

II: DURABLE DOMINATION: GRAMSCI MEETS BOURDIEU

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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.

Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (p.172).

In his *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* Pierre Bourdieu undertakes what he calls a socio-analysis of the self, distinguished, he says, from an ego-centric auto-biography that would dwell on a triumphal career by an examination of the educational field within which he grew up, an examination of his insertion into the civil war in Algeria, and an examination of the university field into which he then entered. Much of the focus is on the domination of philosophy that he faced in “École Normale, the derogation of sociology in France, and his refusal to enroll in the fashionable Marxism. Ultimately, he explains his interest in reflexivity and his insights into the academic field by his own trajectory from a rural outpost in the Béarn to professor at Collège de France. He always felt ill-at-ease and an imposter in the academic world, possessing a “cleft habitus,” the effect of a “very strong discrepancy between high academic consecration and low social origin,” (p.69) and from this vantage point was able to better “objectivate” the academic terrain.

Antonio Gramsci, unique among the great Marxist theoreticians, came from a strikingly similar rural background, was similarly uncomfortable in the university setting, although for Gramsci it meant leaving the university for a life of journalism and politics before being unceremoniously cast into prison. The parallels in their intellectual perspectives are striking. Both repudiated Marx's laws of history, both developed sophisticated notions of class struggle, and both focused on what Gramsci called the superstructures of capitalism, what Bourdieu called the fields of cultural domination, and both thereby lost sight of the economy, dealing only with its effects. More positively, both were preeminently interested in questions of domination and reproduction. They were concerned to understand social action within constraints, and to overcome such false oppositions as voluntarism and determinism, subjectivism and objectivism. In so doing both drew heavily on the ideas first formulated by Marx in the *Theses of Feuerbach*. Both were reflexive about the place of intellectuals in politics – their place in the reproduction and in the transformation of social orders. Given their similarities in social trajectory and thus in disposition, given their common theoretical preoccupations, their fundamental divergences are all the more interesting – closely tied to the very different historical contexts within which they grew up. Gramsci, after all, remained a Marxist, engaged with questions of socialism at a time when it was still very much on the agenda whereas Bourdieu distanced himself from Marxism in what would become a postsocialist world.

In the final analysis Bourdieu has greater confidence in scholastic truth generated in the academy whereas Gramsci grounds truth in the experience of workers in the

process of production and factory council, making way for what he calls “the organic intellectual,” embedded in the working class. To use Gramscian terminology, where Gramsci sees good sense embedded in the common sense of the working class Bourdieu sees only bad sense. Contrariwise Bourdieu places great faith in the potential good sense of sociology, elaborated within the autonomous arena of the academy. Gramsci, on the other hand, is skeptical that university intellectuals can be more than “traditional intellectuals” who, in the final analysis, reproduce domination. Each is concerned about the dangers of pathology -- Bourdieu that social science be overrun by markets and experts, Gramsci that working class experience be distorted rather than elaborated by the party.

In attacking the other’s respective positions, each absolutizes the other’s auto-critique. Thus, Bourdieu turns Gramsci’s cautionary remarks about the organic intellectual into a polemic against the organic intellectual tout court, while Gramsci, had he the chance, would have turned Bourdieu’s critical remarks about the scholastic fallacies committed by fellow academics, journalists and publicists into claims about the inherent limitations of the traditional intellectual. These opposed views of the traditional and organic intellectuals are embedded in divergent views of domination: on the one hand symbolic domination in which the dominated do not recognize domination as such and hegemony in which the dominated recognize and consent to domination. Out of this emerge different theories of social change and transformation.

Accordingly this lecture follows a course comparing the social trajectories of Bourdieu and Gramsci, how those trajectories give rise to their respective conceptions of intellectuals, and their divergent theories of domination and transformation. Consistent with the way I have organized these lectures, namely as a Marxist response to Bourdieu, I will reconstruct Bourdieu's theory through a Gramscian lens. Following Gramsci's measured assessment of his antagonists, especially Croce, I will ensure that Gramsci is more respectful of Bourdieu than Bourdieu was of Gramsci! But we will begin by deploying Bourdieu's notion of habitus to trace the intersection of biography and history.

2. The Intersection of Biography and History

The concept of habitus is the way Bourdieu transcends the subjectivism of the agent centered perspective and the objectivism of the outsider scientist by recognizing the incorporation of social structure as a durable but generative set of dispositions -- perceptions and appreciations. Habitus accounts for the practical sense, learned capacity to innovate, to play the game, to have a feel for the game -- a creativity defined by accumulated dispositions, internalized from previous social structure, at the same time a creativity channeled by the actually existing social structure. We can think of habitus as layered, with the deepest and more profound layers acquired early on in life. The lives of Gramsci and Bourdieu offer us a parallel succession of four sets of experiences: early childhood and schooling (from village to city); first political experiences (Algerian revolution vs. factory council movement), theoretical development (university vs. communist movement), and final redirections (from university into public sphere vs. from party to prison)

Both Gramsci and Bourdieu grew up in peasant societies. Gramsci was born in Sardinia in 1891, Bourdieu was born in 1930 in the Béarn in the Pyrenees. Both were children of local public employees, Bourdieu the son of a postman and then a clerk in the village post office, Gramsci the son of a clerk in the local land registry. Bourdieu was an only child but Gramsci was one of seven, who played a major role in his early life. Both were very attached to their mothers – in both instances women from higher status peasant background than the fathers. They both shone at school and by dint of will power advanced from their poor villages to metropolitan centers, each with the support of devoted schoolmasters.

Undoubtedly Gramsci's life was more difficult. Not only was his family far poorer but he also suffered from the physical and psychological pain of being a hunchback. Only with his deep reserves of determination, sacrifice, and support from his elder brother, could Gramsci in 1911 make his way to the mainland of Northern Italy with a scholarship to study philosophy and linguistics at the University of Turin. In similar fashion Bourdieu would make his way to the preparatory lycée and then enter the École Normale Supérieure where he studied philosophy, the apex of the French intellectual pyramid. Coming from peasant background to the urban metropolis, whether Turin or Paris, was daunting -- both were fish out of water in the new middle and upper class milieu of the university. Although they both became brilliant intellectuals and political figures, neither lost touch with the sources of their marginality, their village and their family. Gramsci's devotion to his family and rural mores are captured in his letters

from prison just as Bourdieu remained similarly close to his parents throughout his life, returning home periodically to conduct field research. Their rural up-bringing is deeply embedded in their habitus, their dispositions and their thought, whether by way of obdurate legacy or vehement reaction.¹

Gramsci never finished university but dived into Turin's working class politics, which was heating up during World War One. He began writing for the socialist newspaper *Avanti!* and also for *Il Grido*. After the war he became editor of *L'Ordine Nuovo*, the cultural magazine of Turin's working class, designed to articulate its new culture and destined to become the mouthpiece of the factory council movement, the occupation of the factories of 1919-20. Bourdieu, on the other hand, left university and after a year teaching in a lycée, was drafted for national service in Algeria in 1955. He would remain in this war torn country for 5 years, conducting field work when his military service was over, teaching at the university, and through his writing giving voice to the culture and struggles of the colonized, both in town and village. With the period of austerity that came after the temporary setback to the anti-colonial movement in the Battle of Algiers (1957), Bourdieu's position became untenable and he was forced to leave in 1960. Thus, in their formative years after university both Gramsci and Bourdieu were fundamentally transformed by struggles far from their homes. Even during these

¹ Reflecting their very different intellectual positions and dispositions they diverge fundamentally in their relation to their class origins. In the film "Sociology as a Martial Art," a portrait of Bourdieu's academic and political life, there is a scene in which Bourdieu describes his revulsion for the dialect of his home region in the Pyrenees, illustrating the class habitus he developed in the academic establishment, whereas Gramsci writes moving letters from prison to his sister, imploring her to make sure that her children do not lose familiarity with folk idioms and vernacular.

years, however, Gramsci was politically much closer to his protagonists than Bourdieu whose political engagement manifested itself at a scientific distance.

The bifurcated racial world of colonialism removed Bourdieu from his protagonists just as the class order of Italy thrust Gramsci, although an émigré from the semi-feudal Sardinia, into working class politics. Accordingly, at this point the two men took very different roads. Following the defeat of the factory councils, Gramsci becomes a leader of the working class movement, a founder member of the Communist Party in 1921, and its General Secretary in 1924, precisely when fascism consolidated itself. He spends time in Moscow with the Comintern, and in exile in Vienna, but travels throughout Italy after 1923 at a time when being an elected deputy gave him political immunity. This ends in 1926 when he is arrested under a new set of laws and in 1928 he is brought to trial. The judge declares that Gramsci's brain must be stopped for 20 years. He was sent to prison where, despite numerous and ultimately fatal diseases, he produced the most creative Marxist thinking of the 20th. Century – the famous Prison Notebooks. Ironically, it was the fascist prison that kept Stalin's predators at bay. Gramsci's health deteriorated continuously until he died in 1937 of tuberculosis, Pott's Disease (that eats away at the vertebrae) and arterio-sclerosis, just as an international campaign for his release was gaining ground.

Bourdieu's trajectory could not have been more different. He passed into the academy, taking up positions in France's leading research centers, writing about the place of education in reproducing the class relations of French society. Bourdieu was to be

elected to the prestigious professorship at the Collège de France in 1982, which made him a preeminent public intellectual, and in later years an inheritor of the mantle of Sartre and Foucault. From the beginning his writings had political import and bearing but they took on a more activist and urgent mission in the middle 1990s, especially with the return to power of the socialists in 1997. He publicly defended the dispossessed, and attacked the ascendant technocracy of neoliberalism, and above all attacked the mass media and journalists in his book *On Television*. He undertook various publishing ventures from the more academic *Actes de la recherches en sciences sociales* to the more militant *Raisons d'agir* book series. In his last years he would try to forge a “collective intellectual” that transcended national and disciplinary boundaries, bringing together progressive minds to shape public debate.

If Gramsci moved from party political engagement to a more scholastic life in prison, where he reflected on the failed socialist revolution in the West, Bourdieu took the opposite path from the scholastic life to the more public opposition to the growing tide of market fundamentalism, even addressing striking workers and supporting their struggles. Gramsci's organic connection to the working class through the Communist Party exaggerated the revolutionary potential of the working class. In prison he devoted himself to understanding how the elaborate superstructures of advanced capitalism, which included not just an expanded state but also its relation to the emergent trenches of civil society, not only justified and maintained domination but also won the active consent of those over whom they rule. Bourdieu, on the other hand, had already elaborated a theory of reproduction based on his analysis of strategic action within fields

and its necessary adjunct, habitus, that is the incorporation of social structures into the body as a set of dispositions. In the late 1990s, finding the public sphere, where traditional intellectuals could speak their truths, increasingly distorted by the media, Bourdieu adopted an offensive posture, even to the extent of openly supporting publics that were under assault from the state. The defense of the autonomy of intellectual and academic activities led him to become one of the most prominent public figures in France, but nonetheless very much in the mold of a traditional intellectual.

If Gramsci's prison theorizing advanced beyond his political practice, Bourdieu's academic theory lagged behind his high-profile politics. Gramsci could write about the Modern Prince (the ideal typical Communist Party) but could not find one in reality whereas Bourdieu burst onto the public scene, as we will see, without theoretical justification. Bringing the theorists into a conversation will help to elaborate their individual specificity and blindspots, and their relevance to the political conjuncture in which we find ourselves.

3. Intellectuals: Organic versus Traditional

The decisive shaping of the political-intellectual habitus lies in their third mature phase when Bourdieu returns to the university in 1960 to make sense of his Algerian expedition and Gramsci turns to the organization of a working class movement and Communist Party, assimilating the lessons of the Factory Council Movement. Their (di)vision of politics and theory emerges from their locations within the social structure.

For Bourdieu the production of truth is a scholastic process whose necessary condition is “skholé,” leisured pursuit of knowledge, the protected and autonomous space to contemplate and investigate reality in community with others. In the modern era that space is vouchsafed by the university, the home of the scientific field. Competition and struggle in the scientific field, armed struggle as he calls it in *Pascalian Meditations*, governed by the rules of scientific method are necessary for generating true comprehension of the world.² Among the social sciences sociology holds a privileged place because -- unlike philosophy and economics -- it is able to grasp the conditions of its own production. Properly executed sociology is a reflexive discipline capable of objectifying the very process of knowledge production – a feat which is not a handicap but a necessary asset for the advance of social science. Precisely because sociology engages the world, it is by the same token forced to engage itself and its conditions of existence. Not so for philosophy and economics, disciplines that suffer from scholastic fallacies, resulting from the false and unrecognized projection of their conditions of knowledge production onto the world being studied, as if lay people are propelled by “underlying structures” (Levi-Strauss), by abstract moral imperatives (Habermas’s undistorted communication), or by models of rational action (economics). These misguided disciplines take the logic of things to be things of logic.

The other danger, affecting such disciplines as law and medicine is that they become creatures of the state. Hijacked by politics they lose their autonomy and thus their capacity to generate scientific knowledge. Even sociology can succumb to scholastic

² Bourdieu never spells out the rules of scientific method either in his treatment of the scientific field or even in *The Craft of Sociology*, which concerns, as the subtitle indicates, epistemological preliminaries.

fallacies and can be hijacked by the state as he made clear in his sweeping indictment of US sociology as well as swipes at his French colleagues. In short, the university is the only place where true social science can emerge, but there is no guarantee that sociology as a reflexive science will emerge there. Sociology has potential but it requires careful nurturance and elaboration.

Gramsci, by contrast, grounds truth not in the academy but in the productive experience of classes. If for Bourdieu some *disciplines* are more apt to constitute genuine science, then for Gramsci some *classes*, by virtue of their material conditions, have a better grasp on reality than others! Here he follows Marxist orthodoxy, arguing that it is the collective and practical transformation of the real world that grounds working class understanding, understanding denied to peasantry and the bourgeoisie. This kernel of understanding, the good sense of the working class, is buried in a husk of common sense, the sedimented residues of the ideologies of existing and prior dominant classes.

The active man-in-the-mass has a practical activity, but has no clear theoretical consciousness of his practical activity, which nonetheless involves understanding the world in so far as it transforms it. His theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world: and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. But this verbal conception is not without consequences. It holds together a specific social group, it influences moral conduct and the direction of the will, with varying efficacy, but often powerfully enough to produce a situation in which the contradictory state of consciousness does not permit of any action, any decision or any choice, and produces a condition of moral passivity. Critical understanding of self takes place

therefore through a struggle of political “hegemonies” and of opposing directions, first in the ethical field and then in that of politics proper, in order to arrive at the working out at a higher level of one’s own conception of reality. (PN: 333)

In other words, industrial workers have two consciousnesses, a good sense that comes from the collective transformation of production, part of a common sense that also includes a folk consciousness, which is the sedimentation of taken-for-granted, unexamined dominant cultures. In this passage, therefore, class struggle manifests itself as a struggle between these consciousnesses, which when elaborated become two competing hegemonic representations of the world.

Following Marxian orthodoxy, the peasantry cannot develop a good sense because they do not enter into the collective transformation of nature through an organic division of labor. Their knowledge and understanding of the world cannot be more than fragmentary and partial.³ The modern bourgeoisie, on the other hand, do reach toward a universality, but it too is partial because its transformation of the world is not only indirect, and mediated by the working class, but based on particularistic interest in profit. It is a false universality because it cannot embrace the interests of all classes.

For Gramsci the organic intellectual – organically connected to a class -- has two functions: on the one hand to combat the ideologies of the dominant classes, that is to reveal their arbitrary character, and on the other hand to elaborate the good sense in the

³As we shall see in Lecture IV, Fanon argues the obverse. In the colonial situation neither the working class nor the bourgeoisie can develop beyond a corporate class consciousness but the productive experience of the peasantry, precisely by virtue of its collectivist relation to land, does offer the ingredients of a total understanding if nurtured by radical intellectuals from the towns.

common sense of the working class, to turn the good sense into theoretical knowledge. The Communist Party, the Modern Prince, the permanent persuader, the collective intellectual is the vehicle for developing working class consciousness, but it does not bring that consciousness to the working class from without. Rather the party and the working class are in a dialogic relation. The organic intellectual can only be effective through an intimate relation with the working class, sharing the life of the working class, which, in some renditions of Gramsci, means coming from the working class. The organic intellectual is not a lone individual but embedded in an organization, the political party, analogous to the university in Bourdieu's theory.

No less than the university the party suffers from pathological forms, distorting the production of knowledge either through vanguardism that imposes truth from without or a subservience that is uncritical of common sense. Here Bourdieu takes Gramsci's critical understanding of the party and absolutizes it. Thus, for Bourdieu, these two pathologies are inherent to the very nature of the political party because the working class or indeed any "class" cannot achieve a scientific, i.e. true, understanding of the world. In Gramscian language, for Bourdieu classes do not possess a kernel of good sense within the common sense. Their common sense is irrevocably bad sense! For Bourdieu all classes suffer from a fundamental misrecognition of their place in the world.⁴ Therefore, there is nothing for intellectuals to elaborate. That is not to say that agents are dupes, not

⁴ In his Algerian studies, especially *Algeria, 1960*, Bourdieu actually adopts a strictly Marxian view that the working class can achieve a totalizing understanding of the world, denied to the peasantry and subproletariat, because of their relative security and longer time horizons. Later, for example in *Distinction*, he abandons this position in favor of the working class's deeply seated misrecognition of social structure and its potentialities.

at all. They follow a logic of their own, a logic of practice, but they do not have the capacity and conditions to make that logic the object of analysis, to move from the logic of practice to the logic of theory. That is the privilege of the sociologist as scientist, ensconced in the *skholé* of the university.

Bourdieu, therefore, vents his wrath against what he calls the “mythology of the organic intellectual” united with its class. As the dominated fraction of the dominant class intellectuals expand their struggles within the dominant class by joining forces with the working class. They develop an illusory identification with the working class.

It is not a question of the truth or falsity of the unsupportable image of the working class world that the intellectual produces when, putting himself in the place of a worker without having the habitus of a worker, he apprehends the working-class condition through schemes of perception and appreciation which are not those that the members of the working class themselves use to apprehend it. It is truly the experience that an intellectual can obtain of the working-class world by putting himself provisionally and deliberately into the working-class condition, and it may become less and less improbable if, as is beginning to happen, an increasing number of individuals are thrown into the working-class condition without having the habitus that is the product of the conditionings “normally” imposed on those who are condemned to this condition. Populism is never anything other than an inverted ethnocentrism. (*Distinction*, p.374)

In short, the intellectual, whose habitus is formed by *skholé*, can never appreciate the condition of the working class, whose habitus is shaped by the endless and precarious pursuit of the necessary means of existence. The chasm is so great that it precludes any sort of dialogue or mutual illumination. This is, indeed, a bleak view of the prospects for intellectuals to engage with anyone but themselves.

On the one hand, to get too close to the working class or any other class is to risk being contaminated by its misrecognitions. On the other hand, because their habitus is so different from the working class, organic intellectuals – understanding neither themselves nor those they engage – suffer from the temptation of dictatorship of ideas, and liable to manipulate the working class. Indeed, to claim to elaborate working class consciousness, to speak in the name of the people, is to already substitute oneself for the people.

Bourdieu extends this criticism to political leaders in general who are governed by the logic of the political field, the field in which representatives of organizations compete with one another, manipulating representations of their followers for their own ends. This is Bourdieu's understanding of the iron law of oligarchy. He is deeply skeptical of the capacity of parties and trade unions to be genuinely responsive to the people they represent.⁵ If intellectuals do become responsive to the represented then they are easily captive of mistaken views, whereas if they are responsive to the pressures of the political field then they commit the opposite distortion – betraying their supporters even as they speak in their name.

Gramsci was only too aware of the pitfalls awaiting the organic intellectual, which is why he so stressed the binding of the intellectual to the experience of the working class. Indeed, Bourdieu disingenuously appropriates Gramsci's account of the pathologies of representation, turning them into a dismissal of the very idea of the

⁵ In *Paper Stones* Adam Przeworski analyzes how the competition among political parties shapes the classes they claim to represent. It is an excellent exemplification and concretization of Bourdieu's argument.

organic intellectual.⁶ Where Gramsci is vigilant about the dangers of the organic intellectual in order to affirm its possibility, even its necessity, Bourdieu deploys the dangers to reject the idea out of hand. Gramsci's confidence in the organic intellectual is grounded in the kernel of good sense that he believes exists within working class consciousness, whereas Bourdieu denies there can be any such good sense, and so for him dialogue has to be artificial and thus dangerous.

Let us now turn the tables on Bourdieu's intellectuals with their steadfast commitment to the autonomy of the academic field. Gramsci would undoubtedly consider them to be "traditional" intellectuals who "experience through an *'esprit de corps'* their uninterrupted historical continuity and their special qualification, they thus put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group" (PN: 7). Bourdieu's abiding concern is that the autonomy of intellectual and cultural fields is continually under erosion whether from state or market. The lack of autonomy is amply apparent in *Homo Academicus* and *State Nobility*. Gramsci's criticism of the traditional intellectual is not so much the failure to realize the goal of autonomy and independence, but rather of the goal itself as consolidating domination by presenting the interests of the dominant class as the interests of all. For Gramsci the intellectuals of the dominant class *have* to be autonomous in order to present themselves as the carriers of universality.

⁶ Bourdieu says, "The most interesting thing about Gramsci, who, in fact, I did only read quite recently, is the way he provides us with the bases for a sociology of the party apparatchik and the Communist leaders of his period – all of which is far from the ideology of the 'organic intellectual' for which he is best known" (pp.27-8 in *In Other Words*). See "Political Representation" and "Delegation and Political Fetishism," (*Language and Symbolic Power*, chapters 8 and 9) or "The Uses of the People," (*In Other Words*, chapter 10)

Gramsci would see Bourdieu's universality and his goal of making it accessible to all as none other than the perfection of a capitalist ruling ideology.

Thus, intellectuals deriving from the landed class in Germany and England or from within the feudal order in Italy had a built-in autonomy from the dominant class based on their connections to previous modes of production, making them especially well-suited to present a picture of universalism that sometimes even expressed itself in anti-capitalism. Yet, the function of their autonomy was to reproduce capitalism to protect capitalism against the subjugated but equally against capitalists who can't see beyond their immediate economic interests.

Bourdieu has two responses to these accusations. The first is to claim that bourgeois universality, grounded in cultural and intellectual fields, is humanity's finest achievement and thus the goal should be to provide access to that universality. Everyone should have the opportunity to appreciate Flaubert and Manet. In other words, cultural and intellectual autonomy is indeed in the interests of all, even to the point of denying subjugated classes the notion that they can generate their own independent culture. This argument seems quite consistent with Gramsci's view of traditional intellectuals whose function is to reproduce domination through a denial of any alternative culture. More interesting is a second line of defense, namely that autonomy of intellectuals, under the best circumstances, creates a critical knowledge that unmask domination. In other words, Bourdieu's place in the scientific field allows him to demonstrate that and how cultural distinction hides class domination. Yet, here too there is a paradox, not just the

unmasking but also the masking of domination depends on the autonomy of cultural fields and so to defend that autonomy is to defend class domination.

Leaving aside Bourdieu's defense of autonomy, the further question becomes: to whom is Bourdieu speaking? As he says in *Sociology in Question* the dominant classes have no interest in his message and while the dominated have an interest they don't have the capacity to comprehend the message – so deeply rooted is their socialization to capitalism. This, perhaps, is the final paradox of Bourdieu: his insistence on making a ruptural break with common sense and his view that intellectual contact with the dominated classes is dangerous are at odds with the very possibility of making domination widely transparent. The depth of misrecognition within the dominated means that unmasking domination cannot be conducted at a distance. In his practice Bourdieu seems to appreciate this, which is why he alone among the celebrated intellectuals was found on the picket lines talking with striking workers in the 1990s. What was he doing there if not aspiring to be an organic intellectual? His practice seems to have belied his theory.

Thus, if Bourdieu has a double critique of the organic intellectual -- either succumbing to popular misrecognition or imposing self-interested misrepresentation -- Gramsci returns the compliment with his own double critique of Bourdieu's traditional intellectual. Either the intellectual field is permeated by distorting social forces of market and state and thus its ties to the dominant class are transparent OR it is autonomous and thereby, all the more securely, promotes the universality of the dominant class.

Bourdieu's critique of domination is itself couched in terms of the universality of culture and art. Bereft of a vehicle for communicating that critique to the people who have an interest in it, universality only buttresses domination.

In the postscript to *Rules of Art* Bourdieu pulls no punches and risks all. Having written off any historic role for the subordinate classes, and seeing the dominant classes as steeped in their own domination, he extols an international of intellectuals as the savior of humanity:

Cultural producers will not find again a place of their own in the social world unless, sacrificing once and for all the myth of the 'organic intellectual' (without falling into the complementary mythology of the mandarin withdrawn from everything), they agree to work collectively for the defense of their interests. This should lead them to assert themselves as an international power of criticism and watchfulness, or even of proposals, in the face of the technocrats, or – with an ambition both more lofty and more realistic, and hence limited to their own sphere – to get involved in rational action to defend the economic and social conditions of the autonomy of these socially privileged universes in which the material and intellectual instruments of what we call Reason are produced and reproduced. This *Realpolitik of reason* will undoubtedly be suspected of corporatism. But it will be part of its task to prove, by the ends to which it puts the sorely won means of autonomy, that it is a corporatism of the universal. (*Rules of Art*, p.348)

Is the corporatism of the universal in which intellectuals present their interests as the interests of all more than the ideology of, what Alvin Gouldner has called a flawed universal class? What ends – what visions and divisions -- has Bourdieu in mind for this organic intellectual of humanity?⁷ Is there any more to his Modern Prince than the

⁷ Even Bourdieu is led to the appropriation of the idea of the organic intellectual. "The ethnosociologist is a sort of organic intellectual of humankind who, as a collective agent, can contribute to denaturalizing and defatalizing human existence by putting her competency at the service of universalism rooted in the understanding of particularisms." (Cited by Loic Wacquant in "Following Pierre Bourdieu into the Field,"

defense of the autonomy of science and culture? Why should we trust intellectuals, the historic bearers of neoliberalism, fascism, racism, communism to be the saviors of humanity? In dissecting the scholastic fallacies of others, is Bourdieu not committing the greatest scholastic fallacy of all, the self-misrecognition of the intellectual as (potential) bearer of a deceptive universality? Bourdieu has replaced the universality of the working class based in production and projected by the political party, with the universality of the intellectual based in the university, which for Gramsci is none other the purest form of bourgeois hegemony.

4. Domination: Hegemony vs. Symbolic Violence

The inverse valorization of traditional and organic intellectuals provides the foundation of divergent theories of domination: on the one side Gramsci's hegemony which is based on consent and on the other side Bourdieu's symbolic violence which is based on misrecognition. Hegemony is explicit and overt and, thus, can be subverted by the organic intellectual while symbolic violence is deep and unconscious, only appreciated by the sociologist qua traditional intellectual.

Bourdieu dismisses Marxist notions of ideology and consciousness as surface phenomena, inadequate to grasp the bodily inscription of social structure as a habitus that is so at home with domination that it does not recognize it as such.

In the notion of 'false consciousness' which some Marxists invoke to explain the effect of symbolic domination, it is the word 'consciousness' which is excessive; and to speak of 'ideology' is to place in the order of representations, capable of being transformed by the intellectual

Ethnography (5)4: 388) But it is an organic intellectual of an abstract entity – humanity – the very antithesis of Gramsci's organic intellectual, indeed the apotheosis of Gramsci's traditional intellectual!

conversion that is called the “awakening of consciousness”, what belongs to the order of beliefs, that is, at the deepest level of bodily dispositions (*Pascalian Meditations*, p.177).

Submission is not a matter of consciousness but of *habitus*, those deeply embedded perceptions and appreciations, inaccessible to consciousness.

For his part Gramsci is no less dismissive of such a sociology of spontaneous and unconscious submission.

If political science means science of the State, and the State is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules, then it is obvious that all the questions of sociology are nothing other than questions of political science. If there is a residue, this can only be made up of false problems, i.e. frivolous problems. (PN: 244)

So for Gramsci hegemony has no unconscious foundation. It contrasts with dictatorship as a distinctive form of domination that combines force and consent without force ever disappearing, and in which force is itself the object of consent. Hegemony is consent protected by the armor of coercion. What is decisively new about Gramsci’s formulation in the context of Marxism is the tying of hegemony to the late 19th. century expansion of civil society – a dense associational life between state and economy, made up of mass media, church, political parties, trade unions, universal schooling and a host of voluntary organizations. Civil society is intimately connected to the state which itself undergoes expansion to include ideological as well as repressive apparatuses of the state. The organization of consent is intimately connected to the absorption of individuals through their participation in civil society under the leadership of traditional intellectuals – teachers, priests, community leaders, lawyers, doctors, social workers.

The parallels between hegemony and symbolic power are striking, but the differences remain fundamental. For Bourdieu domination, whether class or gender, secures itself through a symbolic universe that defines categories of *distinction* and thereby mystifying the underlying reality. We see this at work most clearly in *Distinction* where underlying class domination is transposed into an assertion of cultural superiority which the dominated accept as an innate attribute of the dominant. Moreover, the state consecrates these distinctions, defining what it is to be a citizen, a racial group, an occupation, an educational credential so much so that Bourdieu declares the state to have not only the monopoly of legitimate physical violence but also of symbolic violence. We see here an expansion of the state parallel to Gramsci's inclusion of ideological state apparatuses, only the symbolic world operates at an unconscious as well as a conscious level.

If there are parallels in the expansion of the state, are there are parallels to civil society within the framework of Bourdieu? Similar to Weber's account of modernity as the rise of value spheres, Bourdieu's contemporary social space is occupied by autonomous and differentiated fields – scientific, economic, artistic, religious, bureaucratic, etc. – arenas of practical activity defined by rules, stakes, and relevant capital, supplying distinct terrains of competition and struggle. The field of power, analogous to civil society, contains these separate fields, and the political field, i.e. the state, is the site of struggles over the rules and boundaries of the different fields as well as the exchange rates of their respective capitals. There is even evidence that the emergence of separate fields in the 19th. century, as illustrated in Bourdieu's account of the genesis

of artistic fields, coincided with the rise of Gramsci's civil society. The articulation of the separate fields within the field of power, like the articulation of associations within civil society, has no singular principle, but it is the object of struggle even as it structures that struggle.

What of the struggles within civil society/field of power? Here too we can detect certain convergences that clarify the differences. The centrality of civil society to the organization of hegemony has dramatic implication for the understanding of revolution. Direct assault on the state, seizure of state power, what Gramsci called the War of Movement has to take second place to the War of Position, the slow patient transformation of the institutions of civil society, pulling them away from the state and reorganizing them under the direction of the communist party, the Modern Prince, the creator and builder of an alternative hegemony. Lenin's two stage revolution in which the capitalist state is destroyed and replaced by a dictatorship of the proletariat which itself withers away could work in Russia where civil society was "weak and gelatinous" but not in the West where it was strong and had a "proper relation to the state." In Russia the War of Movement comes first followed by a War of Position, that is the constitution of socialist hegemony from above, whereas in the West the War of Movement is only the final assumption of state power, after the much more difficult War of Position has been won.

To be sure Bourdieu would find the idea of a War of Position laughable. If he has no collective vision of struggles that reach across fields, nonetheless he has a far more

detailed analysis of struggles within separate fields that underlines just how difficult it is to conduct a War of Position. Bourdieu presents political practice as a form of game playing in which rules, stakes, relevant forms of capital are taken as given. Indeed, the act of playing a game implies already an unstated investment or *illusio* in the game.

Struggles are understood as unconscious strategies, expressed in the idea of having a feel for the game that absorbs the creativity and attention of the players. To the outsider the game may appear insignificant but to the players it becomes the meaning of their life, mystifying the underlying conditions of domination that make the game possible. The struggle for the articulation of games, that is the struggle in the political field takes place in the field of power, largely beyond the influence of the dominated classes.

So how might Gramsci respond? For Gramsci the experience of class is transcendent, so that the War of Position, that is the transformation of civil society, is a struggle for class hegemony in which each class seeks to present its interests as the interests of all. Under advanced capitalism bourgeois hegemony is especially powerful. Gramsci's account of the rise of bourgeois hegemony also serves as a framework for the struggle for socialist hegemony. Thus, he sees class formation as a three step ladder: an economic corporate stage in which fractions of a class pursue their material interest (textile vs. mining capital, industrial vs. financial capital or printers vs. autoworkers), followed by the consolidation of an economic class (manufacturers vs. landed classes fighting over free trade, wage laborers vs. farmers fighting over labor legislation). The final rung on the ladder of class formation is the purely political stage in which a class rises above its narrow economic interests to represent the interests of all classes, making

sacrifices of economic kind that do not touch the essential character of the economic system they dominate.

Thus, the bourgeoisie makes economic concessions (improvement of working conditions, minimum wages, limited length of the working day) without threatening profit – indeed concessions lead the bourgeoisie to develop new strategies of making profit. Moreover, the bourgeoisie has a state that in the name of universalism enforces such concessions, even against the will of capitalists. Gramsci also underlines the importance of hegemonic ideology as a relatively autonomous system of ideologies that present the interests of the bourgeoisie as the interests of all. The working class, on the other hand, has an almost impossible task forging its own hegemony, since it does not have the wherewithal to grant economic concession, nor does it have the state to enforce its collective will. In the best of scenarios all it possesses is the Modern Prince as organization weapon and moral reformer, to cultivate that political ideology, “expressed neither in the form of a cold utopia nor as learned theorizing, but rather by a creation of concrete phantasy which acts on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organize its collective will” (PN: 126). Given this balance of forces Gramsci could only be pessimistic about the possibilities of revolution in the West.

But Gramsci’s pessimism looks decidedly optimistic by the side of Bourdieu’s analysis of symbolic domination! The power of symbolic domination lies not in the presentation of the interests of the dominant class as the interests of all, but the obfuscation of the very category of class. The categories of distinction that provide the

living template of our lives are so taken for granted that domination becomes invisible or misrecognized as such. Before there can be any class struggle for hegemony, therefore, there has to be a struggle over the very existence and meaning of classes. Classification struggles precede class struggles. Bourdieu problematizes what Gramsci takes for granted – the recognition of class domination – as the precondition of a War of Position.

Who then will fight the classification struggle? In Bourdieu's world the invisibility of domination is founded on the concordance of a social structure with a habitus inculcated by the same social structure. At the same time, the durability of habitus, the permanence of its dispositions, inevitably brings about discordance between habitus and specific fields, what Bourdieu calls *hysteresis*. Bourdieu's favorite example, the inspiration of the very idea of habitus, is that of Algerians whose rural habitus clashes with the economic fields of urban life. His own habitus, molded by his rural origins, allows him to see more vividly the physiognomy at the academic field with which he is at odds. For our purposes the most interesting clash between habitus and field comes about not as a result of mobility between fields, what one might call a *situational hysteresis*, but through *processual hysteresis*, resulting from the temporal transformation of the field itself.

Homo Academicus describes how the expansion of higher education brings about the devaluation of credentials and the blocked succession of assistant lecturers, generating a tension between the aspirations and opportunities, between expectations and the possibility of their realization, between class habitus and the occupational field of

higher education. The processual hysteresis hits several academic fields at the same time so that local or conjunctural crises merge and lead to a general crisis. The usually disparate temporal rhythms of individual separate fields are synchronized, giving rise to a general crisis conducted in singular public time, producing an historical event with its suspension of common sense, the revelation and interrogation of the doxa of each field. In such moments of forced polarization and inversions of hierarchy anything seems possible! Bourdieu is, of course, referring to May 1968.

The crisis spreads through the communication of agents in homologous, i.e. subordinate positions in different fields, but he warns against the dangers of building alliances across fields, especially between intellectuals and workers.

The alliances founded on homology of position – for instance, those which were set up, conjuncturally, between agents occupying subordinate positions in the academic field and agents occupying subordinate positions in the social field taken as a whole – are of this sort: unless they are restricted to the realm of the imaginary, as were a number of meetings dreamed of between the “intellectuals” and the “proletariat”, they have a greater chance of materializing, and lasting, if the partners whom they mobilize at a distance around vague slogans, abstract manifestos and formal programmes, have less opportunity to enter into direct interaction, to see and to speak to each other; indeed, their encounters bring together not abstract individuals, defined only in relation to their position in a determined region of social space, but total persons, all of whose practices, discourse and even simple bodily appearance express divergent and, at least potentially, antagonistic systems of dispositions (*habitus*). (*Homo Academicus*, pp.179-80)

This perspective on crisis is strikingly at odds with Gramsci’s notion of organic crisis, which is precisely a balance of class forces, whether between dominant and subordinate classes or within the dominant class between different fractions of its power bloc. One

might argue that Bourdieu provides the micro-foundations for such a catastrophic equilibrium of class forces, developing simultaneously in different fields. On the other hand, Gramsci would argue that those linkages across fields do not spring up spontaneously but depend on the hard work of a War of Position, orchestrated by genuine organic collective intellectual, deeply embedded in a number of fields so that the clashing of habitus is muted if not moot. In the final analysis the denouement of Paris 1968 suggests this was not an organic crisis of capitalism.

Gramsci and Bourdieu tackle a similar problem -- the durability of domination but their differences are deep. First, hegemony rests on consent whereas symbolic violence rests on misrecognition, Second, whereas civil society embraces and absorbs subordinate dissent it also provides a terrain of struggle whereas the field of power is confined to the leaders engaged in political games among themselves at the expense and exclusion of the dominated. Third, just as the state orchestrates hegemony through its connections to civil society, so the state holds the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence by consecrating the classifications, capitals, and stakes of the separate fields that compose the field of power. Fourth, Gramsci's war of position and the struggle for hegemony presupposes classes as an existential category whereas Bourdieu argues that prior to any class struggle there has to be a struggle over the very category of class. Finally, for Gramsci, like Bourdieu, social transformation comes about through struggle that has revolutionary effects in times of organic crisis, but whereas Gramsci sees this in terms of the balance of class forces, Bourdieu sees it in the accelerated diffusion of local crises generated by a systemic and processual mismatch of habitus and field. Their

parallel concepts reveal deep divisions. We shall adjudicate the empirical basis of their conceptions of domination in Lecture III, for now we will examine their complementarity.

5. Rapprochement: The University as the Modern Prince

Bourdieu and Gramsci are mirror opposites. Bourdieu looks at Gramsci's theory as the expression of the mythological organic intellectual who is contaminated by or manipulator of dominated classes, while Gramsci would look at Bourdieu's theory as the embodiment of the traditional intellectuals whose strain to autonomy serves to reproduce the very domination they claim to be attacking. Where Bourdieu grounds knowledge in the competition governed by the rules of science, taking place in the protected space of the academy, Gramsci grounds knowledge in the practical transformation of the world and elaborated by the political party in close connection to the working class. On the face of it, these two perspectives are irreconcilable, but today, I venture to suggest, both traditional and organic intellectuals are necessary. In the case of Bourdieu, his late-in-life political practice suggests that both types of intellectuals are necessary, although his theory lagged behind his practice. In the case of Gramsci, the practice of communism never approximated his theory so that today we have to rethink the notion of the Modern Prince.

Bourdieu describes the world today as overrun by market forces, threatening the fabric of society, specifically the autonomy of fields and the values they defend. Nation states, together with the growing number of supra-national agencies, no longer contain or

regulate markets but increasingly support the commodification of everything (from privatization of public functions to the trafficking in human organs). Intellectuals can no longer hide behind university barricades but must take the offensive against the ideologists of market panaceas. One should not overlook, however, that, in the United States particularly, the apostles of neoliberalism are also firmly encamped behind those same barricades. The collusion of states and markets has been justified if not nurtured by the disciplines of economics and political science. This is not to write off all political scientists or economists. After all these disciplines are themselves fields of power with challenging as well as dominant principles, for example, post-autistic economics and the perestroika movement in political science. Still, as Bourdieu knew only too well, the war has to be waged on two fronts: the enemy within as well as the enemy without.

Although Bourdieu is too sanguine about the potential neutrality of the university, which serves capitalism and the neoliberal state in so many ways, his own sociology – and we should ask what are the conditions of its possibility -- does challenge the premises of economics and political science, and unmask their ideological functions. With its focus on the mechanics of domination -- symbolic violence, capital, fields, habitus – Bourdieu provides the ammunition for a critical sociology. Undoubtedly the achievement of Bourdieu has been to draw together those disciplines (anthropology, geography and sociology) to contest the illusion of the epoch – the utopia of markets. Its weakness lies in the way it hovers above society, in its often impenetrable prose, inaccessible to the popular classes, chief victims of mystification, which is why the organic intellectual is also necessary. Impelled by the urgency of the issues of the day, Bourdieu himself

violated his own proscription against the organic intellectual as he acknowledges in *Acts of Resistance* (1998) and *Firing Back* (2003).

Once can sustain all Bourdieu's criticisms of the organic intellectual without abandoning the idea. One can reconstitute the forces within the university, sharpening the tools of critique, but it is also important to build linkages from below, establishing collaborations with the organs of civil society. This is especially relevant today when state and markets are forging a combined assault on civil society. While Gramsci's faith in the good sense of the industrial working class may be anachronistic the necessity of concrete phantasies to uproot and galvanize the energies of subaltern classes is not.

A critical social science has to be a double headed creature, on the one hand directed at ruling ideologies, demystifying their naturalization of the arbitrary, revealing the patterns of domination behind consecrated systems of classification, while, on the other hand, excavating and elaborating the social alternatives embedded in the lived experience and the lived experiments of subaltern communities. The pursuit of such real utopias, as Erik Wright calls them, calls for ethnographic expeditions into the soil of social existence.

Turning to sociology itself – and Bourdieu did believe that sociology had a privileged place with regard to critical thinking -- we can distinguish between two types of public sociology -- a traditional public sociology, engaging the ruling ideologies that courses through our tattered public sphere, attacking their disciplinary roots within the

academy, and an organic public sociology working in the trenches of civil society, energizing and engaging resistance to markets and states, challenging domination not with demystification but with alternatives. In the final analysis the traditional and organic public sociologies, although founded in very different professional bodies of knowledge, sustain rather than undermine each other.

If both are necessary are both equally possible? As Bourdieu has been at pains to underline, third-wave marketization has invaded the means of communication, the mass media themselves, making it ever more difficult to disseminate critical perspectives. If it is hard in France it is even more difficult in the United States, where the invasion has extended to the sacred territory of the university itself -- dependence on private donors, corporatization of research, commercialization of admissions, pandering to students and falling levels of literacy, not to mention the shifting overall balance of power among academic disciplines. The traditional public sociologist who goes against the grain has a limited public audience.

The situation is no better for the organic public sociologist. Gramsci himself knew the dangers lying in wait for the organic intellectual, and how public engagement had to be organized as a collective enterprise. Can sociologists, based in the academy venture forth into the trenches of civil society without succumbing to the pathologies described by Bourdieu – populism and vanguardism? As it is presently constituted the university prides itself in standing aloof from publics unless, of course, those publics happen to be business associations. Nonetheless, mindful of the need to defend the university,

educators are rethinking higher education, underlining its civic mission and endorsing its public character. We can see this, for example, in the commitment to service learning. The challenge is to make the university more receptive to working with the broader communities it serves and in ways that do not compromise its academic functions. Some universities are better placed to do this than others, some are more the ivory tower than others.

Either way, traditional or organic, public sociology faces an uphill struggle against the very forces that cut away at its own foundation. In this struggle traditional and organic public sociologists must see one another as complementary, not antagonistic, and, moreover, they must seek common cause with publics that face similar assaults from markets and states. The university may not have been cast as a Modern Prince but that makeshift role has been thrust upon it. It means that Gramsci has to give up the communist party and Bourdieu has to give up the classical idea of the university, standing aloof from society as an ivory tower. How can the embedded university be the meeting ground of the inheritors of Gramsci and Bourdieu? The answer to this question varies from country to country, where we have to reconnoiter the articulation of university and civil society and how that articulation is shaped by market and state. In this respect the US looks very different than Brazil, India or South Africa, which in turn are very different from Russia and China, or from France and Norway.

Having pointed to the possibility of a rapprochement between Gramsci and Bourdieu, the organic and traditional intellectual, still there is one issue that I have

skirted, namely, how deep is capitalist domination? Bourdieu as theoretician claims, seemingly against his political practice, that submission to capitalism is deep and unconscious whereas Gramsci claims it is conscious and deliberate, but durable nonetheless. For Bourdieu the problem with “false consciousness” is not the falsity but the consciousness, whereas for Gramsci it is the opposite, the problem is with the falseness not the consciousness. A lot rides on who is right. In the third lecture I try to adjudicate between these positions.

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