

II: THEORY AND PRACTICE: MARX MEETS BOURDIEU

The historical success of Marxist theory, the first social theory to claim scientific status that has so completely realized its potential in the social world, thus contributes to ensuring that the theory of the social world which is the least capable of integrating the *theory effect*—that it, more than any other, has created—is doubtless, today, the most powerful obstacle to the progress of the adequate theory of the social world to which it has, in times gone by, more than any other contributed.

Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Spaces and the Genesis of Classes”

What is Bourdieu saying here? The historical success of Marxism is to have constituted the idea of class out of a bundle of attributes shared by an arbitrary assemblage of people, what he calls “class on paper.” Aided by parties, trade unions, media, and propaganda -- an “immense historical labor of theoretical and practical invention, starting with Marx himself” (Bourdieu, 1991 [1984]: 251) -- Marxism effectively called forth the working class as a real actor in history, an actor that otherwise would have had only potential existence. However, Marxism did not see itself as constituting the working class, but as discovering and then reflecting the prior existence of an objective class, destined to make history in its own image. Marxism did not have the tools to understand its own effect – “theory effect” – without which there would be no “working class”. In short, Marxism did not comprehend its own power, the power of its symbols, and thus, missed out on the importance of symbolic domination.

But why does Marxism constitute such a “powerful obstacle to the progress of the adequate theory of the social world” *now*, if before it had been so successful? Here I conjecture the answer is as follows. In failing to recognize the symbolic world, it fails to anticipate the emergence of fields of symbolic production – fields of art, literature, science, journalism – that engender their own domination effects, overriding and countering Marxism’s symbolic power. Marxism cannot understand that a classification or representational struggle has to precede class struggle, that is classes have to be constituted symbolically before they can engage in struggle. Unable to compete in the classification struggle, Marxism loses its symbolic power and the working class retreats back to a class on paper, no longer the effective actor that it was. When the economic was being constituted as an autonomous field in 19th century Europe, Marxism had a firm grasp of reality, but with the rise of cultural, scientific, bureaucratic fields (in the late 19th century?) Marxism lost its grip on reality and its theory became retrograde.

Bourdieu never examines his claims about Marxism, but that is precisely what we will do, starting with Marx himself. I will let Marx speak back through a dialogue with Bourdieu, taking as my point of departure their common critique of philosophy. From there I construct a conversation that brings forth their divergent theories, showing how the one ends up in a materialist cul de sac and the other in an idealist cul de sac. Each breaks out of the prisons they create, but in ways they cannot explain, which becomes the paradox of the gap between theory and practice.

The Critique of Philosophy

Uncanny parallels join Marx and Engels' critique of the "German Ideology" and Bourdieu's critique of "scholastic reason" in *Pascalian Meditations*. In *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels settle accounts with Hegel and the Young Hegelians just as in *Pascalian Meditations* Bourdieu settles his scores with his own philosophical enemies. Both condemn philosophy's disposition to dismiss practical engagement with the world. As Marx writes in the first Thesis on Feuerbach, the German philosophers elevate the theoretical attitude as the "only genuinely human attitude," while practice is only conceived in "its dirty-judaical manifestation." Bourdieu's immersion in the Algerian war of independence, his experience of the raw violence of colonialism made nonsense of his philosophical training at the École Normale.

Still, *Pascalian Meditations* is Bourdieu's culminating theoretical work in which Pascal is presented as an inspirational philosophical break with philosophy, centering the importance of the practice of ordinary people, emphasizing symbolic power exercised over the body, and refusing the emanation of pure philosophy from the heads of philosophers. *The German Ideology*, is not a culminating work, but an originating work that clears the foundations for Marx's theory of historical materialism and materialist history. The different titles reflect their different location in the biography of each of their authors, but the argument against philosophy is, nonetheless, surprisingly similar.

Let us begin with Marx and Engels scoffing at the Young Hegelians who think they are making history, when they are but counterpoising one phrase to another.

As we hear from German ideologists, Germany has in the last few years gone through an unparalleled revolution. The decomposition of the Hegelian philosophy ... has developed into a universal ferment into which all the "powers of the past" are swept. ... It was a revolution besides which the French Revolution was child's play, a world struggle beside which the struggles of the Diadochi appear insignificant. Principles ousted one another, heroes of the mind overthrew each other with unheard-of rapidity and in the three years 1842-45 more of the past was swept away in Germany than at other times in three centuries. All this is supposed to have taken place in the realm of pure thought. (Tucker, 1978: 147)

Here is Bourdieu's attack on modern and postmodern philosophers:

Now, if there is one thing that our 'modern' or 'postmodern' philosophers have in common, beyond the conflicts that divide them, it is this excessive confidence in the powers of language. It is the typical illusion of the *lector*, who can regard an academic commentary as a political act or the critique of texts as a feat of resistance, and experience revolutions in the order of words as radical revolutions in the order of things. (Bourdieu, 2000 [1997]: 2)

The argument is the same: we must not confuse a war of words with the transformation of the real world, the things of logic with the logic of things.

But how is it that philosophers mistake their own world for the real world? The answer lies in their oblivion to the social and economic conditions under which they

produce knowledge. For Marx it is simply the division of mental from manual labor that permits the illusion that ideas or consciousness drives history.

Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. *From this moment onwards consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice*, that it really represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of “pure” theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc.[Italics added] (Tucker, 1978: 159)

Emancipated from manual labor, upon which their existence nevertheless rests, philosophers imagine that history is moved by their thought. “It has not occurred to any one of these philosophers,” Marx and Engels (Tucker, 1978: 149) write, “to inquire into the connection of German philosophy with German reality, the relation of their criticism to their own material surroundings.” In identical fashion, Bourdieu argues that philosophers fail to understand the peculiarity of the material conditions that make it possible to produce “pure” theory.

But there is no doubt nothing more difficult to apprehend, for those who are immersed in universes in which it goes without saying, than the scholastic disposition demanded by those universes. There is nothing that ‘pure’ thought finds it harder to think than *skholè* the first and most determinant of all the social conditions of possibility of ‘pure’ thought, and also the scholastic disposition which inclines its possessors to suspend the demands of the situation, the constraints of economic and social necessity. (Bourdieu, 2000 [1997]: 12)

The scholastic disposition calls forth the illusion that knowledge is freely produced, and that it is not the product of specific material conditions. Bourdieu does not limit his critique of the scholastic fallacy, namely repression of the conditions peculiar to intellectual life, to philosophers but broaden it to other disciplines. He criticizes anthropologists, such as Levi-Strauss, and economists for universalizing their own particular experience, foisting their abstract models onto the recalcitrant practice of ordinary mortals. Only sociologists, reflexively applying sociology to themselves and, more generally, to the production of knowledge, can potentially appreciate the scholastic fallacy of others, and the necessary separation of theory and practice.

In Bourdieu’s eyes – and here I am imputing an argument to Bourdieu that, as far as I know, he never made -- Marx contravenes his own critique of idealism and becomes a perpetrator of a scholastic fallacy. He is guilty of inventing the idea of the proletariat that carries the burden of humanity by fighting against dehumanization to realize another scholastic invention -- communism -- a world community populated by renaissance individuals, rich in needs and varied in talents. These ideals are but the projection of the intellectuals’ sense of alienation from their own conditions of existence. Real workers, Bourdieu would argue, are only concerned to better their material conditions of existence, bereft of such lofty Marxian dreams. Just as Bourdieu would turn Marx against Marx so, as we will see, Marx would turn Bourdieu against Bourdieu. For now it is sufficient to note that both Marx and Bourdieu insist on a break with the logic of theory by turning to the logic of practice.

From Historical Materialism to Coexisting Fields

Out of these common critiques of philosophy arise divergent social theories. Since Bourdieu's social theory is so clearly a response to Marx, we should begin with the latter. For Marx the logic of practice refers to economic practice, understood as the concrete social relations into which men and women enter as they transform nature. These social relations form the mode of production with two components: the forces of production (relations through which men and women collaborate in producing the means of existence, including the mode of cooperation and the technology it deploys) and the relations of production (the relations of exploitation through which surplus is pumped out of a class of direct producers and appropriated by a dominant class). The mode of production gives rise to Marx's three histories: (a) history as a succession of modes of production – Tribal, Ancient, Feudal, and Capitalist; (b) history as the dynamics of any given mode of production as the relations of production first stimulate and then fetter the expansion of the forces of production – a theory that is only worked out for capitalism; and (c) history as the history of class struggle which propels the movement from one mode of production to another, when the material conditions of such a transition are met. Capitalism gives way to communism which, being without classes and thus without exploitation, is not a mode of production. The key to history lies in the mode of production but it is only within the capitalist mode of production that the direct producers, that is, the working class, through its struggles, comes to recognize its role as agent of revolution.

Bourdieu will have no truck with such economic reductionism, such a theory of history and of the future, this projection of intellectual fantasies onto the benighted working class. But let us proceed step by step. When Bourdieu turns to the "logic of practice" he goes beyond economic activities to embrace activities in all arenas of life, and furthermore those activities are seen less in terms of "transformation" and more in terms of bodily practices that lead to and evolve from the constitution of the habitus, the inculcation of dispositions of perception and appreciation. Here is how Bourdieu defines habitus in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

The habitus, the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, produce practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the habitus. (Bourdieu, 1977 [1972]: 78)

The habitus generates practices that, like moves in a game, are regulated by the regularities of the social structure and in so doing they reproduce those structures. But practices and knowledge are bound together by the body whose importance the intellectualist vision misses. The social order inscribes itself in bodies, that is to say, we learn bodily, and express our knowledge bodily – all under the organizing power of the habitus, itself largely unconscious.

The notion of habitus gives much greater weight and depth to the individual who, in Marx, is simply the effect or carrier of social relations. Nevertheless, in the account of those social relations Bourdieu's notion of field draws on and generalizes certain features of Marx's concept of mode of production, or at least his conception of the *capitalist* mode

of production elaborated in *Capital*. Indeed, underlining the parallels Bourdieu refers to the *political economy of symbolic goods* (science, art, education). As with the capitalist mode of production so with the notion of field, individuals compulsorily enter into relations of competition in order to accumulate capital according to rules of the market place. Bourdieu's fields have the same character, each having their own distinctive "capital" that agents seek to accumulate, bound by rules of competition that give the field a certain functional integrity and relative autonomous dynamics. If there are any overall historical tendencies of fields it is toward the concentration of the field-specific capital as when Bourdieu (1975) writes of the scientific field as being dominated by those who increasingly monopolize scientific capital.

However, there are fundamental differences between Marx and Bourdieu. In Bourdieu's field, most fully elaborated for the literary field in *Rules of Art* (Bourdieu, 1996 [1992]), but also in his account of the scientific field, the notion of exploitation, so essential to Marx, is absent. Instead we have a field of domination governing the struggle between the consecrated incumbents and the new challengers, the avant-garde. It is as if capitalism were confined to just the competition among capitalists, which is, of course, how conventional economics thinks of the economy. Indeed, the only book Bourdieu (2005) devotes to the economy as such, *Social Structures of the Economy*, focuses on the role of habitus and taste in the matching of supply and demand for different types of housing. It's all about the social underpinnings of the housing market. There is no attempt to study housing from the standpoint of its production process, from the standpoint of construction workers, for example. The very concept that is definitive of the capitalist economy for Marx, namely exploitation, is absent in Bourdieu's concept of the field.

More to the point, the architecture of fields is profoundly different in the two theories. In Marx there is essentially just one major field – the capitalist mode of production with its inherent laws of competition leading to crises of overproduction and the falling rate of profit on the one side and the intensification of class struggle on the other. The only thing holding back the demise of capitalism is its superstructure, composed of, you might say, a series of subsidiary fields – legal, political, religious, aesthetic and philosophical. Bourdieu transposes the base-superstructure model into a system of coexisting fields. Although the economic is, in some undefined sense, still dominant and threatens the autonomy of other fields, Bourdieu pays attention to the inner workings of what in Marx are more or less dismissed as epiphenomenal.

No less fundamental is the way they conceive of the relation among fields. If Marx has a historical succession of economic fields, Bourdieu has a functional coexistence of fields. Bourdieu's multiplication of coexisting fields poses a host of new problems with respect to the relations among fields, which is why one axis of differentiation and struggle within any field is over its autonomy/heteronomy with respect to other fields, usually the economic. In his later writings Bourdieu engages in a polemical defense of science and culture, education and politics against the corrosive influence of the invading economy. The creation of the literary field in 19th century France required the break from bourgeois literature on the one side and social realism on

the other, to an autonomous literature-for-literature's sake. But autonomy brings with it another sort of relation among fields, a relation of *misrecognition*. The autonomy of the educational field or of various cultural fields leads to the misrecognition of their contribution to the reproduction of relations in other fields, most notably class relations in the economic field. Whether in *Distinction* or in *Reproduction* the preexistence of class structure is taken as given and the focus is how culture or education simultaneously secure and obscure class domination.

The coexistence of fields raises a further question: their effect on the action of individuals as they move across fields. In Marx individuals are only studied in one field and there they act out the imperatives of the relations in which they are embedded. Bourdieu's analysis is more complex, he has to ask how individuals nurtured in one field behave in another field – how do students coming from peasant families (as opposed to urban middle classes) behave within the educational sphere. Does it make no difference or is there something in their cultural capital or their habitus that makes them behave differently? Each field may have its logic but sometimes the strength of the habitus agents bring from another field – the peasant who comes to town – may lead to a tension, conflict, or even rupture with the new order, what he calls a “misfiring” of habitus. It is the durability of the habitus that can lead to what Bourdieu calls *hysteresis* – how an individual's inherited and obdurate habitus inhibits adaptation to successive fields.

Bourdieu's favorite example of hysteresis is the devaluation of educational credentials that, in his view, explains the student protest of May 1968. *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu, 1988 [1984]) describes how the expansion of higher education created an oversupply of assistant lecturers whose upward mobility was consequently blocked. The ensuing tension between aspirations and opportunities not only affected the young assistants, but students more generally who found that their degrees did not give them access to expected jobs. The result was a discordance between class habitus and the labor market simultaneously in a number of fields, so that their normally disparate temporal rhythms were synchronized, merging into a general crisis, conducted in a singular public time, producing an historical event that suspended common sense.

This is a repotted version of the theory of relative deprivation that once informed so much social psychology and social movement theory. It does not take seriously the self-understanding of the actors, nor even the resources they have at their disposal. To be sure, the disjuncture of habitus and field, expectation and opportunity, disposition and position, is always a potential source of change, but we need to know when it leads to adjustment to the field, when it leads to innovation, and when it leads to rebellion. In these regards Bourdieu's theory of habitus has little to offer – even less than Robert Merton's (1968 [1947]) famous essay on social structure and anomie that systematically examined the consequences of the gap between aspirations and possibilities, namely, rebellion, ritualism, retreatism, innovation as well as conformity. In Bourdieu's hands habitus, however, remains a black box, yet one that is nonetheless essential to thinking about the effects of mobility between fields both on the individual and on the transformation of fields themselves.

We can now put the two models side by side: Marx's succession of modes of production through history with its problematic dynamics and transition, its unjustified linear progress to communism; and Bourdieu's unspecified totality made up of coexisting and homologous fields with unexamined and untheorized inter-relationships. If Marx's totality is governed by a richly developed base and a weakly understood superstructure, Bourdieu's unspecified history can at best be seen as the development of a differentiated set of fields with no mechanisms of propulsion, reminiscent of Durkheim's or Spencer's models of differentiation, or Weber's coexisting value spheres. Thus, in Bourdieu's account Kabylia is an undifferentiated society without separate fields that characterize advanced societies, but there's no notion of how one gets from the undifferentiated to the differentiated society. Or to put it even more crudely: if Marx's theory of history is deeply flawed, Bourdieu has no theory of history, even if his work is historically rooted.

Symbolic Domination: From Weak to Strong

Marx's strong sense of social transformation is accompanied by a weak theory of symbolic domination in contrast to Bourdieu's strong theory of social reproduction, at the heart of which is symbolic domination. Still, there remains an uncanny convergence in the way they both conceive of symbolic domination. Let us return to *The German Ideology* and to the much quoted passage on ideology.

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, *the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.*" (Emphasis added)
(Tucker, 1978: 172)

Here Marx and Engels advance from a dismissal of ideology (in contradistinction to science) to the real effects of those illusory ideas in sustaining the domination of the dominant class. We do not know, however, what Marx and Engels intended when they wrote that the dominated class, i.e. those who don't have access to the means of mental production, are *subject to* the ruling ideas. Bourdieu takes up the issue and sees subjection as deep and irreversible.

Symbolic violence is the coercion which is set up only through the consent that the dominated cannot fail to give to the dominator (and therefore to the domination) when their understanding of the situation and relation can only use instruments of knowledge that they have in common with the dominator, which, being merely the incorporated form of the structure of the relation of domination, make this relation appear as natural; or, in other words, when the schemes they implement in order to perceive and evaluate themselves or to perceive and evaluate the dominators (high/low, male/female, white/black, etc.) are the product of the incorporation of the (thus neutralized) classifications of which their social being is the product. (Bourdieu, 2000 [1998]: 170)

The parallels are astonishing, except that Bourdieu puts symbolic violence at the center of his account. For Marx, of course, symbolic violence does not only reign down from the superstructure, but is powerfully present within the economic base itself. Exploitation itself is mystified by the very character of production that hides the distinction between necessary and surplus labor since workers appear to be paid for the entire work day.

Participation in the market leads to commodity fetishism wherein the objects we buy and sell and the objects we consume are disconnected from the social relations and human labor necessary to produce them. Again the essence of capitalism is mystified.

For Marx, however, these expressions of ideology, whether ideology is understood as ruling ideas or lived experience, are dissolved through class struggle, leading the working class to see the truth of capitalism on the one side and their role in transforming it on the other!

It is not a matter of what this or that proletarian or even the proletariat as a whole *pictures* at present as its goal. It is a matter of *what the proletariat is in actuality*, and what in accordance with this *being*, it will historically be compelled to do. Its goal and its historical action are prefigured in the most clear and ineluctable way in its own life-situation as well as in the whole organization of contemporary bourgeois society. There is no need to harp on the fact that a large part of the English and French proletariat is already *conscious* of its historic task and is continually working to bring this consciousness to full clarity. (From *The Holy Family* in Tucker, 1978: 134-5)

This optimistic teleology is deeply flawed. For the proletariat to rid itself of the “the muck of ages,” as Marx and Engels put it in *The Germany Ideology* (Tucker, 1978: 193) is not so easy. Only under unusual circumstances does class struggle assume an ascendant path, intensifying itself as it expands. To the contrary: through its victories, through the concessions it wins, its revolutionary tempo is dampened and its struggles come to be organized, most frequently, *within* the framework of capitalism. In this the state, under-theorized by Marx, plays a key role. In such a context the symbolic violence of dominant ideologies incorporated in lived experience prevail over the cathartic effect of struggle.

Bourdieu indicts the whole Marxist tradition – and not just Marx -- for its revolutionary optimism, labeling it an intellectualist fantasy or scholastic illusion, and then bends the stick in the opposite direction.

And another effect of the scholastic illusion is seen when people describe resistance to domination in the language of consciousness – as does the whole Marxist tradition and also the feminist theorists who, giving way to habits of thought, expect political liberation to come from the ‘raising of consciousness’ – ignoring the extraordinary inertia which results from the inscription of social structures in bodies, for lack of a dispositional theory of practices. While making things explicit can help, only a thoroughgoing process of countertraining, involving repeated exercises, can, like an athlete’s training, durably transform habitus. (Bourdieu 2000 [1997]: 172)

What this “countertraining” might look like is never elaborated. Whether class struggle might be a form of “countertraining” is especially unclear because Bourdieu never entertains the idea of class struggle or even allows for “collective resistance” to the dominant culture. The working classes are driven by the exigencies of material necessity, leading them to make a virtue out of a necessity. They embrace their functional life-style rather than reject the dominant culture. An alternative culture remains beyond their grasp because they have neither the tools nor the leisure to create it (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]: chapter 7).

Having, thus, written off the working classes as incapable of grasping the conditions of their oppression, Bourdieu is compelled to look elsewhere for contesting symbolic domination. Having broken from a fallacious logic of theory to the logic of practice, and having discovered that the logic of practice is no less fallacious, Bourdieu breaks back to the logic of theory, the emancipatory science of sociology, and to struggles within the dominant class. Let us follow his argument!

From Class Struggle to Classification Struggle

In his writings on the French period of 1848-51 Marx has a complex analysis of the struggles among the fractions of the dominant class that cannot be summarized here. Suffice to say intellectuals played a significant role. In a succinct paragraph in *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels wrote of a cleavage within the dominant classes, between its economic part and its intellectual part, as follows.

The division of labour .. manifests itself also in the ruling class as the division of mental and manual labour, so that inside this class one part appears as thinkers of the class (its active conceptive ideologists, who make the perfecting of the illusion of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood), while the others' attitude to these ideas and illusions is more passive and receptive, because they are in reality the active members of the class and have less time to make up the illusions and ideas about themselves. Within this class this cleavage can even develop into a certain opposition and hostility between the two parts. (Tucker, 1978: 173)

Without referring to Marx, Bourdieu calls these the dominant and the dominated fractions of the dominant class, giving the latter a “chiastic” structure in which one part is well endowed with economic capital (and relatively low in cultural capital) while the other is well endowed with cultural capital (and relatively low in economic capital) . Bourdieu, too, recognizes the conflict between the two fractions, but casts that conflict in terms of struggles over categories of representation, the so-called classification struggles. Recognizing that intellectuals are the source of ruling ideology, “the illusion of the class about itself,” Bourdieu also sees the possibility of their generating a symbolic revolution that can shape the “deepest structures of the social order.”

Likewise, the arts and literature can no doubt offer the dominant agents some very powerful instruments of legitimation, either directly, through the celebration they confer, or indirectly, especially through the cult they enjoy, which also consecrates its celebrants. But it can also happen that artists or writers are, directly or indirectly, at the origin of large-scale symbolic revolutions (like the bohemian lifestyle in the nineteenth century, or, nowadays, the subversive provocations of the feminist or homosexual movements), capable of shaking the deepest structures of the social order, such as family structures, through transformation of the fundamental principles of division of the vision of the world (such as male/female opposition) and the corresponding challenges to the self-evidences of common sense. (Bourdieu 2000 [1997]: 105)

It is not clear whether this “shaking up” will actually undermine the domination of the dominant class. There is not even a hint that it will create opportunities for the dominated to challenge their subjugation. One has to ask, therefore, what are the interests that lie behind any such “symbolic revolution”?

As the dominated fraction of the dominant class, intellectuals are in a contradictory position. Certain parts may identify with the dominated classes and indeed try to represent the latter's interests. As such they may even pursue an agenda hostile to the dominant class as a whole. In the final analysis, however, this is an intellectualist illusion that they share interests with the dominated as there is little basis for an enduring connection between intellectuals born out of *skholé* and workers born into material necessity.

Rather than turning to any presumed universalism from below, Bourdieu commits himself to what he calls the *Realpolitik* of Reason, the pursuit of universality that is wired into the character of the state.

Those who like Marx, reverse the official image that the State bureaucracy seeks to give of itself and describe the bureaucrats as usurpers of the universal, acting like private proprietors of public resources, are not wrong. But they ignore the very real effects of the obligatory reference to the values of neutrality and disinterested devotion to the public good which becomes more and more incumbent on state functionaries in the successive stages of the long labor of symbolic construction which leads to the invention and imposition of the official representation of the State as the site of universality and the service of the general interest (Bourdieu, 2000 [1997]: 124)

In this remarkable passage, written at the very time he is attacking the French state for continuing to violate its public function, in which the right hand of the state is displacing the left hand, when the state is openly pursuing an aggressive assault on the working class, Bourdieu is also appealing to its “disinterested devotion to the public good” that will eventually assert itself against the state's usurpers. In the long run the state will become the carrier of the general interest, but how?

The idea of universality will not prevail simply because it is an attractive ideal – that would be the worst form of idealism – but because there are certain fields which by their very functioning, by virtue of their internal struggles, give rise to a commitment to the universal.

In reality, if one is not, at best, to indulge in an irresponsible utopianism, which often has no other effect than to procure the short-lived euphoria of humanist hopes, almost always as brief as adolescence, and which produces effects quite as malign in the life of research as in political life, it is necessary I think to return to a ‘realistic’ vision of the universes in which the universal is generated. To be content, as one might be tempted, with giving the universal the status of a ‘regulatory idea’, capable of suggesting principles of action, would be to forget that there are universes in which it becomes a “constitutive” immanent principle of regulation, such as the scientific field, and to a lesser extent the bureaucratic field and the judicial field; and that, more generally, as soon as the principles claiming universal validity (those of democracy, for example) are stated and officially professed, there is no longer any social situation in which they cannot serve at least as symbolic weapons in struggles of interests or as instruments of critique for those who have a self-interest in truth and virtue (like, nowadays, all those, especially in the minor state nobility, whose interests are bound up with universal advances associated with the State and with law). (Bourdieu, 2000 [1997]: 127)

Let us recall that Bourdieu sets out on his journey with a critique of scholastic reason that misses the ways in which theoretical models, such as those of “rational choice” or “deliberative democracy” are but projections of the very specific conditions under which knowledge is produced. After turning from this fallacious logic of theory to the logic of

practice and finding there only misrecognition, Bourdieu returns to the same universalities, produced in the scientific, legal, bureaucratic fields, universalities that he had earlier called into question as scholastic fallacies -- the product of the peculiar circumstances of their production. But now he turns to them as founding the hope for humanity.

We are back with the Enlightenment, with Hegel's view of the state criticized by Marx as portraying a false universality that masks the interests of the dominant class by presenting them as the interests of all. Not just Marx, but Weber, too, saw the dangers that such universality would become a formal rationality, and, thus, the perfection of domination. We can see this enlightenment faith in Bourdieu's proposals for an international of intellectuals, recognizing that they are a corporate body with their own interests, but at the same time regarding them as the carriers of universalism, a corporatism of the universal. They are what Alvin Gouldner (1979) called a flawed universal class. But Bourdieu was not only organizing intellectuals, but paradoxically he was also to be found on the picket lines of striking workers, haranguing them about the evils of neoliberalism – even as he claimed they could not understand the conditions of their own oppression. No different from the people he studied he too created a gap between his theory and his practice, especially when his theory led him into a political cul de sac.

Conclusion

Marx and Bourdieu set out from similar positions, but they end up in divergent places. They both start out as critics of intellectualist illusions or scholastic fallacies that privilege the role of ideas in the making of history. They both break to the logic of practice, but where Marx remains wedded to the logic of practice, seeing in it a future emancipation realized through working class revolution, Bourdieu sees the logic of practice as a cul-de-sac, mired in domination. So he breaks away from the logic of practice, back to the practice of logic, to a faith in reason whether embodied in an international of intellectuals or the universality of the state. In short, if Bourdieu starts out as a critic of philosophy and ends up as a Hegelian, believing in the universality of reason, Marx also starts out as a critic of philosophy but ends up with material production but no considered place for intellectuals or for himself. Marx cannot explain how he produced his theory of capitalism, sitting in the British museum removed from the working class, and writing in a place remote from their experiences. We are on the horns of a dilemma: intellectuals without the subaltern or the subaltern without intellectuals.

Each recognizes the dilemma and, in his practice, each breaks with his theory: Bourdieu joins workers as allies in the struggle against the state while Marx battles with intellectuals as though the fate of the world depended on it. Can we bring theory and practice closer together? Gramsci, with his theory of hegemony and intellectuals, seeks to do just that, trying to transcend the theoretical opposition: faith in the subaltern on the one side and in intellectuals on the other. In the next conversation we will see how he fares, and where this will leave Bourdieu.