Peers (1823–1830), arguing the royalist cause both in the government and in his writings. After the 1830 revolution overthrew the Bourbons, Bonald retired to the provincial quiet of his hometown, where he died in 1840.

Bonald, like other early conservatives, argued against the individualist and utilitarian assumptions of the Enlightenment that only submission to tradition can provide social order. Unlike them, however, his traditionalism is highly rationalized. History, for Bonald, is a thoroughly structured and unitary process, a logical development of the principles of human nature, the gradual coalescence or constitution of society according to its truth. Tradition is precisely the sum of those truths that history has confirmed while shedding all falsified practices and opinions. This deep rational structure is a society’s constitution, something that exists prior to any specific legislation or administration, the sum of necessary relations that give society its unity. What Bonald calls the constitution is thus the deep structure of society, the scientific laws of its way of life, manifested in its political, religious, familial, and linguistic institutions.

This argument from unity and necessity led Bonald to extremely monistic conclusions. As history is identified with the unfolding of the general, fundamental, and necessary truth of human society, there is ultimately only one tradition shared by all peoples, albeit encrusted with their deviations, which finds its apogee in the Catholic monarchy and its unrivalled unity of spiritual and political power. Bonald’s monism is confirmed by the triadic structures he finds everywhere in society, the relation between power, minister, and subject, in which the first provides agency, the second mediation, and the third obedience. In politics, this takes the form of king, nobility, and people; in religion, of God, Christ, and man; in language, of subject, verb, and object; in the family, of father, mother, and child; in the person, of mind, organs, and passions. Each social sphere is thus the embodiment of the same fundamental structural relations. Social order requires that the third term always be subordinated to the second, and the second to the first. In a very influential book on divorce, Bonald thus argued that it dissolved the necessary relations of society, destroying woman’s necessary subordination to man and thus unraveling society into a mass of egoistic individuals.

Everywhere, Bonald defended what he saw as the holistic hierarchies of Catholicism, feudalism, and tradition against the individualism of Protestantism, capitalism, and the Enlightenment, which he believed incapable of creating or maintaining a society. Such claims were common among opponents of the French Revolution, but Bonald was unique in arguing them with the language of science.

Bonald contributed significantly to the later development of French sociology, and especially to the ideas of Comte and Le Play, by making society the object of a science concerned with uncovering the general laws of social organization. This science taught that society is something prior to the individual in history, logic, and morality and that social phenomena are necessarily interdependent and thus to be understood only in a holistic fashion. Social order for Bonald, however, was not only theoretical but also a normative concept. Given his unbending allegiance to authority and to the absolute monarchy in particular, this places severe limits on his relevance to contemporary social theory. Unlike the vast majority of monarchical apologists, however, his defense of social order gave rise to a theory of social order. The deep roots of modern social theory in the reactionary tradition (long ago observed by Karl Mannheim and Robert Nisbet) demand that close attention be paid to the political implications of sociological research.

— Owen Bradley

See also Historicism; Maistre, Joseph de; Positivism; Power; Religion in French Social Theory

FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES


BOURDIEU, PIERRE

Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), Professor of Sociology at the Collège de France, Paris, died on January 23, 2002, aged 71. His death made the headlines on the front page of Le Monde and inspired fulsome tributes from all walks of French public life—not least Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, who had himself suffered the sting of Bourdieu’s pen and tongue—and from the academic community worldwide. Arguably the last of the great French intellectuals active during the second half of the twentieth century, he remained active and productive to the end of his life.

Whether one admires Bourdieu—and he was capable of inspiring extraordinary loyalty and admiration—or not, his standing as an intellectual of genuinely global significance is beyond question. Widely regarded during his lifetime as internationally among the most important of social scientists, his theoretical legacy appears to be securely established (see Jenkins 2002 and Robbins 1999 for divergent assessments).

Within France, perhaps his major contribution to sociological development was to reject the increasingly alope
abstraction of the grand social theory that came to be associated with the existentialist, Marxist, and structuralist traditions during the 1960s and early 1970s. In response, Bourdieu asserted the absolute centrality to social thought of critical empirical research (and in this one suspects that his anthropological roots were showing). Philosophy and theory, particularly epistemology and the philosophy of science, were never neglected—given his intellectual formation and background, they could not be—but neither were the nuts and bolts of systematic inquiry.

From his institutional power base in the Centre de Sociologie Européene, he inspired and led a sustained programme of interconnected investigations into many aspects of French life. Early anthropological studies in Algeria and rural France were followed by sociological research, first on the urban proletariat in Algeria and subsequently in France, on topics as diverse as education, stratification, consumption and cultural taste, art, photography, literature, television, and journalism, rounded off by a final massive discipline—defying exploration of the experience of dispossession and exclusion. All of these projects were grist to his intellectual mill. Bourdieu is probably responsible, with Alain Touraine, for the reinvention of critical empirical social research in France.

In the best French tradition, Bourdieu did not neglect the wider context and problems of society, insisting vigorously on the right, indeed the duty, of the public intellectual to intervene in the politics and issues of the day, whether they were poverty, immigration, or globalisation. During the final decade of his life in particular, he appeared to be inspired to do better than the introspective and self-regarding intellectual politics for which le tout Paris had long been notorious. Some of his best and most accessible work is to be found in the polemical use of oral testimony in *The Weight of the World* (1999) (*La misère du monde*), which reads like a cross between Zola, Mayhew, and Terkel, or in the short pieces explicitly written as political interventions during this period. In some respects, not least in the language he used, he seemed to have found a new voice.

In the Anglophone world as well, one of Bourdieu’s main contributions was to emphasise the necessary and mutual implication in each other of theory and empirical research. This was particularly important for a generation of young scholars on the broad left, such as the Birmingham school of cultural studies in Britain, who were seeking an exit from the sterility of increasingly labyrinthine Marxist theory and legitimation for actually getting their hands dirty in the field. Unlike much contemporary theory, Bourdieu’s arguments were typically rooted in detailed research, taking in every option from ethnographic fieldwork to the large-scale social survey. Furthermore, his insistence on the indivisible unity of theory and research, and indeed, his insistence on a host of other things, was expressed in a language and tone of brook-no-argument certainty that offered a refreshing alternative to the fashionable indecision and relativism of postmodernism.

Theoretically, Bourdieu’s work also struck another note outside France. During the 1970s, Anthony Giddens was developing his notion of structuration, attempting to throw a load-bearing bridge across the abyss that yawned between the great theoretical constructs of social structure and social action, and attracting a great deal of attention for doing so. For a while, certainly well into the 1980s, this was the major international social theoretical debate and arena, and Bourdieu was addressing the same issues, albeit from a different direction (Parker 2000).

The final internationally significant dimension of Bourdieu’s work was inspired in part by local French traditions in the philosophy of science (particularly the work of Canguilhem). In this respect, Bourdieu made an important contribution to that understanding of sociology, which, beginning with Max Weber and continuing through writers such as Alvin Gouldner, emphasises the necessary reflexivity of the enterprise. This is in part an epistemological position and in part a matter of ethics. It is, par excellence, the ground over which theory, research, and politics confront each other in Bourdieu’s work.

**BIOGRAPHY**

Born in 1930 in the Béarn area of southeastern France, Pierre Bourdieu was the son of a minor civil servant, rural, but more petit bourgeois than peasant. In the early 1950s, he studied, together with Derrida and Le Roy Ladurie, among others, at the elite École Normale Supérieure in Paris, finding intellectual and political life there stifling. Graduating as an agrégé de philosophie, he refused to write his dissertation in response to what he saw as institutional rigidity and sterility.

After teaching for a year in a provincial lycée, he was called up for military service in 1956 and spent the next two years with the French Army in Algeria. It was a transformative experience, politically and intellectually. He elected to spend a further two years there, researching and teaching at the University of Algiers, producing a series of polemical studies of the impact of colonialism and the war on the Algerian peasantry and working class and the French settlers.

Returning to France in 1960, Bourdieu attended Lévi-Strauss’s anthropology seminars, read Marx again, and worked for a period as Raymond Aron’s assistant. Three years of exile at the University of Lille were rewarded in 1964 by a senior position at L’École Pratique des Haute Études in Paris, his base for most of the next two decades. It was here that the Centre de Sociologie Européenne was established in 1968 and where Bourdieu gathered around him a team of collaborators, such as Boltanski, Darbel, de St. Martin and Passeron, who provided the foundation for an increasingly ambitious collective programme of research.
and publication, of which he was the obvious focus and leader.

His directorship of the centre continued when, in 1981, he was elected, following typically hard-fought internal politics and in competition with Boudon and Touraine, to the Chair in Sociology at the Collège de France left vacant on Aron’s retirement. Now secure in the senior position in French sociology, he further consolidated his position outside France with a series of translations, lectures, and other public appearances. Capable of seeming to be all things theoretical to all people, not least because of his own imaginative and pragmatic appropriation of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, structuralism, Goffman’s interactionism, and Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language, he became a major influence on Anglophone anthropology, sociology of education, and cultural studies.

During the final decade of his life, he increasingly turned his intellectual capital into political impact, writing in the press, appearing on television, and delivering speeches. His politics remained rooted in his early rejection of Stalinism, his experiences of Algeria in the 1950s, and his affinity with student radicalism during the 1960s. Characterised by sympathy for the oppressed and anger about their conditions of life, scepticism about conventional wisdom, and fiery certainty, his political writings of this late period in his life are among his best.

**EPISTEMOLOGY**

One characterisation of Bourdieu’s intellectual trajectory might point to his initial rejection of authoritarian Marxism and existentialism, followed by a further, longer-term move away from structuralism—although he arguably never deserted it altogether—toward his own theoretical and epistemological synthesis of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and interactionism. This synthesis involved a rejection of analytical models that invoked rules supposedly governing behaviour, and an exploration of the generation and pursuit of strategies.

One of the themes informing this journey emerged first on his return from Algeria, in the research encounter with his own society in the shape of the Béarnais peasantry. In identifying himself to some extent with his research subjects, he realised that they are no more blindly rule governed than we are and that the objectification of “them” in the course of research is in itself a problem. This marked the beginning of a process of epistemological reflection on social science practice that was to continue throughout his career. His “epistemological experiment” of “participant objectivation” required the researcher to “objectify the act of objectification.” In the course of research, two steps backward were required: the first from the situation being examined and the second from the stance required by that disinterested examination.

Bourdieu argued that taking the point of view of the detached observer privileges ideals, norms, and values, easily expressed in language and easily formulated as rule-like propositions. Furthermore, questioning encourages informants to produce generalised “official accounts” that reflect what it is believed should happen rather than what does. As a result, the reality of the analytical model is substituted for an analytical model of reality.

Thus, Bourdieu’s basic epistemological precepts are the need for critical vigilance with respect to the implications of the objectification inherent in research and the need to try and “step into the shoes” of others practically (because we cannot read their minds). These inform two other significant aspects of his epistemology. The first concerns the pitfalls of synopsis: the condensation and summary of complex and disparate material within a unified and unifying frame of reference. He had in mind devices such as diagrams, genealogies, and schedules or calendars, and he argued strongly that these “synoptic illusions” are always distortions (albeit perhaps necessary distortions; in his later work, most notably in *Distinction* (1984), he himself resorted extensively to diagrams). This is perhaps most strikingly so in their suppression of the time and timing of human life.

The other epistemological and methodological thread running through much of Bourdieu’s work is his distrust of what people say (although, once again, this is not fixed in stone; his last major work, *The Weight of the World*, relies almost totally for its impact and its argument on edited interview transcripts). What really matters, he argued, is practice: what people do. This found its way into much of his later empirical research in his extensive reliance on statistical data and analyses.

**THE LOGIC OF PRACTICE**

Bourdieu’s epistemological writings are concentrated in two closely related works, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) and *The Logic of Practice* (1990), which focus on his anthropology and the theorisation of how humans do what they do and how we are to understand the world they construct in so doing. This foundational framework rests on three key equally important concepts: practice, habitus, and field.

Practice is what humans do (and, for Bourdieu, should not be confused with voluntarist notions of “action”). It is improvisatory rather than rule governed; it is embodied; it takes time and is situated in space; it is strategic, in that it goes somewhere, producing outcomes. Bourdieu’s emphasis on practice betrays the influence of Marx’s early writings, on one hand, and Goffman, on the other. Epistemologically, it is important to attend to what people actually do because of the gulf between official cultural accounts and everyday realities.
To Bourdieu, strategy does not imply deliberation or motivation (indeed, his idiosyncratic understanding of “strategy” is a theme in criticisms of his work). Strategies are, rather, rooted in less-than-conscious “practical logic” (or “practical sense”), the emergent product of encounters between habitus and field. Also called “the feel for the game,” this is the cornerstone of his implacable opposition to rational action theories. Strategies emerge and make practical sense within a world constituted as taken-for-granted doxa, “the way things are,” a world in which objective probabilities condition the expectations formed and held by individual subjectivities.

The conditioning of practice by habit is also important and feeds into Bourdieu’s model via the notion of habitus. Not an original concept, in his usage habitus refers to implicit embodied generative dispositions and principles of classification—apparently both individual and collective, although the individual is the easiest to grasp—that in a continuously improvised but unreflexive process adjust to objective conditions in any given field of interaction. They appear to generate practice in a way that is somewhat analogous to the relationship between meaningful utterances and deep structures in Chomskian linguistics (or for that matter, the relationship between structure and the manifestations of culture in Lévi-Straussian structuralism). In this process of adjustment between the internal and the external, an ongoing, relatively stable status quo is produced and reproduced. This admittedly somewhat imprecise conceptualisation of habitus provided the kernel of Bourdieu’s attempt to transcend the “ruinous opposition” between objectivism and subjectivism.

The final coordinate of Bourdieu’s conceptual triangle is the field. Loosely defined, this can be thought of as a culturally significant, institutionally constituted arena, a “network of objective relations” characterised by desirable goods and values, accepted ways of doing things, recognised relationships between ends and means, and struggles for access to all of these. Examples might include kinship relations, the political domain, the art world, or formal education. Every field is characterised by its own doxa and appropriate habitus, shared among legitimate participants.

Bourdieu draws on metaphors of “the game” and “the market” to characterise the coordinated yet undirected workings of a social space organised as interconnected fields. As in any market, capital accumulation is at stake. Bourdieu, perhaps drawing inspiration from Weber, emphasises the diversity of capitals that may be means and ends in the competitive struggles in all fields: economic capital, symbolic capital (such as honour or reputation), social capital (networks and relationships), and cultural capital (such as legitimate knowledge). There is a homology among the basic principles informing different fields that allows participants to move between them and produces and reinforces cumulative patterning effects, of hierarchy in particular. Habitus is at the heart of the practical logics that create the collective logics of fields and their interrelation.

THE REPRODUCTION OF SOCIETY

To Bourdieu, fields should be understood, perhaps before they are anything else, as systems of power relations. They are also the site and the medium of interaction between the collective— institutions—and individual agents. This is, definitively, a process of symbolic violence that allows domination to be achieved indirectly, culturally, rather than through crude coercion. Symbolic violence depends on and must therefore foster “misrecognition” (méconnaissance), through which power becomes perceived as axiomatic and/or legitimate rather than arbitrary (and resistible) domination. Nor is it only domination that is arbitrary: the taken-for-granted reality of any social space, doxa, is a “cultural arbitrary,” neither natural nor in place because it is in any functional sense “better.”

False knowledge is thus the foundation of both subordination and superordination. Bourdieu explored this at greatest length in his studies of education, most notably in the classic, Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture (1990). The symbolic violence of the cultural arbitrary doesn’t just happen; it is based in pedagogic action, whether that be family education, formally institutionalised education, or the diffuse education of the peer group and everyday life. For pedagogic work to succeed, it must invoke legitimate pedagogic authority. Its outcome is the inculcation of a fitting habitus, appropriate to the field and the agent’s position within it.

That process of fit and fitting takes place throughout the life course but is most concentrated in early socialisation, whether familial, institutionalised, or diffuse. Hierarchy is obscured and domination experienced as legitimate: Self-limitation and self-censorship are the most effective forms of dispossession, and the social and cultural system is reproduced. Bourdieu argued, in some of his earliest work in Algeria and in later work on schooling and the experience of higher education, that the process that he called “the subjective expectation of objective probabilities” is fundamental to our understanding of inequality and domination.

There is, however, more to it than this. In a further elision of means and ends, the legitimization of domination is also achieved through the medium with and within which pedagogic action works. Particular kinds of symbolic mastery (culture) are privileged as most valuable and most prestigious (and therefore most difficult). According to Bourdieu, the accumulation of cultural and symbolic capital does not permit egalitarianism in this respect, even though it may pay lip service to the principle: Privilege is misrecognised as merit, and cultural heredity determines the survival of the most fitting.

None of this is achieved consciously or knowingly in a conspiracy by the agents involved. Partly because of the
key illusion of meritocracy, partly because many of the victims of the system have a vested interest in the defence of their small gains and minor licences, and partly because the field of institutional education is committed to its own preservation and to safeguarding its own monopolies on competence and legitimate judgement, cultural and social reproduction proceeds through the meshing of tacit compacts and agents’ cumulative and mutually confirming axiomatic participation in doxa. Thoughtlessness is the essence of the process.

One of the most consistent themes in Bourdieu’s writings on education is that conflict within the fields of institutionalised education is also class conflict. In his studies of the French university system, particularly Homo Academicus (1988) and The State Nobility (1996), he explores the ways in which culture is simultaneously resource, weapon, and prize in struggles over wider economic and political dominance, struggles in which the elite provides the referees as well as competitors. Spoils internal to the field are also at stake, as revealed in the “conflict of the faculties,” the struggles during which symbolic capital and status are accorded to disciplines, careers, and knowledge: As the backgrounds and trajectories of students and staff make clear, this too is fundamentally a class conflict.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Woven deep into the fibre of education are conflicts over language: the language of interaction, of submission to examination, of assessment, and of ambition. All utterances are, in Bourdieu’s theoretical scheme, the product of a linguistic habitus at work within a linguistic market and are intimately affected by power relations. What people say—and what they do not say, for censorship is potent here too—is conditioned by their anticipation of its reception by others. Language in use signifies and signals wealth with respect to any of the various capitals mentioned earlier, authority, and the utterer’s location in the relevant field. The meaning of what is uttered is not simply a technical function of vocabulary and syntax, but a practical matter of power and position. In this respect, Bourdieu’s study of French academic language use in Homo Academicus is a useful case study and an excellent example of reflexive sociology (even though he stops short of applying to himself the same critical strictures to which he subjects his peers).

There is more to culture than language, of course. In Distinction, one of his best-known books, Bourdieu excavated the complexities of the connections between cultural consumption and class. This a deep and broad work, difficult to summarise and, despite its undoubted flaws, a genuinely important piece of sociology that is likely to survive and be appreciated by posterity. Its project is two stranded, and each prong is ambitious. First, Distinction is a vigorous assault on the notion that aesthetic taste is a natural or sublime impulse, pure and disinterested. Second, it is aimed at nothing less than a reconstruction of Weber’s model of social stratification, focussing in particular on the relationship between class and status.

Apropos aesthetics, Bourdieu’s key move was to anthropologise “Culture with a capital C,” as merely “culture.” In the process, the field of Culture, and particularly the field of Art, becomes disenchanted, as another arena characterised by struggles for individual and collective recognition with respect to symbolic capital (status and reputation). Echoing earlier research that he did on the appropriation of photography and the use of art galleries, Distinction is based in data from large social surveys, looking at everything from newspapers read to music enjoyed to food eaten. Cultural consumption is dissolved into ordinary consumption of every sort.

Apropos stratification, Bourdieu proposed that class and status can be brought together theoretically by the connections between “class factions” and “life-styles.” In detail, he proposed three broad zones of taste, legitimate (i.e., elite), middlebrow, and popular, within each of which class fractions lived distinct lifestyles. Aesthetic judgements within this system are products of interplays between economic capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital. As a general principle, for example, he proposed an inverse relationship between economic capital and cultural capital (more money, less taste).

Taste, Bourdieu argued, is no less than language one of the key signifiers of class identity. Culture is thus something with which we fight, and over which we fight. Only those in the upper reaches of the class system can afford the luxury of aesthetic choices: The “playful seriousness” of the field of Art is a facet of the self-regarding sense of distinction that unites the elite (and notions of the sublime are revealed as yet another weapon in the class struggle). This is conspicuously the case with those cultural “alternatives” promoted and embraced by those members of the elite who, having disappointed themselves in the struggle for mainstream cultural and symbolic achievement, must settle for employment as teachers or social workers.

One of the striking things about this body of work, when set beside Bourdieu’s emphasis on practice, is its reluctance to engage with the immediate practices of cultural production. In general agreement with his rejection of models of behaviour as rational action, the closest he gets to this are various discussions about the way in which creative projects—up for arbitration in the marketplace of the field of Art—become classified as legitimate endeavours or not. The adjustments between subjectivities and objective conditions here are produced by something called the “artistic unconsciousness,” itself the product of an artistic habitus, taste, inculcated by legitimate education. Artistic creativity is reduced, at best, to the taking of positions in the field.
OVERVIEW

It is obvious from this brief, and incomplete, summary of Bourdieu’s life’s work that throughout the empirical research into different topics, using different methods, and invoking different disciplinary traditions, there runs a consistent set of theoretical arguments about the implicit and tacit wellsprings of human practice; about the importance of embodiment; about the ways in which humans internalise the outside world and how this affects what they do; about the inevitability of struggles for recognition; about the centrality of culture to politics and stratification (and vice versa); and about the bad faith and disingenuity of legitimacy, whether it be political or cultural.

Bourdieu’s work has attracted an equally consistent body of criticism. Suffice it to summarise four critical themes here. First, despite his stated project, there is more than a residue of determinism in his theory: It may help us to understand the reproduction of the status quo but does little to address change or innovation. Second, his opposition to any admission of the rational actor into our understanding of human practice smacks of ideology more than reason. Third, his conceptualisation of habitus as the source of behaviour is at best unclear and at worst mysterious. Finally, his work lacks the concern with institutions and how they work that is necessary to transform his model of fields into a convincing and genuinely sociological account of the human world.

— Richard Jenkins

See also Agency-Structure Integration; Body; Cultural Capital; Cultural Marxism and British Cultural Studies; Habitus; Lévi-Strauss, Claude; Social Capital; Structuralist Marxism; Structuration

FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES


BUREAUCRACY

The seminal analysis of bureaucracy lies in the work of Max Weber. Weber, among others (e.g., Simmel), offered a theory of the increasing rationalization of the world. He was especially interested in the structures and ideologies that fostered this growing rationalization, particularly in the West. For Weber, the bureaucracy represents the paradigm of rationalization.

Weber’s discussion of the bureaucracy is grounded in his broader interest in authority structures. He outlines three ideal types of such structures based on different grounds for authority: charisma (based on the followers’ view that the leader has a unique personality or personal characteristics), traditional (based on a long-standing custom), and rational-legal (based on a set of formal rules, regulations, and offices).

The rational-legal system of authority is the one most common in the West and the one of greatest interest to Weber. Bureaucracy is seen as the organizational form associated with this type of authority. A bureaucracy is, in the most general terms, a type of organization based on formal rules, regulations, written records, and documents; specific functions assigned to specific offices; a hierarchy of those offices; and a system of power and authority built into the hierarchy of offices.

The ideal-type bureaucracy has several major characteristics: (1) There is a contiguous structure of offices that are bound by set rules; (2) each of these offices requires its holder to have a specific level of competence as well as a duty to perform certain functions, the authority needed to execute those functions, and the means of compulsion necessary to perform the functions; (3) the offices are organized in a hierarchy; (4) offices may require those who fill them to undergo training in order to learn the skills necessary to effectively handle their duties; (5) individuals who fill an office are provided with the necessary means to perform their duties, and they do not own the means of production; (6) the office belongs to the organization and may not be appropriated by the individual currently in office should he or she choose to leave; and (7) rules, regulations, administrative tasks, and decisions are all presented and recorded in writing.

Although Weber generally had a bleak and somber view of increasing rationalization, he most often presented its purest form, the bureaucracy, in a positive light. He