

French Marxism

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French Marxism continues to play a role in intellectual life, despite the current state of crisis within Marxism. It maintains its vitality primarily through the work of Bourdieu. Althusser, and even the work of his disciples, seems very dated, irresistibly recalling a recent but evolved past, like the Beatles' music or the early films of Godard. If we hope to understand the current phenomenon of the intellectual resurgence of the 1960s, it is the development of Bourdieu's work that undeniably represents the only really lively manifestation of the Marxist "sensibility" within this resurgence.

If it is through Bourdieu that French Marxism continues and is surviving this moment of crisis within Marxism, this is probably also due to the nature of his relations to Marxism. These relations are such that the crisis of Marxism, which made Althusser a museum piece during the same period, left the symbolic capital that Bourdieu benefited from intact. Here again, this particular quality of Bourdieu's Marxism is deeply representative of the intellectual style of the 1960s. Any reference to the founding father is euphemistic enough and is combined with enough apparent distance, or even open criticism (which is frequently an exaggeration), that the emergence of an original, new, in short, "French" position seems believable. One of the great qualities of French philosophy of the sixties was its allowing its own theoretical identity to be forgotten. This is how Bourdieu's Marxism was overlooked. One must not underestimate the role played by the strategy of constantly denying the model, which is among the conditions that made the survival, if not the resurgence, of these currents possible, in spite or their being very "situated." It is only natural that it be to Bourdieu's work, given that he appears the master of this type of exercise, in the Marxist register that we look for the lines of force (or weakness) of French Marxism.

Bourdieu's texts try to illustrate their irretrievable distance from Marxism at three points. It is particular-

ly significant that they address these criticisms first to the Althusserian version of Marxism: The denial, situated in relation to what passed in the sixties for a most vigorous defense of a certain Marxist orthodoxy in France, is directed primarily at efficiency in the strategy of autonomization. So it is legitimate, in situating Bourdieu's work today, to question the real scope of this three-part criticism: a criticism in the name of science of Marxism as a philosophy; a criticism of structuralist Marxism on behalf of a "correct philosophy of history;" and a criticism of simplistic materialism in the name of the understanding of the complexity of the social.

Bourdieu Against Althusser

In an article of 1975 severely critical of Balibar, Bourdieu, interpolating quotations from Marx, referred to Althusser's efforts as merely a "variation on philosophical ambition," which is characterized, in imitation of the most traditional philosophy, by the "claim to have mastered empirical science and the sciences that produced it," a "theoretical" or "theoreticist" claim in Althusserianism that could cut short philosophy's necessary replacement by science. The so-called science that the Althusserians had learned by reading *Capital* (the science of the possible modes of production and their transformations) in fact demonstrates a quasi-metaphysical apriorism when it attempts to deduce (like philosophy) "the essential event, the historical given of the theoretical model." Practiced in this way, the "break" produced "only 'science' with no scientific practice,...a science reduced to a judicial discourse on the science of others"; in short, Althusserian Marxism produced only a consolidation of philosophy.

Bourdieu takes his critique of structuralist Marxism onto the terrain of philosophy itself, in the name of what today he calls "the real logic of historical action and the true philosophy of history." One might ask, having followed what he indicates such a philosophy of history is, if it preserves the autonomy

of human practices in relation to the self-development of economic structures or objectives better than Althusserian structuralism. In addition to determination through objective structures (in dialectical relation with them), Bourdieu reintroduced the determination of history by historical agents, but he also specified that this dialectic between structures and actions is equivalent to that of "objective structures and incorporated structures" in that it "is at work in every practical action." If, as Bourdieu says, "practical actions" make history (and if, in this way, history cannot be reduced to the mechanistic self-development of structures), it is only to the extent that any action is the place where the structures of the social world are expressed both *directly*, in the mode of a determination of action by the "objective structures" of the social world, and *indirectly* by the "incorporated structures" that *habitus* are. It should be recalled that the *habitus* in Bourdieu's vocabulary are nothing other than "systems of durable and transposable dispositions" that "produce...the conditioning associated with a particular class of existence conditions." As a result, Bourdieu writes that the dialectic of structures and of their interiorization as "structured structures predisposed to functioning as structuring structures" is at play in every action. The distance from Marxist structuralism seems to be somewhat reduced: The "real philosophy of history" that Bourdieu demands, reexploiting the schema of the "ruse of reason," consists of maintaining yet again that men (their actions) make history but without knowing the history they make, actions being nothing other than the location of a dialectics of the structures of the social world with each other (with their incorporation in the *habitus*).

Bourdieu's critique of Marxist structuralism, however problematical in content, does serve an important strategic function. It allows him to position himself today as an adversary of the elimination of the subject, just as the late Foucault did. Bourdieu's intention is presented as a critique of subjectivism, but not as a negation of subjectivity. The advantage gained by the operation is then immediately reinvested, since Bourdieu indicates that his own practice of sociological analysis, rather than destroying subjectivity, contributes to constructing the subject; a sociological analysis in fact "makes a true reappropriation of the self possible," thanks to "the objectivation of objectivity which haunts the place of so-called subjectivity"; by showing direct and indirect social determinants (*habitus*), "it offers perhaps the only means of contributing to the

construction of something like a subject, if only through the consciousness of the determinants, a construction otherwise abandoned to the forces of the world."

The second type of critique Bourdieu addresses to Althusser's Marxism is conclusive. If the model is denied, we must also admit that we are witnessing, a superb "return of the repressed." In spite of its "subtleties," Althusserianism did not really renew the Marxist approach to the social, any more than Bourdieu had overturned the basic principles of what he inherited, including its inconsistencies and perverse effects. At least Althusserian Marxism had the stature to admit what it was and to dare to appear what it was.

Unable to be disproven by any empirical reality, Bourdieu's discourse obeys only its own logic

One last type of critique demands a less radical opposition. In an interview with Bourdieu devoted to *Homo Academicus*, it was remarked that his work is not really original since "to point out that intellectuals have passions and interests and that they occupy a social situation has already been done by others" before him. In his response he agrees that, "to reduce the adversary's reasons to mere causes...to interests of a usually more or less base nature, is the daily bread of intellectual life" (which pertains to a very specific idea of intellectual debate even today). Having made that point, he immediately stated, "there are ways and there are ways of doing things. What distinguishes my work from these other behaviors...is that I describe the whole game that breeds both the particular interests of intellectuals – which are entirely irreducible to the class interests proclaimed by the heavy Marxist artillery, which was loaded with big cannonballs but always missed the mark – and the partial insights of others' interests."

Although self-proclaimed, this new critique of Marxism is truly clever, centered this time on the means for practicing reduction, once the principle of reducing discourses to interests has been accepted. A quick reading might leave the impression that Bourdieu's work is not a smoothing out of the interests that enliven the intellectual debate around class interests and that he instead demonstrates autonomy of thought with respect to the class struggle – which would mark a decisive break with Marxism. The

problem is that a great number of texts contradict this idyllic interpretation, encouraging the impression that this sociology is less a break with the Marxist practice of reducing behaviors to the class interests that they are supposed to explain than merely a more subtle variant of the same practice.

The field of intellectual production is defined as a group of *relations of force*. Thus we read that "the sociology of science rests on the assumption that the truth of the product – even this very specific product that scientific truth represents – resides in a particular species of the social conditions of production; that is, in a particular state of the structure and functioning of the social field. The 'pure' world of the purest science is a social field like any other, with its relations of force and its monopolies, its struggles and its strategies." Scientific or intellectual practice has no autonomy vis-à-vis the power relationships that define that structure of the global social field and therefore no specificity for the field of intellectual production, which is merely a "social field like any other," a group of power relations. As a result, when Bourdieu, in his last writings (notably in *Sens pratique*), is delighted to take up problematics that are strictly Kantian (for example, the conditions of possibility of scientific experimentation and the limits of scholarly understanding), the critical enterprise being approached in this way is not so much related to the critical philosophy of Kant as it is to the critical theory of the first Frankfurt school: As it was for Horkheimer, it is a matter of illuminating the "social conditions of possibility" of scientific knowledge by relating it to power relations that structure the whole field of activity.

Bourdieu displaces to a considerable extent, at one level, the terms of the correspondence or of the adaptation where the social equilibrium is established. Relations between social groups (relations between classes) still remain property relations. The social order is nothing other than "the addition of classifying and classified judgments by which agents classify and are classified," depending on how they represent the distribution of property. Bourdieu emphasizes, against the "economist side of Marxist theory," that today we can no longer depend on an objectivist definition of property (that is, on an idea of property that owes nothing to the representations of it that agents create) and that we have to integrate the possession of "symbolic property" into property relations. For him symbolic property is basically only "material property perceived as property that distinguishes." The basis of social classification is still

found in the (objective and subjective) consideration of material property. The description of each state of the social world as an equilibrium between distributions and classifications (of property) is then clear. Beyond the vocabulary, a banal theme of the Marxist Vulgate is being reaffirmed.

In the course of what seems to be a mere dressing up of Marxist discourse, the identification of class struggle as the ultimate foundation of all social practice – including intellectual and scientific practice – is entirely reaffirmed, with the information, which is nevertheless important, that the debate about the real existence and the division of social classes serves those who benefit from the class struggle, a dominant class that reinforces and reproduces its domination in this way. The triviality of this observation makes the sophistication of the discourse even more necessary.

The characteristic of all dogmatic discourse is its lack of value even to the person who holds it

Bourdieu maintains that the field of intellectual production is a group of power relations. But he also demonstrates that these power relations have to be interpreted as class struggles for the appropriation of capital (material and symbolic). When an interview in the *Nouvel Observateur* represents the "specific interests of intellectuals" as "entirely irreducible to class interests revealed by crude Marxist artillery," one has to admire the cleverness but must carefully avoid misunderstanding. Bourdieu cannot seriously mean to say that the interests of intellectuals are not class interests; the entire analysis we have focused on here challenges this autonomization of intellectual activity.

The sentence can be understood only in this way: that in the Marxist tradition class interest has too often been defined *without mediation, directly or brutally*, as the basis of intellectual production. This type of reference to class interests has been criticized by Bourdieu in his article on Heidegger, for example. He understands quite well that reducing Heidegger's philosophy of ontological difference to the class interests of the German petite bourgeoisie of the period between the two wars is an attack on the Marxist-inspired interpretations that have already developed such an analysis. He criticizes Adorno in this way for not having elucidated the "alchemy" that transforms

a given social interest ("expressive interest") into its sublime forms. The preceding genealogies of philosophical discourse were right in principle, but they practiced a simplistic "short-circuiting" between the interest and the sublimating discourse without explaining the modalities of the sublimation and for that reason could not be complete, "taking account of the internal logic of the work." The entire essay devoted to Heidegger attempts to fill this explanatory gap by showing that social interest and its sublimated version are separated by the "field of possible philosophical positions assumed" – a philosophical field, meaning that in any given period the philosophically acceptable or "legitimate" problematics are not infinite and that no interest can be expressed in discourse permitted by the "spirit of the times" unless it flows into them. By crossing this field of the possible, expressive interest finds its way to sublimation, the forms of sublimation being no more undetermined than the interest itself.

So it is in a very precise, and also very restrictive, sense that the heavy Marxist artillery still misses its object, since its reductionism is not disputed but only its vulgar practice of "short-circuiting." The genealogical method, then, only needs improving, needs complicating, needs to be made less massive and, if possible, less vulgar – but does not need to be called into question again as such. Bourdieu's position still explicitly calls for a "generalized materialism," which he defines by bringing together both Marx and Weber.

Nor should Bourdieu's sociology actually appear to be a distinguished version of vulgar Marxism. It is a form of denied Marxism, and as such it constitutes one of the components of 1968 philosophy, with which it shares the themes of the end of philosophy or the death of the subject through an exaggeration of genealogical practice. This is also how this approach, where the primary strategy was to confuse its own identity – not without a degree of success, in fact – can now, having been returned to its own domain, become the object of a critical examination.

A Popperian Critique of Bourdieu

This critical analysis could be focused on the assimilation of objectivity to a process of objectivizing social determinants, an important theme for Bourdieu, which he theorized most notably in book 1 of his *Sens pratique*. To understand the basis of this critique, we must recall how Popper defines scientificity and scientific objectivity through reference to the criteria of *falsifiability*.

Popper's definition of scientificity relies on a critique of the consequences that Hume believed could be derived from his analysis of reasoning by induction. Hume's skepticism rests entirely on the idea that science always proceeds by induction, that is, by reasoning consisting of the derivation of a general rule through the observation of specific facts or, more precisely, from observing the repetition of specific sequences.

We know what Popper's position on this reasoning is: If Hume (as Kant had recognized) is right in thinking that reason by induction never leads to certain and positive truths, he is wrong, on the other hand, to conclude from this that science fails to achieve its intentions, since – and this of course is the essential aspect of Popper's epistemology – the aim of science is not to arrive at certain and positive truths. Science aims not to verify hypotheses but to try to falsify them. This redefinition of the scientific method is explained with a simple example: Although 100,000 white swans cannot verify the proposition "All swans are white," a single black swan can prove conclusively that it is false. As a result, scientific certitudes depend only on errors, not on truths. From this derives the first and fundamental criterion for the scientificity of a discourse: its falsifiability (the possibility that it is contradicted by the facts) and not its verifiability.

His philosophy is characterized by an absence of self-reflection

On one side – where Popper places metaphysics, Marxism, and psychoanalysis as well as astrology – there is a nonfalsifiable discourse; on the other, there is scientific discourse, which, excluding certain possibilities of the real world, exposes itself to being disproven.

In the light of Popper's argumentation, at least two criticisms of Bourdieu's work seem possible:

The discourse produced is essentially (as far as its fundamental theses are concerned), nonfalsifiable. If we recall the theses that Bourdieu defends in *Reproduction*, for example, we find the idea that the school system, which is characterized by its role in social selection, is reproduced, no matter what the participants' attitude, the participants in this case being merely the unconscious, blind toys of the system. On this basis, no effort on the part of any

protagonist can, by definition, succeed in disproving the interpretation.

Unable to be disproven by any empirical reality, Bourdieu's discourse obeys only its own logic, to which he has always already submitted the facts a priori. It has the structure not of a science, which it claims to be, but of an ideology, in Arendt's meaning when she defines it as "the logic of an idea."

This discourse rejects on principle any disagreement, for two very clear reasons: It is not debatable, first of all, simply because it is nonfalsifiable. How can a discourse that can never be contradicted be debated? Bourdieu's discourse cannot be disputed any more than can the discourse of a dogmatic theologian. In the same way that a person who tries to demonstrate to the theologian that God does not exist finds that he cannot prove it, we do not see how it could be demonstrated that reproduction does not exist. This primary exclusion of debate itself poses a number of problems: The obverse of the *scientific* weakness of this type of discourse could well be a very great, very disturbing *political* strength, since a nondebatable proposition in its irrefutability always exercises a degree of terrorism.

Bourdieu's discourse forbids any disagreement with it for another, deeper reason. It is a discourse that considers objections to it to be only resistances in the analytic sense of the term and therefore supplementary confirmations of its truth. The work is supposed to lead to "terrifying" consequences for people who discover the strategies and calculations of interests through it, so any disagreement with its results guarantees *ipso facto* their confirmation, while simultaneously disqualifying itself. Not only is an objection unable to disturb the theory (since the theory has been made nonfalsifiable), but any objection is exposed to being dismantled by genealogical analysis that depends on the interest that gives it its strength, and which is not an interest in the truth, we suspect. Faced with a question that expresses a reservation, he will never ask *What do you mean?* but only *Who are you to direct this critique of the theory?* The content of the objection can never be addressed, never discussed. Disagreement disappears in the face of identifying the adversary.

Critique of Sociologism

The critique inspired by Popper can be usefully complemented and reinforced through an analysis more directly inscribed within the framework of criticism. Such an analysis could demonstrate easily the total absence in Bourdieu's sociological dis-

course of the kind of self-reflection which, when criticized, is the most effective antidote to dogmatism, and rightly so. The characteristic of all dogmatic discourse is that it is of no value even to the person who holds it, its content inapplicable to its author.

Bourdieu's hoax consists of presenting as a solution what is in fact an enormous problem

According to the theses of materialist epistemology, all discourses are historical and express historically determined interests. The distinction between traditional theory, which attempts to be autonomous from history, and critical theory, which is considered to be totally immersed in history, is founded on this simple statement. Bourdieu adopts the affirmation of the historicity of all discourse, as the following text, among others, reveals: "The sociology of science rests on the claim that the truth of the product – even the very specific product of scientific truth – is contained in a particular species of social conditions of production or, more precisely, in a determined state of the structure and functioning of the scientific field. The 'pure' universe of the 'purest' science is a social field like any other."

Here it is clearly stated that discourses, including scientific discourses, are products and that therefore they are immersed in sociohistorical reality. This conviction leads to a real contradiction:

Either the sociology of science, like all other discourses and in conformity with its own presuppositions, is itself entirely historical, in which case the problem of defining the "break" between ideology and science (between traditional theory and critical theory) does indeed appear to remain insoluble; from this perspective, no discourse is ever privileged in any way, and there exists only a battlefield where the different discourses gather and where the only criterion of validity is success or failure. Science, then, is not superior to ideology in any way, and the distinction between science and ideology becomes particularly problematical.

Or else, in order to avoid this difficult situation, the sociology of knowledge *decrees* an "epistemological break," declaring itself to be supe-

rior to ideology, and indeed superior to any other discourse, in a constitutive gesture of sociologism. It could then escape from the demand for self-reflection, since with this decree it would no longer have to apply its own criteria to itself: It then becomes dogmatic by giving itself an excessive and illegitimate privilege by its own standards.

In view of this contradiction, two solutions were considered. A perfectly defensible solution can be found in returning to the notion of "the pure interests of reason" as it was used by Kant in *Critique of Pure Reason*. Elaborating it, however, poses a number of problems. This perspective has the obvious advantage of preserving the notion of "the interests of science" without being vulnerable to the consequences of these interests being interpreted exclusively in terms of class. This is the direction Habermas took in *Knowledge and Interest*, by way of Kant and Fichte, which assumes not the celebration of the death of philosophy but a renewal of philosophical activity in order that the status and function of "pure interests" be rigorously determined.

Bourdieu adopted another solution consisting not of resolving the problem but of declaring it insoluble. He did so by decreeing that it is an insurmountable contradiction which would be presented from then on as a rich tension, when it is in fact merely a gross contradiction within which it is possible to play on all the registers, once the pill has been swallowed. Bourdieu writes that, if the conditions of production of scientific truths have to be analyzed, it is "in the name of the conviction, which itself is a product of a history, that the reason for the paradoxical progress of a reason that is historical through and through and yet irreducible to history has to be looked for in history." It is not difficult to see that this time the hoax consists of presenting as a solution what is in fact an enormous problem, given that the notion of an entirely historical reason that is irreducible to history, at first glance and at second, makes absolutely no sense.

Bourdieu, like everyone else, in fact finds himself forced to distinguish between the ahistorical interest in the truth and the historical interests that feed strategies for acquiring power (including intellectual power). He goes endlessly on attributing pure interests to himself, both naively and foolishly, and reserving historicostrategic interests for others. Let us return to the interview in the *Nouvel Observateur* on the occasion of the publication of *Homo Academicus*. If Bourdieu is always angry with

philosophers, he says it is because they regard themselves as "the cleverest defenders of intellectual narcissism," because "these people who talk endlessly about radical doubt, about critical activity, about deconstruction, always omit doubting the belief that leads them to accepting this position of doubt, this prejudice about the absence of prejudice that confirms its distinction with respect to common sense." In other words, it is philosophy that is characterized by an absence of self-reflection. Let us admit it (even if we cannot see how this definition can be applied to the whole of philosophy, from Parmenides to Nietzsche), but then we could legitimately wait for Bourdieu himself to begin practicing the self-reflection of which philosophers are congenitally incapable. However, let us read the rest of the interview. There Bourdieu explains that professors might greatly profit from the assiduous reading of his works, if they would consent to doing their self-analysis (here their socioanalysis) and to becoming aware of the unacknowledged interests supporting them. The interviewer asks if they really have an "interest" in it, and the sociologist answers with stunning dogmatism: "From my point of view, which is that of genuine scientific gain, I am sure that they would. I would even say that they could derive a great ethical advantage from such a socioanalysis."

We do not often try to convince someone who prefers tea to coffee that his choice reveals an unfortunate lack of taste

A simple question: What exceptional status does Bourdieu give his own thought since it and *it alone*, pure and disinterested, corresponds to the "point of view... of genuine scientific gain" and not to a point of view determined by an unacknowledged socially and historically situated interest, like everyone else's thought?

Throughout Bourdieu's texts, one can readily find an indefinite number of indications of such an absence of self-reflection that are difficult to ignore (let us be very clear; we do not deny that Bourdieu questions himself on the conditions of possibility of his own discourse, but since he looks for them only in the "objective" world of social determinants, it is less like self-reflection than self-reification).

In an interview given in November 1979 to *Liberation*, Bourdieu denounces the discourse of the ecology

movement for being "full of scornful references" to "subway – work – sleep" and to the vacations that the "ordinary petit bourgeois" take like "sheep," while he serenely explains in parentheses: "Quotation marks have to be used everywhere. It is very important – not to indicate the prudent distance of official journalism but to signify the gap between analytical language and ordinary language, where all these words are instruments of struggle, arms, stakes in the battle for distinction." Yes, but will he ever tell us the exact nature of the "distinction" separating the "distance" from the "gap"? The answer that science manages to advance without paying any attention to these subtleties would mean – which might have been preferable under the circumstances – that the sociology of knowledge might have done better to stay away from any epistemological considerations, since it is ultimately proving to be incapable of resolving the most minimal question in all epistemology, the question of the difference between science and the ideology of common consciousness.

Confrontation with Kant

It is understandable in view of the foregoing why a confrontation with Kant must have seemed to Bourdieu like an unavoidable move. Was not his primary concern addressing the analysis of the conditions of possibility of discourse from the sociological perspective, as the modest subtitle of *Distinction* indicates: *A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*?

The few pages devoted to the *Critique of Judgment* deserve analysis on this decisive point in their own right, so well do they demonstrate the purely sophistic nature of the intellectual pottering on which they are based. Here is what he says in what passes for an introduction to a deconstruction that is described as severe and rigorous: "When one sets about reconstructing its logic, the popular 'aesthetic' appears as the negative opposite of the Kantian aesthetic and that the popular *ethos* implicitly answers each proposition of the 'Analytic of the Beautiful' with a thesis contradicting it."

At first glance it is difficult to grasp exactly how obvious it is that popular taste is the opposite of Kant's valorization of the "beautiful natural countryside," or even his critique of intellectualizing in artistic matters. No doubt the statistics indicate to Bourdieu that the working masses hurry to concerts of serial music and that avant-garde intellectuals visit Niagara Falls. But, be that as it may, let us look at his demonstration aimed at refuting two central themes of the *Critique*, according to which the beautiful is

not the agreeable and the beautiful is the beautiful representation of a thing and not the representation of a beautiful thing.

The *Critique of Judgment* is entirely concerned with the idea (and it is still difficult to see what it has to do with "the antipopular") that the beautiful is neither agreeable nor true and that between the two terms there exists a specific feature of the aesthetic dimension. Reason can very briefly sketch it out since it coincides with common sense, unlike what Bourdieu asserts. In Kant's view, the indisputable sign that the Beautiful cannot be confused with culinary art is that, contrary to the well-known adage, one never stops *arguing about* the Beautiful. The Beautiful is an object of communication, even of interpretation (in the musical sense of the term), which is the case to a lesser extent with the agreeable. We do not often try to convince someone who prefers tea to coffee that he is missing some essential dimension and that his choice reveals an unfortunate lack of taste! Nor is the Beautiful the true. If we argue about it, we do so with the feeling that our disagreement cannot be resolved by demonstration, as a scientific dispute might be, at least in principle.

It is not important here that Kant seems to be saying something essential when he places the aesthetic at an equal distance from the true and the agreeable. What we have to understand is how can it be claimed that this analysis is the polar opposite of popular aesthetics, prototypical of the aesthetics of the dominant class?

A great deal of French philosophy of the 1960s was allowing its own theoretical identity to be forgotten

This is Bourdieu's argument: Contrary to the Kantian distinction between the beautiful and the agreeable, "working-class people, who expect every image to fulfill a *function*, if only that of a sign, refer, often explicitly, to norms of morality or agreeableness in all their judgments." The strength of the reasoning is simple. What Bourdieu wants to demonstrate is that for the people there is no pure aesthetics and that what finally counts is the content of the representation and not the representation itself – that they do not differentiate the beautiful from either the agreeable or from the representation of the thing.

This statement seems to us gratuitous, false, and incredibly contemptuous. But the most incredible thing is the example Bourdieu evokes to support his "demonstration." For – and a reader of the third *Critique* could never have dreamed of it – the example is that of photography! As far as we know, the problem of photography is not a central one in Kant's work. Even if we were to assume a thing that is already hypothetical and quite pretentious, that we could speak, as Bourdieu does, of Kant's position on a subject he never addressed (and for good reason), the example of photography would be particularly badly chosen. First because Kant's aesthetic is above all an aesthetic of natural beauty (Hegel reproached him for it often enough); and also because Kant never allows, in his opposition to classical French aesthetics, anything into the aesthetic domain that could be assimilated as a form of *imitation* in any way (which is why he claims to prefer baroque art and English gardens to the geometric art of French-style gardens). But that is not all. Not satisfied with choosing photography as his example for refuting Kant, Bourdieu's argument becomes frankly comic when he decides to discuss only two types of photographs: nudes and war photographs of violent death. In other words, *Playboy* and *Paris Match* are models of art for the third *Critique*. Under these conditions the reader has no choice but to follow Bourdieu: In fact, the thesis that the representation of the thing counts more than the thing itself fails here: "Photographs of nudes are almost always received with comments that reduce them to the stereotype of their social function: 'All right for Pigalle...it's the sort of photos they keep under the counter.'" Similarly, "the photograph of a dead soldier provokes judgments that, whether positive or negative, are always responses to the reality of the thing represented."

We do not see how a reaction that shows an interest in the content of these photographs can be called the exclusive prerogative of "popular aesthetics." In the reactions to such images on the part of high school students, executives, or nuns of any social class, one can bet that the contents of the representation would be more important than the form. As a sociologist of publishing, Bourdieu really should know that the large number of magazines devoted specifically to photography are in fact competitors of *Lui* or *Playboy* that are simply easier to buy and read in public and that the sometimes considerable price that is paid for war photographs published in the sensationalist press has very little to do with their aesthetic value, if there is one.

On the other hand, it is quite probable that precisely for these reasons Kant would not have considered these photographs to be works of art since it is so difficult to separate the representation of the thing from the thing represented. Kant's thesis is clear enough not to be deformed here. It states that a painting may be beautiful even if it represents garbage, which is why we cannot see how it challenges the taste of the popular classes, classes Bourdieu obstinately decides to treat like dumb animals.

In order to refute the *Critique of Judgment* sociologically, which in principle is not a scandalous or impossible goal, it would have been necessary to test its theses rather than set up examples of "arts" in opposition to it that it quite simply has no knowledge of and that it would probably have rejected as art. It has not been demonstrated that privileging natural beauty over artistic beauty, distinguishing between the beautiful and the agreeable, the beautiful and the true, and so on, is "antipopular." These are all things that Bourdieu is no doubt perfectly well aware of.

After reading these aberrant criticisms of the Kantian aesthetic as prototype of the bourgeois aesthetic, we are interested in knowing something about the aesthetic judgments that Bourdieu himself, like anyone else, cannot avoid making. This is a difficult problem since the underlying principle of *Distinction* is that any aesthetic judgment or, more generally, any judgment of taste in the larger sense has to be regarded as a strategy of differentiation. If a bourgeois serves chitterlings, it is because he is acting "like the people" out of snobbery, a typically bourgeois attitude; and if he prefers to offer smoked salmon, the diagnosis is no longer in doubt (My God, but it is a sure thing!) Under these conditions, how is it that Bourdieu has not died of hunger? A journalist from *Liberation* once asked him – and this is a more serious example – "If all cultural practices, all classical tastes, have a defined place in the social space, then a counterculture has to be viewed as a differentiating activity like any other...What, then, would a real counterculture be like?" Here is his unfortunately quite predictable answer: "I do not know if I can answer that question."

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