transparency with respect to the symbolic capital that secures the field's autonomy. Instead, the architect typically opts for the security of obscurity.

The most sustained statement of the social aims of deconstructionist architecture

³⁹³ Stevens, 114.

appears in the writings of Bernard Tschumi. Tschumi describes his early theoretical efforts as attempts to make architecture into “a peaceful instrument of social transformation.”³⁹⁴ He describes his fascination with the tactics of *detournement* developed by Guy Debord and the situationists, and in fact, as the title of one of his major works (*Event Cities*) suggests, it would not be incorrect to read much of his subsequent output as a situationist “misuse” of architecture. In the introduction to his theoretical opus *Architecture and Disjunction*, Tschumi declares as one of his core axioms that “architecture is never autonomous, never pure form,”³⁹⁵ and that it should always be thought of instead “together with the actions and events that take place within the social and political realm...”³⁹⁶ Although the effects of Tschumi's contribution to the architectural field would indicate exactly the opposite, this declaration of social responsibility, or at least the recognition of social entanglement, central to the way Tschumi conceives of his work. The titular “disjunction” is that of form and function, two categories of architectural theory that have been present since its inception and have gained monolithic importance since the modernist revolution. Tschumi's principle theoretical contribution is to reconceive the relation between form and function not as one of causation or expression (or of the refusal of causation or expression), but instead as a relationship of opposition and incompatibility. Form and function, for Tschumi, always work against one another. They do not, in principle, determine or “follow” one another. This has always been the case, and recognizing the fact, both in theoretical discourse and by producing buildings that reveal the antagonism between form and

³⁹⁴ Tschumi, 7.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 3.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 3-4.

function, amounts to a dialectical sublation. Tschumi relates that in the early 1970s, he began to realize that “the old revolutionary concept of “taking advantage of the internal contradictions of society” was applicable to architecture and, in turn, could one day influence society.”³⁹⁷ For Tschumi, The disjunction of form and function became an architectural analogue of a class antagonism. Experiencing architecture that emphasizes disjunction, de-stabilization, de-familiarization, liberates subjects from the control of ideologies written into traditional idioms of architectural form.

Peter Eisenman, Derrida’s onetime architectural collaborator, expresses similar intentions with regard to his work. He conceives of his efforts in response to Walter Benjamin’s observation that architecture is received in a state of distraction. According to Benjamin, the social effects of architecture are all the more troublesome because our use of the built environment is largely pre-conscious.³⁹⁸ Eisenman claims that, because his buildings are so unfamiliar and disorienting in form, it is impossible for a user to experience them casually, and they therefore open up the possibility of escape from the structures of self-conception that bind subjects to their social roles. Eisenman’s assertions betray a close affinity to Theodor Adorno’s ideas about the possibility of architectural beauty, which he conceived partially in response to Benjamin’s assessment of the role of architecture in the production of culture. For Adorno, as for Eisenman, the possibility of a simultaneously beautiful and liberating architecture lies in the creation of exceptional, austere and disarming buildings, which provoke an awareness in us of what Adorno calls “nonidentity,” and therefore disclose to us the radically structured and constrained modes

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 15.

³⁹⁸ This insight is echoed, of course, in Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus.

of life that we typically accept without question. In fact, it has been said of Eisenman's Wexner Center for the Fine Arts, which is highly ambiguous with respect to its use of interior and exterior space, that the center "has no identity."³⁹⁹ It remains to be seen, however, perhaps irremediably, whether this amounts to a lack of identity with a predetermined structural position, or simply a lack of substance. Nevertheless, throughout his theoretical writings, Eisenman maintains a close dialogue with socially critical philosophers, particularly Benjamin, Nietzsche and Deleuze, each of whom developed their theoretical frameworks to address social and moral questions. The fact that Eisenman sometimes appears to be more interested in the frameworks themselves than in the social problems they were designed to elucidate, the fact that it sometimes seems as if he has gone to great pains to remove all traces of the social from these philosophers, is an expression of the first half of deconstruction's paradoxical strategy—purity of form. But the other half, the social program, remains in the decision to ground architectural theory in these thinkers specifically, rather than others. It is worth noting as well that both Eisenman and Tschumi's theoretical work have become increasingly focused on high-level abstractions, and less on social change, as their careers have progressed.⁴⁰⁰

Daniel Libeskind, although less adept at manipulating the philosophical concepts with which deconstruction deals, clearly sees his projects as socially critical and having the potential to supply a transformative experience. His belief that "strangeness" is a criterion for great architecture⁴⁰¹ echoes Eisenman's view, which is also consonant with the general outlines of Adorno's view of the possibilities of architectural beauty, that the

³⁹⁹ R. E. Somol quoted in Patin, 98.

⁴⁰⁰ See Eisenman, *Written Into the Void*, and Libeskind, *The Space of Encounter*.

⁴⁰¹ Libeskind, *Breaking Ground*, 67.

disruptive and alienating character of truly great buildings can result in the liberation of its users from comfortable, but false and sometimes oppressive, modes of thought and being. Although he does so less pedantically than Eisenman, Libeskind goes to great lengths to justify the discomfort that his buildings frequently arouse in the public:

I know certain things about human nature. I know that people want buildings to affirm their illusions, and that when a building reflects a new angle of reality, or an entirely new view, it can feel disturbing. Especially if it doesn't affirm comfortable, familiar thoughts about the world. And yet the world is not that stable mass supported by four elephants on a turtle's back, as described in Hindu mythology. It is more, I think, as Rilke described it—a place of fluctuation, rotating in a cosmic space. In other words, it changes.⁴⁰²

To distinguish his work from the historicism of the postmodernists, Libeskind employs the deconstructionist technique of bringing internal contradictions to a head with one another. He often describes his buildings as “embodying the invisible.” For Libeskind, this means realizing cultural and historical memory in material form. Thus, the conceptual framework of deconstruction (which may simply be reduced here to a form of Marxist-Hegelian negation) allows Libeskind to join the movement of deconstructionist architects while retaining the right to claim that his work is about memory. In the projects for which Libeskind is most famous—the Jewish Museum in Berlin and his design for the former site of the World Trade Center in New York—he always ensures that the memory of violence, and the socially transformative action of that memory in the present, occupies the forefront of the critical and theoretical discussion of his buildings.

Before discussing the field effects of deconstructionist architectural practice, I would like to address an issue that could give rise to some confusion. Throughout the

⁴⁰² Ibid., 195-196.

above, I have made frequent reference to “social structures” as conceived by various architects and philosophers, and, of course, the term is also prominent in Bourdieu’s own theory. I should mention that, although they are for the most part derived from a Saussurean theory of structural linguistics, there are nonetheless important differences between all of these conceptions of social structure. The most relevant of these to the present discussion are the differences between Bourdieu and Derrida’s understanding of social structure. Derrida’s understanding of a movement of *différance* as a kind of operation that proceeds from a place “outside” or “in between” the differences that constitute a social structure appears to conflict directly with Bourdieu’s understanding of the structural conditions that demand reflexivity on the part of the theorist. For Bourdieu, one can never occupy a position “outside” of a structured social space. The only way to achieve an objective point of view, which is always partial and temporary, is to perform the kind of reflexive gymnastics with respect to one’s point of view described in Chapter 4. The extent to which a Derridean movement of *différance* can make an accurate assessment of the social structures it aims to influence is dependent on the accuracy with which the practitioner of deconstruction can gauge the objective organization of a social structure, and subsequently apply the deconstructionist technique deliberately and self-consciously. It is doubtful that even the most careful operation conducted in this manner could be an adequate substitute for maintaining a thorough reflexivity with respect to the field in which one acts.

Deconstruction and Social Reproduction

Contemporary architecture is a world unto itself. Perhaps nothing exemplifies this more than the divergence between the reception of the deconstructionist aesthetic and the social program in which it is rooted. The aesthetic, the face of the architecture most insistent on being evaluated on its own terms, has gained considerable popularity, especially amongst architects. Meanwhile, the social program, the face of the architecture most susceptible to public scrutiny on external grounds, has been repeatedly deemed a failure, except amongst architects. Public outcry against any architectural project is a rare event, but gains visibility when it occurs in response to high profile projects. Condemnations of Daniel Libeskind's winning proposal for the site of the World Trade Center has drawn powerful criticism from all sides, from the claim that it is an insensitive declaration of American imperialism, to the charge that it continues the ill effects of the original World Trade Center on the street grid of lower Manhattan. Similarly, Bernard Tschumi's design for the Acropolis Museum in Athens has been received as an affront to the Greek cultural heritage.

And yet, despite these, admittedly rare, high profile criticisms, the deconstructionists have been highly successful in convincing members of their profession and laymen alike that their products are benchmarks of aesthetic value. This is because the style's champions avail themselves of a range of highly reliable avenues for the production of taste. The deconstructionist aesthetic is disseminated most obviously through its high-profile buildings projects, which are usually museums, concert halls or otherwise non-commercial "gifts to the city," a practice that does much to alleviate the concern that deconstructionist buildings will have a simply destructive effect on the urban environment. Second to the projects themselves are the expensively printed books and

magazines, which never fail to present the latest aesthetic innovations as cutting-edge and highly relevant. By far the most important avenue through which the deconstructionists have secured the future of their aesthetic is the university system of architectural education. These programs function as sites for the dissemination of stylistic preferences among the new generation of apprentice architects, all eager to do right by the standards of the profession. A recent study by an environmental psychologist details the great extent to which the aesthetic preferences of architectural students are transformed during the period of their training.⁴⁰³ The real success of deconstructionism, however, can be seen only by considering the restructuring of aesthetic preferences in connection with the transformation of the architectural field, as well as the effects this transformation has had on other components of social space.

In 1988, the same year deconstructionist architecture made its official debut, the sociologist Robert Gutman identified the following trends in the architectural profession:

(1) the expanding demand for architectural services; (2) changes in the structure of the demand; (3) the oversupply, or potential oversupply, of entrants into the profession; (4) the increased size and complexity of buildings; (5) the consolidation and professionalization of the construction industry; (6) the greater rationality and sophistication of client organizations; (7) the more intense competition between architects and other professions; (8) the greater competition within the profession; (9) the continuing economic difficulties of practice; and (10) changing expectations of architecture among the public.⁴⁰⁴

Given the time of his writing, the changes that Gutman observed, the deconstructionist architecture cannot be awarded full credit for the increased strength of the profession, but its predecessor in revolutionizing the field, the postmodernist movement, must be

⁴⁰³ See Wilson.

⁴⁰⁴ Gutman quoted in Cuff, "Epilogue," 349-350.

credited with contributing a great deal. Commenting on the state of the profession in 2000, however, Dana Cuff reports that these same trends have continued, and there is at present no sign of a radical shift in the behavior of the profession. By the time of Cuff's writing, deconstruction had become a fully recognized and powerful presence in the field. The continuation of these trends despite the radical stylistic revolution taking place within the field lends support to the notion that, as an avant-garde revolution, deconstruction had more to gain by strengthening its autonomy with respect to other professions, with which it competes for what the sociologist Andrew Abbott calls professional jurisdiction, and its own commercial wing, which reduces architectural practice to a business like any other. The trends listed above are therefore not principally the result of any field-external change the economy or society, but such changes have occurred, and are themselves the result of strategies discussed above.

The fact that the deconstructionist style was above all a strategy for the symbolic domination of the architectural field is itself of great significance for the reproduction of social relations as a whole. This is because the extent to which a struggle for domination exists *within* a field of cultural production indicates the extent to which that field itself is an important component of the field of power. Similarly, the extent to which a field of cultural production achieves autonomy within the field of power indicates the extent to which the field of power itself remains constitutive of class division and social domination. It would not be worth attempting to create and secure a distinct and irreducible variety of cultural capital if there did not exist the possibility of occupying a key position in the "division of the labor of domination." The struggle for dominance amongst the professions connected with building and design (construction, engineering,

planning, etc.), and the equally important struggle for autonomy from economic interests (the purview of its own subfield of mass production) secures for architecture the right to define its own products and practitioners as the gold standard of cultural success. In addition, it mobilizes competing fields to invent yet more secure means of achieving the same.

Deconstructionist Architecture in Physical Space

One pitfall of the deconstructionist vision is that it fails to distinguish between the function of its products as architecture and their function as elements in an urban context, a distinction upon which the social project of deconstruction heavily depends. Architecture and urbanism both constitute complex systems of meaning—plenty of grist for the deconstructionist mill. In following very closely in the footsteps of the original modernists, however, deconstructionist architecture has tended to view its products as isolated, sculptural exercises. The deconstruction of our ordinary engagement with the built environment that its projects are meant to facilitate is usually limited in conception to the experience of a single building, and frequently to the building's interior spaces. Indeed, this is precisely where deconstruction finds its best chance of success. When one becomes completely surrounded by deconstructed space, and is not privy to the visual and kinesthetic cues provided by “normal” space, the experience could become one of direct confrontation between the expectations and realities of spatial practice. The hermetic building interior is deconstructionist architecture's best hope at providing a “non-casual” architectural experience. Whether or not it can succeed, I shall leave for the

critics and environmental psychologists to decide. But the case of deconstructionist architecture's relation to the urban context is a different story altogether. It would be difficult indeed to make the case that deconstructionist projects have achieved their desired intent with respect to *urban* spatial practice. And since the deconstructionists' motivation is to call spatial practice into question, it seems a glaring omission to focus only on interior space, leaving the larger spatial background intact. If one source of deconstruction's failures to achieve its social program is its insufficient understanding of its own function in social space, an equally important source is its insufficient understanding of its function in physical space.

Deconstructionist architecture has typically opted for one of two options for relating to its urban environment, both of which reduce to either an affirmation or a denial, but never anything as sophisticated as a deconstruction. The first option is to highlight its own distinctiveness by presenting radically different exterior forms within the same visual field as, or sometimes directly attached to, far more traditional structures. Its proponents usually describe this practice as an interpretation of, and by its detractors as an attack on, the existing structures. Many of Libeskind's museum projects take this tack, as does Gehry's Prague house. From the point of view of deconstructionist theory, however, this seems an entirely facile strategy. Derrida places much emphasis on the role of "presence," in deconstruction. As a system of signs, each element of the formal language of urban form is defined by its place within the totality of urban signs. Accordingly, any given sign, when recognized, is accompanied by the multitude of materially absent signs from which it derives its meaning. A deconstruction of this system would attempt to call to presence the most contradictory of these signs, thereby

calling the entire system of signification into question. In this sense it depends somewhat on the deliberate employment of at least some traditional design conventions. But deconstructionist building exteriors seek to impress purely by contrasting with their surroundings. This frustrates their aim of deconstructing spatial practice because the immediate result of such a simple contrast is to emphasize the presence of the prevailing sign system, affirming it rather than deconstructing it.

The second, and far more frequent, option taken by deconstructionist buildings for relating to their context is simply to distance themselves from it as much as possible. This is an inheritance from the modernist tradition that, in agreement with the philosophy of Le Corbusier, seeks to abolish the street, although the deconstructionist adoption of this as a strategy has less to do with the modernist ideology than with the legitimacy of modernism as the founding architectural avant-garde. The majority of deconstructionist buildings are profoundly isolated. Gehry's 1997 Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, for example, stands on the city's waterfront, central yet separate, on a parcel of land equivalent to more than six Bilbao city blocks. The overall size of deconstructionist projects has continued even amongst the second wave of less well-known architects, such as Eric Owen Moss and Søren Robert Lund. The specific means of isolation varies considerably from project to project: sometimes a parking lot or a landscaped park sets off the building. Very often a public space or esplanade of some kind is included in the master plan. Whatever the specific form they take, however, these zones of mostly empty space are usually mandated in order that the users may admire the buildings in their sculptural purity. In Bourdieuan terms, the isolationist option usually delivers more in terms of cultural capital, since both the sculptural aestheticism of the physical building

and the social exclusivity of the function identified with it are removed from all other images and practices, and can therefore attain a highly purified form of distinction.

Ultimately, however, it matters little whether or not deconstruction's social aims are realized, since the social effects that it produces unconsciously are of far greater weight. Even if deconstructionist buildings successfully dismantle their internal spatial hierarchies, or (more doubtfully), the spatial hierarchies of their urban context, it is clear upon observation that they position themselves in hierarchies that preexist them. Deconstructionist buildings seek and accrue the same spatial profits of occupation and localization, as did their modernist and postmodernist predecessors. What is more, they have thus far tended to pre-select their population of users from the dominant class, especially those already possessed of considerable cultural capital. Any space, regardless of what egalitarian intentions its designers may have had, may become a space of privilege simply by its consistent use by the privileged. Whereas deconstructionist discourse (indeed, all architectural discourse) tends to assume a highly abstract, universal user, its buildings are destined for privileged positions in social space long before they are realized in physical space. And once they are realized, the physical spaces they comprise have already acquired an unintended significance.

Conclusion

By wedding the original strategies of the modernist movement with the discourse and style of deconstruction, the present generation of consecrated avant-garde architects have successfully installed their own vision of architectural value as securely legitimate.

By failing to take the limits of this overall approach into account, however, the deconstructionist movement has fallen short of its original social goals. The fact that, as an avant-garde revolution with ambitious social intentions, deconstruction was able to steer only the form and appearance of its products, and not the larger social order, does not mean that the architect has no powers of social influence. Quite the contrary, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the deeper reason that deconstruction stops short of transforming the social order is that the structure of that social order defines the population of cultural consumers, the clientele upon whose taste even the most subversive of practitioners truly depends, and that clientele must continue to exist as a distinct and dominant social fraction. For if architectural interventions did finally contribute to the elimination of social hierarchies, the architect's distinction, his mastery of specific, privileged forms of cultural capital, would be undermined. This would explain, at least in part, the persistent conundrum as to why “popular” architecture is so unpopular with architects, and why the peculiar aesthetic choices that architects make nonetheless always have a chance at becoming commonplace.

CONCLUSION

As of this writing, analyses granting a central role to space as a theoretical category continue to proliferate in anthropology, philosophy, sociology, urban studies and innumerable other disciplines. Interdisciplinary conferences have been held and volumes of research have begun to appear analyzing the “spatial turn” (an oxymoron that underlines the good sense behind the effort to systematize our intuitions about space) as a paradigm that has begun to transform all areas of social and cultural theory.⁴⁰⁵ In closing, therefore, I would like to consider, in addition to its philosophical lessons, the contribution of the present study to interdisciplinary research.

Bourdieu’s work, I have found, has the tendency to connect, relate, and in a certain sense to reconcile, previously disparate and confused realms of knowledge. In reading Bourdieu, or in working within his theoretical framework, one finds that the dark areas of one’s knowledge are always illuminated in pairs, or sometimes in small constellations. This is the major lesson that Bourdieu took up from Cassirer: to think relationally. In a philosophical climate where leading figures have often been content to declare the world schizophrenic rather than deal seriously with structured complexity, relational thinking (and better yet, spatial relational thinking) is a valuable epistemic technique.

I hope to have demonstrated the virtues of this mode of thought above. The social effects of deconstructionist architecture’s bizarre artifacts, and the internal workings of

⁴⁰⁵ In addition to a great number of texts on the “spatial turn” in specific disciplines, recent general volumes are Warf and Arias, *The Spatial Turn*, and Döring and Thielmann, *Spatial Turn: Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften*.

the architectural profession, for instance, must be thought together. Similarly, the ongoing reorganization of our central cities can only be made sense of once we begin to relate the rewards of symbolic dominance in the corporate world to the highly structured social order that is their inheritance from the industrial age. To bring these diverse elements within, not a single glance, but a fixed and attentive gaze, is the difficult goal that the social space model makes so much easier.

Another reconciliation: in and of itself, social space manages to bridge the gap between “scientific” and “ordinary” knowledge. Of course, this feature of the notion would not be possible if not for Bourdieu’s insistence on another epistemic technique: reflexivity. But reflexive thought alone takes one only so far. Heraclitus knew, and it has been understood well by much of the philosophical tradition (especially since Kant), that self-knowledge, which is at once simply a type of knowledge among others and an encompassing constraint on knowledge, produces both paradox and wisdom. Bourdieu’s genius inheres in his ability to put this philosophical trope to work in the context of a complex and rigorous sociological model, which he saw, in light of the advances made by his predecessors, could only be spatial in form.

The idea of social space represents a major development, not only for the social sciences, but also for the wider spheres of social and cultural theory. In Bourdieu’s theory, space graduates from metaphor to model. It has done so before, but for Bourdieu the move is convincing and resolute. The entirety of his theoretical toolkit depends on an overarching spatial mode of thought, which infuses each of its components with a scientifically determinate, yet eminently intuitive function. Moreover, far from being a mere heuristic with no metaphysical weight, the very epistemic immediacy of the model

convinces its user (once she breaches the initial arcana) that it preserves something of the way social agents really experience their mutual relations, their positions and possibilities, all the while rendering those relations visible in a way that depends on, rather than departs from, statistical evidence.

The idea of social space also suggests a resolution to the estrangement of the social and natural sciences, since it demands to be understood in connection with the biological human body in the same way that physical space does. As records of the social order to which we become entrained, the two are overlapping and equivalent, and are ordinarily distinguished by the sociologist alone. For Bourdieu, then, the social is the material, and social space, in at least one of its interlocking versions, is nothing but the perceptible ground of biological habitus. Although Bourdieu's projects have nothing to do with outmoded efforts at establishing the unity of science, they nonetheless bridge a gap that has long unsettled sociologists and philosophers alike. As "fieldwork in philosophy,"⁴⁰⁶ Bourdieu's work straddles the divide between science and philosophy, while also implying a radical critique of the academic division of labor, of its effects on the hierarchies that persist both within the academy and in society at large.

According to the integrated framework that, I have argued, may be inferred from Bourdieu's work, it is evident that social and cultural forms are practiced both *in* space and *with* space. Not only do social factions exploit the power of the physical environment to reproduce meaning and behavior in their ongoing struggles for dominance, they do so within a multidimensional field, accessed and apprehended with the mind and body alike (although not always in conjunction). The key role of the habitus, to engage both social

⁴⁰⁶ Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, 3.

space and physical space alike in a dialectic of structuration, is what enables an integrated theory of society and space. No “pure” theory of space, whether physical or epiphenomenal, could account so well or so efficiently for the wealth of mutual influences of social space and physical space observed in a wide range of contexts. We must insist instead on a reflexive sociological vision in which the question of social and cultural practice is always one of describing the positions and dispositions of bodies within a multitude of spaces that are not independent of one another.

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