Preface

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Chapter 4, 'Is the Structure of Sentimental Education an Instance of Social Self-analysis?', Chapter 5, 'Field of Power, Literary Field and Habitus', and Chapter 6, 'Principles for a Sociology of Cultural Works', were presented as the Christian Gauss Seminars in Criticism at Princeton University in 1986. They were translated by Claud DuVerlie.

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Editor's Introduction
Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature and Culture

Since the early 1970s Pierre Bourdieu has become a major theoretical voice in the critical study of cultural practices. Bourdieu's analytical method represents a fruitful alternative to many of the immanent modes of analysis — ranging from New Criticism and various brands of formalism to structuralism and deconstruction — which have dominated literary studies during this period. His work converges with and in many ways anticipates the renewed interest in the socio-historical ground of cultural production exemplified in different ways by 'New Historicism', depth hermeneutics, studies of the institutional framework of literature and literary criticism and, in a broad sense, cultural studies. It addresses, directly or indirectly, such issues as aesthetic value and canonicity, subjectification and structuration, the relationship between cultural practices and broader social processes, the social position and role of intellectuals and artists and the relationship between high culture and popular culture, all of which have become increasingly prevalent in cultural debate since the 1970s. Perhaps most importantly, Bourdieu dissects the relationship between systems of thought, social institutions and different forms of material and symbolic power, revealing certain affinities with thinkers such as Michel Foucault, of whom he was a friend and colleague at the Collège de France.

Bourdieu's wide-ranging work cuts across established academic disciplines and provides a powerful and highly productive model for social analysis in diverse fields of activity. In the elaboration of his theory of practice he has written on linguistic exchange, the political uses of language, museum attendance, the social uses of photography, marriage
rites and ritual exchange among the Kabyle and the social origins and trajectories of French university students, academics and intellectuals, to mention only a few of the many areas he has addressed in over twenty books and hundreds of articles.²

Throughout its many facets, Bourdieu's work combines rigorous empirical analysis with a highly elaborate theoretical frame. One of its central concerns is the role of culture in the reproduction of social structures, or the way in which unequal power relations, unrecognized as such and thus accepted as legitimate, are embedded in the systems of classification used to describe and discuss everyday life — as well as cultural practices — and in the ways of perceiving reality that are taken for granted by members of society.³

Bourdieu argues, especially in Distinction, that systems of domination find expression in virtually all areas of cultural practice and symbolic exchange, including such things as preferences in dress, sports, food, music, literature, art and so on, or, in a more general sense, in taste.⁴ As he remarks, ‘taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed.’ Although they do not create or cause class divisions and inequalities, ‘art and cultural consumption are pre-disposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences’ and thus contribute to the process of social reproduction.⁵ Like Foucault, Bourdieu sees power as diffuse and often concealed in broadly accepted, and often unquestioned, ways of seeing and describing the world; but unlike Foucault, in Bourdieu’s formulation this diffuse or symbolic power is closely intertwined with — but not reducible to — economic and political power, and thus serves a legitimating function.

Bourdieu’s work on the cultural field constitutes a forceful argument against both Kantian notions of the universality of the aesthetic and ideologies of artistic and cultural autonomy from external determinants. He provides an analytical model which reintroduces, through the concept of habitus, a notion of the agent — which structuralism had excluded from social analysis — without falling into the idealism of Romantic conceptions of the artist as creator (or subject) which still informs much literary and art criticism today. At the same time, with the concept of field, he grounds the agent’s action in objective social relations, without succumbing to the mechanistic determinism of many forms of sociological and ‘Marxian’ analysis. The essays included in this volume contribute, in a very fertile and often provocative manner, to transcending false dichotomies between internal and external readings, texts and institutions, literary and sociological analysis, popular and high culture. Bourdieu convincingly argues against essentialist concepts of art and the (still) dominant charismatic vision of the artist, both of which tend to efface the objective position of art and cultural practice in the field of social relations. His theory of practice thus calls into question many of the underlying presuppositions and doxa which have long guided the study of literature and art.

In this brief introduction, I will attempt to summarize the major features of Bourdieu’s mode of analysis as they relate to the study of art and literature. Since his work on the cultural field is inseparable from his broader concerns, even such a limited purpose requires a certain contextualization within the general thrust of his work as a whole. At the same time, I have no intention of providing a thorough overview or a critical analysis of Bourdieu’s work, or of situating it, except in a broad sense, within the multiple theoretical positions in the social sciences and philosophy with which his work implicitly or explicitly engages. In the first part of the introduction I will outline some of the basic tenets of Bourdieu’s theory of practice. In the second, I will turn towards his application of that theory to the literary/artistic field (henceforth referred to simply as the cultural field). Then, in the third, I will focus on his theory of art perception and aesthetics.

I

Bourdieu first turned his attention to the field of cultural production in a series of seminars held at the École Normale Supérieure, and later at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, starting in the 1960s.⁶ Much of his work prior to that time had been, in his own words, that of a ‘blissful structuralist’ engaged in ethnographic studies of Algerian peasant communities.⁷ Through those studies he had come to see the limitations of structuralism and had begun formulating his own theory and methodology as a means of overcoming a series of dichotomies (individual vs society, freedom vs necessity, and so forth) which had, in his view, impeded the development of a scientific approach to human practice. He subsumed these dichotomies under the central epistemological dichotomy between ‘subjectivism’ and ‘objectivism’ or, as he sometimes puts it, between social phenomenology and social physics.⁸

Subjectivism represents a form of knowledge about the social world based on the primary experience and perceptions of individuals and includes such intellectual currents as phenomenology, rational action theory and certain forms of interpretive sociology, anthropology and linguistic analysis (what Volosinov calls ‘individualistic subjectivism’).⁹
In the literary field this would include all idealistic and essentialist theories based on the charismatic ideology of the writer as ‘creator’. Objectivism, on the other hand, attempts to explain the social world by bracketing individual experience and subjectivity and focusing instead on the objective conditions which structure practice independent of human consciousness. It is found in many social theories, including Saussurean semiology, structural anthropology and Althusserian Marxism.10

Both subjectivism and objectivism fail to account for what Bourdieu refers to as the ‘objectivity of the subjective’.11 Subjectivism fails to grasp the social ground that shapes consciousness, while objectivism does just the opposite, failing to recognize that social reality is to some extent shaped by the conceptions and representations that individuals make of the social world. In his critique of objectivism Bourdieu writes, in the conclusion to Distinction, that ‘the representation which individuals and groups inevitably project through their practices and properties is an integral part of social reality. A class is defined as much by its being-perceived and by its being, by its consumption – which need not be conspicuous to be symbolic – as much as by its position in the relations of production.’ Yet his reservations about objectivism (which Bourdieu finds more acceptable than subjectivism in that it is a necessary first step in any social analysis) in no way imply acceptance of theories which posit some sort of creative free will with the ability to constitute meaning, or that the constituted significations of actions and works should be reduced to the conscious intentions of their authors.13 In Bourdieu’s theory, symbolic aspects of social life are inseparably intertwined with the material conditions of existence, without one being reducible to the other.

In an attempt to transcend this false dichotomy, Bourdieu sought to develop a concept of agent free from the voluntarism and idealism of subjectivist accounts and a concept of social space free from the deterministic and mechanistic causality inherent in many objectivist approaches.14 Bourdieu’s genetic sociology or genetic structuralism – which should under no circumstances be identified or confused with Lucien Goldmann’s methodology – thus combines an analysis of objective social structures with an analysis of the genesis, within particular individuals, of the socially constituted mental structures which generate practice.15

It was within this framework that Bourdieu developed the concepts of habitus and field. The notion of habitus was conceived as an alternative to the solutions offered by subjectivism (consciousness, subject, etc.) and a reaction against structuralism’s ‘odd philosophy of action’ which reduced the agent to a mere ‘bearer’ (Träger: for the Althusserians) or ‘unconscious’ expression (for Lévi-Strauss) of structure. Bourdieu first introduced into his theory the notion of habitus – a concept borrowed from Scholastic philosophy but also used, in a different but not totally unrelated sense, by thinkers such as Hegel, Husserl and Mauss – on the occasion of the French edition of Erwin Panofsky’s Architecture gothique et pensée scolastique.16 On one level Bourdieu compares the notion to Chomsky’s generative grammar, in that it attempts to account for the creative, active and inventive capacities of human agents, but without – and here he distances himself from Chomsky – attributing it to a universal mind. In sum, habitus represented a ‘theoretical intention . . . to get out from under the philosophy of consciousness without doing away with the agent, in its truth of a practical operator of object constructions’.17

Bourdieu formally defines habitus as the system of ‘durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively “regulated” and “regular” without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.18

The habitus is sometimes described as a ‘feel for the game’, a ‘practical sense’ (sens pratique) that inclines agents to act and react in specific situations in a manner that is not always calculated and that is not simply a question of conscious obedience to rules. Rather, it is a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions. The habitus is the result of a long process of inculcation, beginning in early childhood, which becomes a ‘second sense’ or a second nature. According to Bourdieu’s definition, the dispositions represented by the habitus are ‘durable’ in that they last throughout an agent’s lifetime. They are ‘transposable’ in that they may generate practices in multiple and diverse fields of activity, and they are ‘structured structures’ in that they inevitably incorporate the objective social conditions of their inculcation. This accounts for the similarity in the habitus of agents from the same social class and authors speaking of a class habitus (in Distinction, for example, Bourdieu shows statistically how the working-class habitus generates analogous preferences across a broad range of cultural practices). Finally, the dispositions of the habitus are ‘structuring structures’ through their ability to generate practices adjusted to specific situations.

The habitus does not negate the possibility of strategic calculation on the part of agents, but it functions in a quite different manner. In
Bourdieu's words, 'This system of dispositions — a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices, an internal law through which the law of external necessities, irreducible to immediate constraints, is constantly exerted — is the principle of the continuity and regularity which objectivism sees in social practices without being able to account for it; and also of the regulated transformations that cannot be explained either by the extrinsic, instantaneous determinisms of mechanistic sociologism or by the purely internal but equally instantaneous determination of spontaneist subjectivism.\(^\text{19}\)

Agents do not act in a vacuum, but rather in concrete social situations governed by a set of objective social relations. To account for these situations or contexts, without, again, falling into the determinism of objectivist analysis, Bourdieu developed the concept of field (champ). According to Bourdieu's theoretical model, any social formation is structured by way of a hierarchically organized series of fields (the economic field, the educational field, the political field, the cultural field, etc.), each defined as a structured space with its own laws of functioning and its own relations of force independent of those of politics and the economy, except, obviously, in the cases of the economic and political fields. Each field is relatively autonomous but structurally homologous with the others. Its structure, at any given moment, is determined by the relations between the positions agents occupy in the field. A field is a dynamic concept in that a change in agents' positions necessarily entails a change in the field's structure.

The formulation of the notion of field also represented an attempt to apply what Bourdieu, borrowing from Cassirer, calls a relational mode of thought to cultural production. This requires a break with the ordinary or substantivist perception of the social world in order to see each element in terms of its relationships with all other elements in a system from which it derives its meaning and function. Bourdieu's initial elaboration of the concept of intellectual field (in the 1966 article 'Intellectual Field and Creative Project') was still excessively dependent on a substantivist perspective.\(^\text{20}\) The recognition of the importance of objective relationships between positions, as opposed to interactions among agents, came through a critical reading of Max Weber's sociology of religion.\(^\text{21}\)

In any given field, agents occupying the diverse available positions (or in some cases creating new positions) engage in competition for control of the interests or resources which are specific to the field in question. In the economic field, for example, agents compete for economic capital by way of various investment strategies using accumulated economic capital. But the interests and resources at stake in fields are not always material, and competition among agents — which Bourdieu sees as one universal invariant property of fields — is not always based on conscious calculation. In the cultural (e.g. literary) field, competition often concerns the authority inherent in recognition, consecration and prestige. This is especially so in what Bourdieu calls the sub-field of restricted production, that is, production not aimed at a large-scale market. Authority based on consecration or prestige is purely symbolic and may or may not imply possession of increased economic capital. Bourdieu thus developed, as an integral part of his theory of practice, the concept of symbolic power based on diverse forms of capital which are not reducible to economic capital. Academic capital, for example, derives from formal education and can be measured by degrees or diplomas held. Linguistic capital concerns an agent's linguistic competence measured in relation to a specific linguistic market where often unrecognized power relations are at stake.\(^\text{22}\)

Two forms of capital are particularly important in the field of cultural production. Symbolic capital refers to degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (connaissance) and recognition (reconnaissance).\(^\text{23}\) Cultural capital concerns forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions. In Distinction, the work in which he elaborates the concept most fully, Bourdieu defines cultural capital as a form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts. He suggests that 'a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded'. The possession of this code, or cultural capital, is accumulated through a long process of acquisition or inculcation which includes the pedagogical action of the family or group members (family education), educated members of the social formation (diffuse education) and social institutions (institutionalized education).\(^\text{24}\)

Like economic capital, the other forms of capital are unequally distributed among social classes and class fractions. Although the different forms of capital may be mutually convertible under certain circumstances (for example, the proper kind and amount of academic capital may be converted into economic capital through advantageous placement in the job market), they are not reducible to each other. Possession of economic capital does not necessarily imply possession of cultural or symbolic capital, and vice versa. Bourdieu, in fact, analyses the field of cultural production as an 'economic world reversed' based
on a ‘winner loses’ logic, since economic success (in literary terms, for example, writing a best seller) may well signal a barrier to specific consecration and symbolic power.

It is important to recognize, however, that Bourdieu’s use of economic terminology does not imply any sort of economism or economic reductionism. In fact, he sees the economic field per se as simply one field among others, without granting it primacy in the general theory of fields. To enter a field (the philosophical field, the scientific field, etc.), to play the game, one must possess the habitus which predisposes one to enter that field, that game, and not another. One must also possess at least the minimum amount of knowledge, or skill, or ‘talent’ to be accepted as a legitimate player. Entering the game, furthermore, means attempting to use that knowledge, or skill, or ‘talent’ in the most advantageous way possible. It means, in short, ‘investing’ one’s (academic, cultural, symbolic) capital in such a way as to derive maximum benefit or ‘profit’ from participation. Under normal circumstances, no one enters a game to lose. By the same token, no one enters the literary field — no one writes a novel, for example — to receive bad reviews.

In each and every field, certain interests are at stake even if they are not recognized as such; a certain ‘investment’ is made, even if it is not recognized as an investment. These interests and investments can be analysed in terms of an economic logic without in any way reducing them to economics, for the structural homology between fields does not imply structural identity. The idea that there are different kinds of capital which are invested in different fields of activity in accordance with the specific interests of the field in question (and of the agents involved) allows Bourdieu to develop what he calls a ‘general science of the economy of practices’, within which one can analyse ‘all practices, including those purporting to be disinterested or gratuitous, and hence non-economic, as economic practices directed toward the maximising of material or symbolic profit’. It is up to the analyst to establish through research what the specific interests of the field are and what strategies of accumulation (which may or may not be based on conscious calculation) are employed by the agents involved.

Bourdieu elaborated and refined the concepts of habitus and field in the process of analysing the field of cultural production which is inseparable from his broader theory of practice. He rejects the idea, implicit in many prevailing forms of immanent analysis (and perhaps taken to its extreme in Baudrillard’s sign fetishism), that symbolic forms and systems of exchange can somehow be set apart from other modes of practice. He posits instead a correspondence between social and symbolic structures based on the systematic unity of social life and the existence of structural and functional homologies among all fields of social activity. The transfer of concepts from one field to another, Bourdieu suggests, possesses ‘an eminent heuristic virtue, the one that the epistemological tradition recognizes in analogy’ and makes it possible for him to attain a greater level of generalization of his theoretical principles.

II

Bourdieu’s theory of the cultural field might be characterized as a radical contextualization. It takes into consideration not only works themselves, seen relationally within the space of available possibilities and within the historical development of such possibilities, but also producers of works in terms of their strategies and trajectories, based on their individual and class habitus, as well as their objective position within the field. It also entails an analysis of the structure of the field itself, which includes the positions occupied by producers (e.g. writers, artists) as well as those occupied by all the instances of consecration and legitimation which make cultural products what they are (the public, publishers, critics, galleries, academies and so forth). Finally, it involves an analysis of the position of the field within the broader field of power.

In short, Bourdieu’s theory of the field of cultural production and his extremely demanding analytical method encompass the set of social conditions of the production, circulation and consumption of symbolic goods.

The very complexity of Bourdieu’s model ensures that it does not fall into the reductionism of either purely internal readings or modes of external analysis of cultural texts. The full explanation of artistic works is to be found neither in the text itself, nor in some sort of determinant social structure. Rather, it is found in the history and structure of the field itself, with its multiple components, and in the relationship between that field and the field of power. As Bourdieu has put it, ‘The theory of the field [leads] to both a rejection of the direct relating of individual biography to the work of literature (or the relating of the “social class” of origin to the work) and also to a rejection of internal analysis of an individual work or even of intertextual analysis. This is because what we have to do is all these things at the same time.’

For Bourdieu, the specific economy of the cultural field is based on a particular form of belief concerning what constitutes a cultural (e.g. literary, artistic) work and its aesthetic or social value. In its most traditional and canonical form — institutionalized in many universities around the world — this belief involves the autonomy of the work from external determinants and an essentialist notion of the absolute value of the work per se. But as Bourdieu notes, both the autonomy of the artistic
field and theories of pure art are fairly recent phenomena, dating, in the form we know them today, from only the nineteenth century. By the same token, aesthetic value, itself socially constituted, is radically contingent on a very complex and constantly changing set of circumstances involving multiple social and institutional factors. Literature, art and their respective producers do not exist independently of a complex institutional framework which authorizes, enables, empowers and legitimizes them. This framework must be incorporated into any analysis that pretends to provide a thorough understanding of cultural goods and practices.

The notion of field provides a means of going beyond internal analysis (whether formalist or hermeneutic) and external explication, both of which Bourdieu sees as inadequate and reductive. Bourdieu identifies two central theoretical traditions in internal analysis. The first derives from the neo-Kantian philosophy of symbolic forms and from traditions which seek universal, ahistorical structures as the basis of the literary or poetic construction of the world. The second, which Bourdieu sees as the more powerful tradition since it lends a degree of scientificity to the analytical endeavour, is that of structuralism.

Bourdieu’s objection to strictly internal analysis – ranging, in literary criticism, from different brands of formalism to Anglo-American New Criticism, French explication de textes, and structuralist and deconstructivist readings of isolated texts – is quite simply that it looks for the final explanation of texts either within the texts themselves (the object of analysis, in other words, is its own explanation) or within some sort of ahistorical ‘essence’ rather than in the complex network of social relations that makes the very existence of the texts possible. Bourdieu directs this critique at all modes of internal analysis, whether conducted on a broad scale, such as Foucault’s ‘field of strategic possibilities’, which seeks the explanatory principle of discourse in the field of discourse itself, or in more narrow concerns with ‘textuality’, such as in the work of the Russian Formalists.

Bourdieu may well agree with Jakobson’s statement that the true subject of literary science is ‘that which makes a given work a literary work’, but he would certainly disagree that ‘that which makes a given work a literary work’ is, as Jakobson would have it, ‘litterariness’, especially when seen in terms of form alone. Tynjanov’s concept of the ‘literary system’ comes closer to Bourdieu’s formulation in that it recognizes in every period the coexistence of opposing literary schools, either consecrated or striving for consecration. The literary system is not harmonious, but rather is driven by conflict in which one aesthetic construction negates opposing constructions. Formal properties are thus understood relationally, that is, in opposition to other formal proper-

ties. Yet for Bourdieu the concept of literary system is ultimately inadequate, for it fails to recognize that formal properties, both past and present, are themselves socially and historically constituted, and it remains imprisoned by immanent modes of analysis.

By isolating texts from the social conditions of their production, circulation and consumption, formalist analysis eliminates from consideration the social agent as producer (e.g. the writer), ignores the objective social relations in which literary practice occurs and avoids the questions of precisely what constitutes a work of art at a given historical moment and of the ‘value’ of the work, which constantly changes in accordance with structural changes in the field. Internal explication, furthermore, ignores the fact that ‘what makes a given work a literary work’ is a complex social and institutional framework which authorizes and sustains literature and literary practice.

Bourdieu suggests that ‘it can only be an unjustifiable abstraction (which could fairly be called reductive) to seek the source of the understanding of cultural productions in these productions themselves, taken in isolation and divorced from the conditions of their production and utilization, as would be the wish of discourse analysis, which, situated on the border between sociology and linguistics, has nowadays relapsed into indefensible forms of internal analysis. Scientific analysis must work to relate to each other two sets of relations, the space of works or discourses taken as differential stances, and the space of the positions held by those who produce them. To be fully understood, literary works must be reinserted in the system of social relations which sustains them. This does not imply a rejection of aesthetic or formal properties, but rather an analysis based on their position in relation to the universe of possibilities of which they are a part. In this universe of belief one must consider, in other words, ‘not only the material production but also the symbolic production of the work, i.e. the production of the value of the work or, which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work’ (‘The Field of Cultural Production’, chapter 1 in this volume). This includes recognition of the functions of artistic mediators (publishers, critics, agents, marchands, academies and so forth) as producers of the meaning and value of the work. Rather than an instance of individual creativity (in accordance with a Romantic conception) or ‘litterariness’ (as the formalists would have it), each work thus becomes an expression of the field as a whole. Within this framework, internal analysis alone is indeed untenable and reductive.

Bourdieu’s opposition to external modes of analysis, especially other sociological approaches, derives from the mechanistic determinism which characterizes many of them. He takes issue with analysts who
attempt, through quantitative or qualitative methods, to relate works directly to the social origin of their authors, or who seek an explanation in the groups which have commissioned works or for whom works are intended. Along these same lines, he rejects Lucien Goldmann's theory of a 'transindividual subject' and the idea that the structure of a specific work 'reflects' or expresses the world view of the social group or class that produced it.

The first problem with most statistical methods of analysis is that they rarely question the 'sample' employed, using, more often than not, a classification of authors borrowed from standard literary histories, memoirs, and biographies. In other words, the sample tends to include only consecrated writers, frequently omitting those writers, now considered minor, who may have occupied an important position in the field at the time of their literary activity, even if only in a negative sense — (that is, occupying a position in opposition to those writers now consecrated). A thorough statistical analysis would have to include the totality of the literary field: both great and minor writers, both those who are now consecrated and those who have been relegated to oblivion by literary historiographers in accordance with specific yet normally unspecified symbolic interests. Even then, statistical analysis alone would at best result in only a superficial and partial identification of certain empirically verifiable regularities such as social origin or formal education, without being able to understand truly the fundamental characteristics of writers or even how 'the writer' is defined at a certain historical moment. This definition — Who can legitimately be called a writer? What is legitimate literary practice? — is one of the key stakes of symbolic struggle in the literary field, and failure to understand it often results in the blind acceptance of the dominant definition of literary legitimacy.

The second and perhaps more serious problem with statistical analysis — as with other forms of analysis which attempt to establish a direct link between the social origins of writers and the significance of their work — derives from what Bourdieu calls the literary field's weak degree of institutionalization. The literary field — like all other fields, but especially those whose stakes are largely symbolic — is relatively autonomous from the demands of politics and economics. There are no ultimate, legally constituted arbiters of literary quality or value, which is unstable and constantly changing over time. Strategies and trajectories of writers tend to be individual — which does not mean that they are totally subjective or the product of conscious calculation — and highly differentiated, even among agents of a similar social background. The literary field does not follow the laws that apply in other fields which may be more amenable to sociological analysis based on traditional categories. It is a field where effort is not necessarily rewarded with success, where the value accorded to specific positions or honours (for example, membership of the Academy in France) may vary greatly according to the agent in question, where supply attempts to create demand rather than vice versa, where seniority has little bearing on career paths, and where writers with many different social and geographical backgrounds coexist, often having little in common other than their mutual interest in literature. There can thus be no direct, mechanistic correlation between the writer’s objective position in society and the type of writing he or she will produce.

Bourdieu also takes issue with ‘reflection theories’, which suppose homologies between the structure of works and the social structure, or between works and the world view of social interests of a specific class. To suggest, in the manner of Lukács and Goldmann, that the writer is somehow an unconscious spokesman for a group is, for Bourdieu, simply to invert the Romantic myth of the poet vates. Reducing the writer to a sort of ‘medium’, this approach assumes a perfect correlation between the group and the mode of expression without questioning how one defines the group whose world view is supposedly expressed through the work’s structure. It takes for granted that one fully understands the world view of the group in question and that that world view is somehow homogeneous. Bourdieu suggests that ‘one ought to examine the presuppositions, all extremely naïve, of these imputations of spiritual inheritance, which can always be reduced to the supposition that a group can act directly, as final cause (function), on the production of the work’ (‘Principles for a Sociology of Cultural Works’, chapter 6 in this volume).

By conceiving of literary works as expressions not of the author but rather of the social class of which he or she is a member, by seeing the author as merely one who lends coherence to the ‘mental structure’ of his or her class, and by positing works as collective products of social groups, such approaches also ignore the objective conditions of the production, circulation and consumption of symbolic goods. They thus fall prey to the objectivism which Bourdieu finds unacceptable in much structuralist analysis. Artistic works, in Bourdieu’s view, are produced by agents existing in objective sets of social relations which are not limited to those of ‘class’ and which fulfil specific functions for those agents which must be brought into the analysis.

Reflection theories, no matter how elaborate or ‘euphemized’, neglect the relative autonomy of the literary field. This problem is addressed by, for example, Mikhail Bakhtin, who suggests that literature is part of, and cannot be understood outside of, the ‘total context’ of a given period’s culture. Social and economic factors clearly affect literature, but
only through their effect on culture as a whole; their impact on literature per se occurs only through the mediation of the entire culture.\textsuperscript{40} To counter what he calls the 'short circuit effect' of approaches that posit a direct connection between art and social structure, Bourdieu developed the theory of the field as a social universe with its own laws of functioning. External determinants can have an effect only through transformations in the structure of the field itself. In other words, the field's structure refracts, much like a prism, external determinants in terms of its own logic, and it is only through such refraction that external factors can have an effect on the field. The degree of autonomy of a particular field is measured precisely by its ability to refract external demands into its own logic.\textsuperscript{41}

Finally, Bourdieu critiques the failure of external analysis to consider works of art as possessing a specific language. This, as we have seen, does not mean that he accepts the formalist contention that literary language alone, or 'literariness', can provide an adequate explanation of literature or literary practice, even when seen, as by Tynjanov, as the result of the historical, yet still internal, dialect of a literary system. The analysis of literary form or language is an essential part of literary study, but has full meaning only when viewed relationally — or, broadly speaking, intertextually — and when reinserted into the objective field of social relations of which it is part and from which it derives. In Bourdieu's view, one cannot ignore 'the balance of forces between social agents [e.g., writers, critics, etc.] who have entirely real interests in the different possibilities available to them as stakes and who deploy every sort of strategy to make one set or the other prevail' (The Field of Cultural Production, chapter 1 below). Only a method which retains a notion of intertextuality, seen as a system of differential stances, and reintroduces a notion of agent (i.e., producer), acting (consciously or unconsciously) within a specific set of social relations, can transcend the seemingly irreconcilable differences between internal and external readings of artistic works. This is precisely the method that Bourdieu has developed with his notions of field and habitus.

To summarize very briefly, Bourdieu's method attempts to incorporate three levels of social reality: (1) the position of the literary or artistic field within what he calls the field of power (i.e., the set of dominant power relations in society or, in other words, the ruling classes); (2) the structure of the literary field (i.e., the structure of the objective positions occupied by agents competing for legitimacy in the field as well as the objective characteristics of the agents themselves); and (3) the genesis of the producers' habitus (i.e., the structured and structuring dispositions which generate practices).

The cultural (literary, artistic, etc.) field exists in a subordinate or dominated position within the field of power, whose principle of legitimacy is based on possession of economic or political capital. It is situated within the field of power because of its possession of a high degree of symbolic forms of capital (e.g., academic capital, cultural capital), but in a dominated position because of its relatively low degree of the dominant classes. It is for this reason that Bourdieu refers to intellectuals as pertaining to the dominated fraction of the dominant class. Although fully within the field of power (except when the cultural practices in question comprise what is often referred to as 'folklore'), the cultural field possesses a relative autonomy with respect to its economic and political determinations.

The field of cultural production is structured, in the broadest sense, by an opposition between two sub-fields: the field of restricted production and the field of large-scale production. The field of restricted production concerns what we normally think of as 'high' art, for example 'classical' music, the plastic arts, so-called 'serious' literature. In this sub-field, the stakes of competition between agents are largely symbolic, involving prestige, consecration and artistic celebrity. This, as Bourdieu often writes, is production for producers. Economic profit is normally disavowed (at least by the artists themselves), and the hierarchy of authority is based on different forms of symbolic profit, e.g., a profit of disinterestedness, or the profit one has on seeing oneself (or being seen) as one who is not searching for profit. It is in this sense that the cultural field is a universe of belief. The symbolic power of this sub-field's products is sustained by a vast social apparatus encompassing museums, galleries, libraries, the educational system, literary and art histories, centres for the performing arts and so forth.

The degree of autonomy of a specific realm of activity is defined by its ability to reject external determinants and obey only the specific logic of the field, governed by specific forms of symbolic capital. In Bourdieu's words, again in 'The Field of Cultural Production', 'in the most perfectly autonomous sector of the field of cultural production, where the only audience aimed at is other producers (e.g., Symbolist poetry), the economy of practices is based, as in a generalized game of "loser wins", on a systematic inversion of the fundamental principles of all ordinary economies, that of business (it excludes the pursuit of profit and does not guarantee any sort of correspondence between investments and monetary gains), that of power (it condemns honours and temporal greatness), and even that of institutionalized cultural authority (the absence of any academic training or consecration may be considered a
virtue'). The very logic of the restricted field of production makes it conducive to formal experimentation and innovation (diverse avant-garde movements are situated at this extreme of the field).

The field of large-scale production involves what we sometimes refer to as 'mass' or 'popular' culture: privately owned television, most cinematic productions, radio, mass-produced literature (the Harlequin or Mills & Boon romance, for example). Sustained by a large and complex culture industry, its dominant principle of hierarchization involves economic capital or 'the bottom line'. Its very nature and its dependence on the broadest possible audience make it less susceptible to formal experimentation, although, as Bourdieu notes in *The Market of Symbolic Goods* (chapter 3 in this volume), it frequently borrows from the restricted field of production in attempts to renew itself.

The cultural field constitutes, as Bourdieu indicates in the subtitle to the lead essay in this volume, an 'economic world reversed', in that the autonomous pole, based on symbolic capital and thus subject only to internal demands, is marked positively, and the opposite pole, based on subordination to the demands of economic capital, is marked negatively. Between these poles is a range of cultural practices which combine the two principles of legitimacy to various degrees. Bourdieu thus refers to two principles of hierarchization which constitute the stakes of struggle in the field: the heteronomous principle, based on external factors, and the autonomous principle, based on specific interests. This fundamental opposition, however, is cut through with multiple additional oppositions, (for example between genres or between different approaches to the same genre). While today these principles are found in the opposition between 'mass' and 'elite' culture, they may vary according to the specific country in question and the specific historical moment of analysis. In his discussion of the literary field in nineteenth-century France, for example, Bourdieu analyses these opposing principles through the opposition between bourgeois art (notably the theatre), social art, and art for art's sake. Social art occupies a thoroughly ambiguous position in relation to the other two in that it appeals to external functions (like bourgeois art) while at the same time rejecting (like art for art's sake) the dominant principle of hierarchy in the field of power.

The cultural field is, furthermore, structured by the distribution of available positions (e.g. consecrated artist vs struggling artist, novel vs poetry, art for art's sake vs social art) and by the objective characteristics of the agents occupying them. The dynamic of the field is based on the struggles between these positions, a struggle often expressed in the conflict between the orthodoxy of established traditions and the heretical challenge of new modes of cultural practice, manifested as *prises de position* or position-takings. Bourdieu sometimes refers to position-takings as the 'space of creative works', but they may refer to both internal (e.g. stylistic) and external (e.g. political) positionings. The space of position-takings can only be defined as a system of differential stances in relation to other possible position-takings, past and present. This is where a notion of intertextuality comes into the analysis. Unlike intertextuality as conceived by Bakhtin or Kristeva, however, which tends to relate texts only to other texts, for Bourdieu texts must be analysed both in relation to other texts and in relation to the structure of the field and to the specific agents involved.

Bourdieu posits a homology between the space of position-takings and the space of positions in the field, so that conflicts between different position-takings in fact constitute particular manifestations of the structure of the latter. In *Homo Academicus* he offers the Barthes–Picard polemic, a 'quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns', as an example of such conflict, which he sees as a 'rationalized retranslation' of the opposition between the posts each critic held, between the social sciences and literary studies or, in institutional terms, between the École des Hautes Études and the Sorbonne, respectively. The polemic, in other words, is not simply between two individuals, but rather is inscribed in the broader conflict between orthodoxy and heresy which constitutes the central dialectic of change in the cultural field. The same principle applies to the process of 'banalization' and 'debanalization' described by the Russian Formalists and to what Weber describes as a process of 'routinization' and 'deroutinization' in the religious field. As Bourdieu puts it in 'Principles for a Sociology of Cultural Works', 'the process that carries works along is the product of the struggle among agents who, as a function of their position in the field, of their specific capital, have a stake in conservation, that is routine and routinization, or in subversion, i.e. a return to sources, to an original purity, to heretical criticism, and so forth'.

The relationship between positions and position-takings is mediated by the dispositions of the individual agents, their feel for the game. Agents' strategies are a function of the convergence of position and position-taking mediated by habitus. In his discussion of Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* (see chapter 4 in this volume), Bourdieu shows how the characters' habitus shapes their inclination to play the game to win or lose, to augment, preserve or squander their inherited capital. Strategies also account for agents' trajectories in the field.

*Strategy* and *trajectory* are two key concepts in Bourdieu's theory of the field. *Strategy* may be understood as a specific orientation of practice. As a product of the habitus, strategy is not based on conscious calculation but rather results from unconscious dispositions towards
practice. It depends both on the position the agent occupies in the field and on what Bourdieu calls the state of the 'legitimate problematic' – the issues or questions over which confrontation takes place, which constitute the stakes of struggle in the field and which orient the search for solutions. Trajectory, as defined in ‘Principles for a Sociology of Cultural Works’, ‘describes the series of positions successively occupied by the same writer in the successive states of the literary field, being understood that it is only in the structure of a field that the meaning of these successive positions can be defined.’ The trajectory is one way in which the relationship between the agent and the field is objectified. It differs from traditional biography in that it does not search, as does Sartre in his study of Flaubert, for some sort of 'original project' that determines and unifies all subsequent developments in a writer's life. It concerns, rather, the objective positions successively occupied in the field. Symbolic forms (e.g. novels or other forms of artistic works) constitute another way in which the relationship between the agent and the field is objectified and, as we have seen, can only be understood relationally.

Bourdieu's model necessarily involves different levels of analysis which account for different aspects of cultural practice, ranging from the relationship between the cultural field and the broader field of power to the strategies, trajectories and works of individual agents. All levels of analysis, each composed of multiple components, must be taken into consideration to gain a full understanding of cultural works. Although represented here only schematically, the significance of Bourdieu's model for contemporary criticism, especially those tendencies concerned with the relations between literature/art and its socio-historical ground, should be clear.

Bourdieu's model might, for example, provide theoretical and methodological rigour to a formulation such as that of Edward Said's 'affiliations', defined as an 'implicit network of peculiarly cultural associations between forms, statements, and other aesthetic elaborations, on the one hand, and, on the other, institutions, agencies, classes, and amorphous social forces'. According to Said, such affiliations anchor writers and their texts in a complex system of cultural relationships which include the 'status of the author, historical moment, conditions of publication, diffusion and reception, values drawn upon, values and ideas assumed, a framework of consensually held tacit assumptions, presumed background, and so on'.

Although at first glance similar to Bourdieu's model, Said's formulation is largely intuitive and ultimately vague, and it never really inquires into the socially and historically constituted institutional framework which in fact sustains literary practice. Nor does it ever inquire into the objective position that criticism itself – and therefore the critic – occupies in the field of social relations.44

Bourdieu's work coincides in a number of ways with the 'New Historicism', identified primarily with Stephen Greenblatt and the journal Representations. Like Bourdieu, the New Historicism has attempted to develop a methodology that would avoid the reductionism both of internal, formalist and of external, more frankly sociological or Marxist paradigms of criticism. It has sought to refigure the literary field, especially that of the English Renaissance, by resituating works 'not only in relationship to other genres and modes of discourse but also in relationship to contemporaneous social institutions and non-discursive practices'.45 It posits, again like Bourdieu, that formal and historical concerns are inseparable, that human consciousness and thought are socially constituted, and that possibilities of action are socially and historically situated and defined.46 But Bourdieu would almost certainly take issue with New Historicism's 'post-structuralist textualization of history', which ultimately downplays the importance of an extra-textual social and historical ground and the mediating role of the field of cultural production.47

During the 1980s the question of the formation and perpetuation of canons has come increasingly to the fore in Anglo-American literary and cultural criticism. Discussions of the canon inevitably impinge on broader questions of aesthetic, literary and cultural value as well as on the constitution, preservation and reproduction of authority and symbolic power in the field. The literary canon has explicitly become both the site and the stake of contention as different groups have argued for its rearrangement along lines more favourable to their divergent interests and agendas.48 Bourdieu's model suggests that such struggles in fact constitute the dynamic of change in the cultural field, for what is always at stake – in struggles between the Ancients and the Moderns, between consecrated artists and the avant-garde, between competing visions of the canon or competing methodologies – is the legitimate definition of literature and literary practice.

The legitimacy and authority of a specific critical interpretation derive at least in part from the legitimacy and authority of those who propagate it, or, to put it another way, from their objective position as authorized lectores (as opposed to auctores) in the literary field. A canonical vision of a literary school, movement or writer represents a structure of authority in the field; we would be naïve to assume that it is innocent or disinterested. As Bourdieu writes in 'The Field of Cultural Production', 'Every critical affirmation contains, on the one hand, a recognition of the value of the work which occasions it . . . and on the other hand an affirmation of its own legitimacy. All critics declare not
only their judgement of the work but also their claim to the right to talk about it and judge it. In short, they take part in a struggle for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of the work of art.’ There is, as Bourdieu has said, an interest in disinterestedness.

At stake in the literary field, and more specifically in the field of criticism is, among other things, the authority to determine the legitimate definition of the literary work and, by extension, the authority to define those works which guarantee the configurations of the literary canon. Such a definition is both positive, through selection of certain literary values, and negative, through its exclusion of others. The establishment of a canon in the guise of a universally valued cultural inheritance or patrimony constitutes an act of ‘symbolic violence’, as Bourdieu defines the term, in that it gains legitimacy by misrecognizing the underlying power relations which serve, in part, to guarantee the continued reproduction of the legitimacy of those who produce or defend the canon.

One of the major tenets of Bourdieu’s theory and method – and one which goes back to his ethnographic studies in Algeria and to his break with structuralism – concerns the need to objectify and analyse the relationship between the analyser and his or her object of analysis. Failure to do so frequently results in the analyser assuming a privileged position (always self-attributed) and effacing relations of power that may be inherent in the relationship. It is for this reason that Bourdieu takes issue, for example, with Derrida’s ‘deconstruction’ of Kant’s *Critique of Judgement*, since it only goes halfway, failing to question its own position in the philosophical field. It thus remains, in Bourdieu’s words, ‘subject to the censorships of the pure reading’. In this respect Bourdieu’s work (for instance, *Homo Academicus*) represents an exemplary self-referentiality, constantly questioning and verifying its own presuppositions.

III

Bourdieu’s theory of the field of cultural production covers, as indicated above, both the material and the symbolic production of cultural works, which entails taking into account the multiple mediators which contribute to the works’ meaning and sustain the universe of belief which is the cultural field. If cultural works are produced in objective historical situations and institutional frameworks by agents using different strategies and following different trajectories in the field, the reception of such works, regardless of the level of that reception, also takes place in specific historically constituted situations. Works have significance for certain groups and individuals based on their own objective position, cultural needs and capacities for analysis or symbolic appropriation. A discussion of the reception of cultural works thus implies a consideration of the values and systems of classification brought to bear on them at different moments. As already noted, such systems constitute the stakes of symbolic struggle in the cultural field and embody frequently unrecognized relations of power. Much of Bourdieu’s work on art, literature and culture – in particular *Distinction* – has been concerned precisely with the ways in which culture contributes to domination and to the process of social reproduction.

The three essays in the final section of this volume all deal with the art world. Taken together, they represent an encapsulation of the overriding concerns of Bourdieu’s model: the reconstruction of an artistic field at a given moment, its relationship to the field of power, the heretical challenge of a specific artist, the transformation of the hierarchy of legitimacy as a result of that challenge, and the long-term implications of that transformation in terms of the aesthetic appropriation of artistic works. The essays’ central focus is, ultimately, the development of the pure gaze – focusing on form rather than function – which characterizes cultivated appreciation of art works up to the present.

The pure gaze came into being with the emergence of an autonomous artistic field capable of formulating and imposing its own values and its own principles of legitimacy while at the same time rejecting external sanctions and demands. This entails, obviously, the emergence of a group of producers motivated by pure artistic intention. Bourdieu suggests that, at least in France, such an autonomous field came into being only in the 1860s with the breakdown of the academic system, which imposed a set of official pictorial and aesthetic values institutionally reinforced by the École des Beaux-Arts, the Salon and other competitions. In the final analysis, academic values were sanctioned and guaranteed by the state, which encompassed the specific institutions in question.

The breakdown of the academic system occurred in particular through Manet’s revolutionary refusal to abide by institutional impositions and his rejection of academic norms. He especially repudiated its injunction, based on a learned tradition steeped in classical culture, that a painting have a narrative content, that it ‘say’ something, and that it deal only with ‘high’ or ‘noble’ themes considered appropriate to legitimate painting. Hence the scandal caused, for example, by (among other works) his *The Absinthe Drinker*. In pictorial terms, Manet’s heretical challenge rejected the academy’s aesthetic of the ‘finish’, which sought to eliminate all traces of the artist’s work and to impose
conventional forms of composition and colour schemes. With Manet, and the Impressionists after him, narrative and drama lose their privileged position, and painting, in its most legitimate form, ceases to refer to anything but itself. Form, in other words, replaces function. The breakdown of the academic system led to the emergence of new groups of artists who no longer recognized a single source of legitimation and who increasingly rejected aesthetic values other than those based on the specific interests of the field. The system’s monolithic authority was replaced, as Bourdieu describes it in ‘Manet and the Institutionalization of Anomie’ (chapter 9 in this volume), by ‘the plurality of competing cults of multiple uncertain gods’.

The pure gaze is thus inseparable from the existence of an autonomous artistic field. It is also inseparable – when one shifts to the level of ontogenesis – from very specific conditions of acquisition, a fact born out by empirical research. Bourdieu’s initial study of the artistic field was made in the mid-1960s when a research team he directed undertook a survey of art museum attendance in Western Europe. The results of the survey were published in 1966 under the title *L’Amour de l’art.* 20

Without going into the details of his survey and analysis, suffice it to say that Bourdieu found, perhaps not surprisingly, that regular museum attendance increases with increasing levels of education, to the point where, although theoretically open to all, art museums become ‘almost the exclusive domain of cultivated classes’. 21 They thus have all the outward appearances of legitimacy, since the only ones excluded are those who exclude themselves. Simply verifying the correlation between educational level – or level of cultural aspiration – and museum attendance through statistical analysis is, however, insufficient for understanding why certain classes exclude themselves from what might be seen as a potentially edifying experience.

Access to works of art cannot be defined solely in terms of physical accessibility, since works of art exist only for those who have the means of understanding them. Comprehension involves a decoding operation, and the ability to decode works of art as they are meant to be decoded (that is, according to the values established in the artistic field) is not a universally shared natural talent, since it involves much more than the direct and immediate apprehension of the work. Artistic competence is a form of knowledge which permits the beholder to situate the work of art in relation to the universe of artistic possibilities of which it is part. As Bourdieu writes in ‘Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception’ (chapter 8 in this volume), ‘The perception of the work of art in a truly aesthetic manner, that is, as a signifier which signifies nothing other than itself, does not consist of considering it “without connecting it with anything other than itself, either emotionally or intellectually” . . ., but rather of noting its distinctive stylistic features by relating it to the ensemble of the works forming the class to which it belongs, and to these works only’. Artistic competence, defined in this manner, is the result of a long process of inculcation which begins (or not) in the family, often in conformity with its level of economic, academic and cultural capital, and is reinforced by the educational system. It also involves prolonged exposure to works of art. The understanding of a work of art thus depends fully on the possession of the code into which it has been encoded, and this is neither a natural nor a universally distributed capability. Competence in this process of appropriation, which Bourdieu sometimes refers to as an ‘aesthetic disposition’, is a form of cultural capital, which, like other forms of capital, tends to follow unequal patterns of accumulation.

The role of the educational system – at least in France – is particularly important in this respect, not because it offers systematic programmes in art appreciation (in fact, it tends to be oriented towards a literary culture), but rather because it tends to cultivate a certain familiarity with legitimate culture and to inculcate a certain attitude towards works of art. In other words, even dealing as it does in the main with literary works, the educational system tends to create a transferable cultural disposition to appreciate academically sanctioned works of art and an equally transferable aptitude for artistic classification. These dispositions gradually become attached to certain academic and social status groups. The transferability of the aesthetic disposition allows knowledge and taste to be arranged into ‘constellations’, closely associated with educational level, ‘such that a typical structure of preferences and knowledge in matters of painting is very likely to be linked to a similar structure of knowledge and tastes in classical music or even in jazz or cinema’. 22

In an ideal situation in which education serves a true democratic function and is available to all on a truly equal basis, its impact should be to provide all students with the same or at least a similar aesthetic disposition. But Bourdieu’s work in the sociology of education has shown, to the contrary, that schooling serves to reinforce, rather than diminish, social differences. The culture it transmits is largely that of the dominant classes, and it tends to perceive and classify as ‘natural’ talent, and thus ‘natural’ superiority, levels of knowledge among students which are in fact largely the result of an informal learning process taking place within the family. The educational system transforms social hierarchies into academic hierarchies and, by extension, into hierarchies of ‘merit’. As Bourdieu writes, ‘It is sufficient to give free play to the laws
of cultural transmission for cultural capital to be added to cultural capital and for the structure of the distribution of cultural capital between social classes to be thereby reproduced.\textsuperscript{53}

Cultural competence and the aesthetic disposition participate in the perpetuation of social differences to the extent that they are taken to be natural talents available to all on an equal basis and thus not recognized as the result of a specific process of cultural transmission and training which is in fact not available to all. Bourdieu refers in ‘Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception’ to the paradox of the process by which the realization of culture becomes natural, to the extent that it is only achieved ‘by negating itself as such, that is, as artificial and artificially acquired, so as to become second nature, a habitus, . . . so completely freed from the constraints of culture and so little marked by the long, patient training of which it is the product that any reminder of the conditions and the social conditioning which have rendered it possible seems to be at once obvious and scandalous’. Cultural capital thus participates in the process of domination by legitimizing certain practices as ‘naturally’ superior to others and by making these practices seem superior even to those who do not participate, who are thus led, through a negative process of inculcation, to see their own practices as inferior and to exclude themselves from legitimate practices.

The implication of Bourdieu’s theory is that any form of analysis which overlooks the social ground of aesthetic taste tends to establish as universal aesthetic and cultural practices which are in fact products of privilege. It is in this sense that Bourdieu discusses at great length, especially in Distinction, the homology of lifestyles – drawing connections, for example, between taste in art and taste in food – and the differences between taste of distinction and taste for necessity. Taste of distinction, of which artistic competence and the aesthetic disposition are part, implies freedom from economic necessity, the ability to keep necessity at arm’s length, and permits the distant and detached relationship to works of art required by a pure aesthetic. The submission to necessity by those less endowed with cultural and economic capital corresponds, on the other hand, to a more functional and pragmatic aesthetic based on the schemes of perception of everyday life and the frequent rejection of the gratuitousness associated, for example, with formal experimentation.

Through a very elaborate empirical analysis of class tastes and lifestyles, Bourdieu offers a radical critique – outlined most explicitly in the ‘Postscript’ to Distinction, titled ‘Towards a “Vulgar” Critique of “Pure” Critiques’ – of Kantian aesthetics. Bourdieu argues that the aesthetics of ‘pure’ taste are based on a refusal of ‘impure’ taste, or taste reduced to the pleasure of the senses, as well as on a refusal of the facile.

This refusal, however, is not universally accessible. Rather, the opposition between ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ or ‘barbarous’ taste is grounded, like the difference between the tastes of distinction and the taste for necessity, in the opposition between the cultivated and the uncultivated or between the dominant and the dominated. In Kant’s words, ‘“Taste that requires an added element of charm and emotion for its delight, not to speak of adopting this as the measure of its approval, has not yet emerged from barbarism”’.\textsuperscript{54}

A pure aesthetic expresses, in rationalized form, the ethos of a cultured elite or, in other words, of the dominated fraction of the dominant class. As such, it is a misrecognized social relationship: ‘The denial of lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile – in a word, natural – enjoyment, which constitutes the sacred sphere of culture, implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane. That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences.\textsuperscript{55}

Bourdieu’s work in the sociology of culture attempts to reinsert issues such as the meaning and value of works into the multiple and complex set of historically constituted social relations which authorize and sustain them. He presents a powerful model which calls into question many of the presuppositions guiding widely received notions of the social role and function of culture and opens new horizons for the study of cultural works and practice.