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# Can Bourdieu's Critical Theory Liberate Us From the Symbolic Violence?

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Pierre Bourdieu argued that sociologists must go beyond the description of how social agents' self-understanding of their institution and society is displayed in their interaction, and should offer a critique of current practice so that the social agents can liberate themselves from the grip of the legitimated symbolic domination. In this article, the author hopes to show that Bourdieu's attempt to establish the epistemologically privileged status of his critique fails on two counts. First, Bourdieu's reliance on psychoanalysis to prove the epistemologically privileged status of his analysis does not provide us with independent evidence that shows why the lay social agents must ascribe an epistemic authority to him. Second, Bourdieu's notion of *illusio* deprives him of the epistemic authority required for the liberation of social agents from the symbolic violence.

*Keywords:* symbolic violence; *illusio*; psychoanalysis; demystification

The relationship of theory to practice occupies the central place in the recent scholarship of social theory (Bourdieu 1990a; Giddens, 1984, 1990; Habermas, 1984, 1993, 2000; Lynch, 1993; Taylor, 1985; Turner, 1994). With the rise of the hermeneutic-interpretive approach in the social sciences, detailed investigation of the meaningful world of agents that has been largely neglected in the traditional positivistic theories takes the first priority in the social science research. In contrast to the positivistic approach in which the aim of social theory is to accurately represent the "preexistent" social world, in the interpretive approach, social reality is defined in terms of agents' self-understanding of their own activity and the institutions to which they belong. On this conception, human practice is based on the self-understanding of the agents, which in turn consists of a set of practical skills, habits, and unstated assumptions that make each other's behavior and utterance meaningful and rational. Such practical skills, habits, and unstated assumptions are in turn closely bound up with the "intersubjective construction" of the social reality that the agents largely take for granted in their everyday life.

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Although Pierre Bourdieu (1990a) concurs that the neglect of the agents' life-world produces a grossly deformed picture of their meaningful world and condemns what he pejoratively calls "theoretical theory," he nevertheless argued that ethnomethodology—which he thinks best represents the social phenomenological approach—"depoliticizes" the world of agents (Bourdieu & Waquant, 1992, p. 74) and fails to go beyond the "doxic" experience of the agents. According to Bourdieu, sociologists must not be simply satisfied with the description of how agents' self-understanding of their institution and society is displayed in their interaction. Rather, they must go beyond the self-understanding of the agents and should offer a critique of current practice so that the social agents can liberate themselves from the grip of the legitimated social classification. Underlying such a conception of the relationship of theory to practice is the "Hegelian dialectic" in which the so-called "labor of the negative" plays a pivotal role in the transformation of the practice in question.

Such an argument, however, is based upon the presupposition that although Bourdieu can penetrate the real *modus operandi* of the social world, practitioners are not capable of "objectively" perceiving the situation in which they are historically embedded and hence need Bourdieu's assistance to liberate themselves from the grip of symbolic domination. In this article, I hope to show that Bourdieu's attempt to establish the epistemologically privileged status of his critique fails on two counts. First, Bourdieu's reliance on psychoanalysis to prove the epistemologically privileged status of his analysis does not provide us with "independent" evidence that shows why the lay social agents must ascribe an epistemic authority to him. Second, I shall argue that Bourdieu's notion of *illusio* deprives him of the "epistemic authority" required for the liberation of social agents from the symbolic violence.

### The Scholastic Fallacy and the Primacy of Practice

Bourdieu concurs with ethnomethodologists, post-Wittgensteinian social theorists, and the phenomenology-inspired sociologists that it is quite mistaken to assume that the theoretical logic of social science can adequately represent the practical logic of the agents. According to Bourdieu, such a failure to recognize the gap between theory and practice is due to the unthought assumptions inscribed in the social theorist's taken-for-granted scholarly practice. To indicate the nature of such unthought assumptions, Bourdieu (1990c) borrowed the term the "scholastic point of view" from John Austin. Austin illustrates the scholastic point of view by referring to a particular use of language wherein scholars, in contrast to the lay people, are preoccupied with examining all the possible meanings of a word without paying any attention to the "situated" use of that word. Extending Austin's use of the term to include the whole range of social scientists' activity usually called "theorization," Bourdieu (1990c) criticized social scientists' practice of substituting theories for practices as killing "the properly strategic dimension of practices" (p. 385).

The strategic dimension of practice here refers to the ways in which social agents deploy the embodied skills and practical sense to cope with a series of unfolding social situations that are replete with uncertainties, indeterminacies, and contingencies. As Bourdieu (1990b; 1996) took pains to show in his analysis of the various fields of cultural production, social agents do not mechanically follow the moral norms or rules enjoined by the community to which they belong. Rather, they interpret those supposedly fixed rules and norms in ways that are most likely to bring them the largest amount of symbolic capital within the “space of the possible” (1990b, pp. 15-16). For Bourdieu, the scholastic fallacy thus lies in reading into the consciousness of the agents the callous conceptual schemes that are not flexible enough to catch all the contextual meanings of actions and utterances that develop with the lapse of time. The violence inveterately done by such a theorization thus amounts to killing the embeddedness of action in duration.

Bourdieu’s (1990b, p. 385) argument that the objective representation of the practical logic of agents is nothing but a social construction available only within the scholastic situation or *skholè*—in which all the contingencies and temporal urgency associated with the pursuits of practical ends are “neutralized” chimes with that of ethnomethodologists who have been concerned with the detailed delineation of how social actors’ intersubjective world is reflexively maintained and made visible in temporally extended social actions (Garfinkel, 1967; Kim, 1999; Sharrock & Button, 1991). In any community of practitioners, according to ethnomethodologists, members develop and regularly apply intersubjective standards to assess the rationality of their own activities. Although members rely on these intersubjectively shared criteria when they evaluate, make judgments of, and criticize each other’s actions, they nevertheless find it very hard to put into words these implicit criteria and assumptions that are embodied in their everyday practice.<sup>1</sup> Ethnomethodologists argue that these criteria—or self-understanding—can be made visible only when they are “instantiated” in local settings, that is, when they deal with “concrete” problems, and can never be written down or made visible *in their entirety*. This means that although members most of the time do what they are expected to do quite unproblematically, it nevertheless remains true that the intersubjective criteria of practical judgment deployed by the members are notoriously difficult for any one of them to define explicitly.

For ethnomethodologists, any general theory abstracted from the practical self-understanding of the social agents is doomed to produce a deformed picture of social interaction in which all contingencies, concreteness, and judgmental aspects of practical reasoning in a wide variety of social contexts are brushed aside by *forcing them to fit* a preconceived theoretical schema. Having never been interested in debunking or going beyond the world of social agents, ethnomethodologists therefore aim to retrieve and hence exhibit the “performative requirements” for being a competent member by studying the interaction of social agents in concrete interactional settings. Ethnomethodologists also

argue that as exhibiting the performative requirements by no means implies going outside the concrete situations of practice and formulating some principles, ethnomethodological investigation has nothing whatsoever to do with constructing a theory.

### The Ontological Complicity Between the Field and the Habitus

But does such a critique of objectivism necessarily lead the sociologists to accept the so-called incorrigibility thesis (Taylor, 1985)—that is, agents' understanding of their own activity is incorrigible and immune from critique—and to merely satisfy themselves with the description of how people make sense of each other's behavior? Or is there any possibility that a sociologist can step in and say something critical about the ordinary practice that, by revealing the hitherto unrecognized aspects of agents' self-understanding, eventually contributes to the transformation of the practice?

In his book *The Logic of Practice* (Bourdieu, 1990b) and many other writings (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), Bourdieu approved of ethnomethodology's concern for the detailed investigation of the agents' logic of practice because he believes that an investigation of the detailed social practice of the agents must precede the truly scientific understanding of social practice. But for Bourdieu, detailed investigation of the practical experience that appears to the agents as immediately given and rational is necessary only because it provides the basis on which a more profound sociological analysis of the constitution of that experience can be erected, that is, an analysis as to how such practical experience (or belief) is produced, maintained, and reproduced in a given social field that is the product of long historical autonomization. At this point, Bourdieu introduced the "second break" into his analysis and criticized ethnomethodologists' preoccupation with the *description* of the performative requirements for being a competent member of a society. "This analysis [ethnomethodology] is excellent as far as description [of practice] is concerned but we must go beyond description and raise the issue of the condition of possibility of this doxic experience" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 73).

Bourdieu (1990b) argued that the doxic experience of the agents that constitutes the subject matter of ethnomethodological investigation derives from "the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a *habitus* and the field to which it is attuned, the taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense" (p. 68). The "em-bodied" dispositions of the social agents that are displayed in their concrete interactional settings—the habitus—and the autonomous institution that is objectified in history—the field—*together* produce the doxic experience that the agents accept with such an immediate transparency. Such an "ontological complicity" between the habitus and the field, Bourdieu argued, explains why social agents regard social reality as a naturally given thing rather than a social construction.

In short, Bourdieu argued that because ethnomethodologists regard such a doxa as devoid of political meaning, they fail to specify the social conditions under which such practical beliefs—or doxic experience—are made legitimate. For Bourdieu (1990b, pp. 56, 94-95), preoccupied only with the *cognitive* aspects of how the agents intersubjectively produce and maintain their prereflexive and practical beliefs, ethnomethodologists forget to specify the *social* conditions under which such practical beliefs are generated and legitimated.

How, then, can a sociologist break with the doxic experience of the agents? The key to understanding Bourdieu's critique of the "incorrigibility" thesis is his notion of *illusio*—a specific interest that results from the agents' investment and commitment to a specific field of cultural production—which in turn is closely related to the production of the doxic experience of the agents. For anyone engaged in the struggle for symbolic capital in the fields of cultural production—be it scientific, philosophical, or literary field—it is essential that he should have an *inclination* to honor and abide by the rules of the game, that is, he must accept the often implicit presuppositions and practical wisdom that everyone else in the field takes for granted and shares with him, for example, what to honor, what to cherish, what to avoid, what to desire, and so on. It also refers to the *ability* of the participants of the game to cope with various situations and contingencies that arise from the everyday practice.

According to Bourdieu, however, these rules of the game, when observed from a detached point of view, are a "cultural arbitrary" imposed on the rest by those who accumulate the largest amount of symbolic capital through previous struggles. Despite the fact that even what counts as facts is itself subject to and determined by the struggle for capital and dominance, those people who participate in the games believe in the legitimacy of the dominant values and the classification schema currently accepted in the field and endorse these arbitrary values imposed on the field by the most powerful. It is ironical to note here that without such miscognition or a doxic experience, the game comes to an end, for everyone knows that the very basis on which they commit themselves has at best an arbitrary foundation. It is also important at this point to note that such an *illusio* cannot be sustained without the complicity of everyone involved in the game. The misrecognition of the participants is a "collective deception" without a particular deceiver, for it is a misrecognition embodied in the habitus of the participants.

For example, even in the scientific field, the collective belief in science can be sustained only when the scientists immerse themselves in the scientific game. It is for this reason that Bourdieu argued that "scientific thought has no foundation other than the collective belief in its foundations that the very functioning of the scientific field produces and presupposes" (1991, p. 8; 1975, p. 34).

Bourdieu now argued that an adequate social theory must take this prereflexive and doxic experience of the social agents as an explanandum and

should be able to explain such *illusio* held by the participants because it is what they take to be the “ultimate reality.” This means that although the theory must ultimately go beyond the participants’ practical self-understanding, it nevertheless must be able to explain how such an *illusio* is produced and maintained within the specific field.

*Symbolic violence* is the term that Bourdieu coined to designate the forces that are mostly unrecognized or misrecognized by the agents in the field. Although most participants think and feel that they are free from any constraints and believe that they can do and in fact are doing what they determine to do, Bourdieu argued that such an unconstrained feeling is due to the misrecognition of the participants. In a given field of cultural production characterized by a specific habitus that is obtained through the embodiment of the legitimated social classification, the possibility of a participant to get ahead in his or her field is determined by the two factors: first, the universe of possibilities that is defined in terms of the currently accepted classification schema and the resources that he or she can mobilize to actualize some of these possibilities. In contrast to the participants’ belief that they are “pure creators, who invent in a vacuum, *ex nihilo*” Bourdieu (1991, pp. 10-11) argued that they are mere “actualizers” of the potentialities that are socially instituted, and these socially instituted potentialities are perceived as such only by those who are endowed with certain socially constituted dispositions, that is, habitus.

Success in such an attempt to actualize the potential inherent in the given field in turn contributes to the increase of the amount of symbolic capital held by a participant and thereby enables him to wield power over other members in the field. Bourdieu (1991) argued that by imposing a definition of reality that is in accord with their preferred classification schema

the dominant consecrate certain objects by devoting their investments to them, and that, through the very object of their investments, they tend to act upon the structure of the chances for profit and thereby upon the profits yielded by different investments. (p. 13)

In sum, Bourdieu’s critique of the practical logic of social agents aims to lay bare the source of the doxic experience of the social agents by tracing it back to the ontological complicity between the habitus and the field.

### Debunking Illusio: Kibitzing or Liberating?

Is such a critique likely to have an impact, however small, on the practice of agents? For Bourdieu (1990a), sociologists are not supposed to judge whether a particular judgment of an agent regarding a certain controversial issue—for example, whether there exists a social class—is right or wrong but should concern themselves with telling “the truth about struggles which have at its stake—among other things—the truth” (p. 181). To put this in other words, Bourdieu

here argued that through an analysis of the mechanics of the transformation of the power relations of the field in question, sociologists can find a true law that governs the production of truth in various fields of cultural production. Furthermore, such an analysis, according to Bourdieu (1990a), will eventually bring about the liberation of the social agents from the grip of domination:

But, above all, the knowledge by itself exercises an effect—one which appears to me to be *liberating*—every time the mechanisms whose laws of operation it establishes owe part of their effectiveness to miscognition, that is, every time it affects the foundations of symbolic violence. Indeed this particular form of violence can be practiced only on subjects, who know, but whose acts of cognition, *being partial and mystified*, endorse the tacit recognition of domination, which is implied in the miscognition of the true foundations of domination. It is easy why sociology ceaselessly has its scientific status challenged, and first and foremost, of course, by all those who need to carry out their symbolic commerce under cover of the darkness of miscognition. (p. 183, italics added)

Thus, it is through the sociologists that the society can reflect on itself, and through such a reflection, the social agents come to realize that they are living in a reified world in which the “constructivity” of the facts is camouflaged.

We can imagine two types of response to Bourdieu’s claim that his analysis liberates the participants of the game from the *illusio* that is product of the complicity between the field and the habitus. The first type of response would be the acceptance of Bourdieu’s allegedly scientific analysis of the final meaning of their life. This response can be expected only when the agents ascribe an immense amount of epistemic authority to Bourdieu and therefore feel obliged to accept the analysis offered by him. In this case, there is no room for the analysts, that is, social agents, to deny or reject the analysis provided by the analyst, because the analysis is supposed to be based on the science as opposed to mere interpretation. Claiming to do a science comparable to mathematics, Bourdieu (1990a, p. 191) argued that he can discover an *isomorphic* structure underlying the phenomenally different fields of cultural production.

However, Bourdieu well anticipated that instead of accepting his scientific analysis, participants might regard his analysis as “kibitzing” that does considerable injustice to their self-understanding of their own institutions and activities. Interestingly enough, Bourdieu took this response as a further confirmation rather than the refutation of the truth of his analysis. Why did he take such a resistance to be natural and as the evidence of the correctness of his theory? Bourdieu (1990a) found the answer in Freud’s psychoanalysis and argued that the debunking of *illusio*, which brings the truth to light, “comes up against the collective defense mechanisms which tend to ensure a real ‘negation’, in Freud’s sense of the word” (p. 187). Such a collective defense mechanism also explains why there is not any social demand for such reflexive knowledge. Bourdieu (1990a, pp. 186-187) here argued that those who are interested in miscognition are the last to entrust the sociologists with such an ability to reflect

upon what they are doing. Bourdieu (1990a) thus described the precarious status of scientific sociology in the following words:

Sociology is a science whose peculiar feature is the peculiar difficulty it has of becoming a science like others. This is because, far from opposing each other, the refusal to know and the illusion of knowing by instinct cohabit perfectly, among researchers as well as practitioners. (p. 189)

But, we might ask at this point, is there any independent evidence that Bourdieu can adduce in favor of his argument for the epistemic authority of his sociological analysis except that sociology has been denied the scientific authority? If Bourdieu (1990a, p. 183) wanted to argue that despite practitioners' disclaimer, his analysis revealed that their judgments and beliefs are "partial" and "mystified," he should have demonstrated why they are deluded whereas he is not. And such a demonstration would consist in showing why his theory, but not that of the practitioners, corresponds to "the way the world really is" or "how things really are." Indeed, Bourdieu thought that he had discovered the rock-bottom explanation as to why people do what they do; for him, human actions become totally incomprehensible unless we suppose they are motivated by the pursuit of symbolic profits in the social space in which they struggle.

But Bourdieu's allegedly firm grip on the real motivation for action can be easily loosened. For the individuals struggling for the increase of symbolic capital do not exist and *cannot* be observed outside of the conceptual network that Bourdieu manages to set up. In such a network, the pattern or theory—the real essence of human motivation stipulated by Bourdieu—and the documentary evidence—the concrete, observed actions of individuals—are "worked up together" in such a circular and mutually reinforcing way that they cannot be separated from one another. Which means that, in contrast to Bourdieu's argument, his theory does not correspond to an independently existing social reality but coheres with itself.

Because Bourdieu's alleged discovery of the real motive for action turns out to be a narrative with a specific moral-practical intent, it is extremely pretentious for Bourdieu to argue that he can reach an objective reality to which no one except him can have an access. Being unable to prove that his rendering of social reality is the only correct way of representing reality, Bourdieu has no choice but to dogmatically impose a fixed meaning on the participants' actions from without and brushes aside other ways of rendering reality as irrational and hence subject to psychoanalysis.

But how scientific is psychoanalysis on which Bourdieu relies to deflect the criticism of those who refuse to accept his alleged discovery? Wittgenstein's (1966) well-known remark about the scientific status of psychoanalysis shows what is at stake here:

If you are led by psycho-analysis to say that really you thought so and so or that really your motive was so and so, this is not a matter of discovery, but of persuasion. In a different way you could have been persuaded of something different. Of course, if psycho-analysis cures your stammer, it cures it, and that is an achievement. One thinks of certain results of psycho-analysis as a discovery Freud made, as apart from something persuaded to you by a psycho-analyst, and I wish to say this is not the case. (pp. 26-27)

Wittgenstein here says that the discovery allegedly made by the psychoanalysis is different in nature from that made in the natural sciences. Whereas natural scientific discoveries somehow “force” us to accept the things that go against our commonsense understanding, psychoanalytic interpretations do not have such a constraining power upon us. Which means that without having to have their lives affected by the rejection of the meaning imposed on their actions by Bourdieu, that is, all of their actions are meant to increase the amount of their symbolic capital, agents can *choose* another narrative that confers upon their actions a more plausible and “followable” (Gallie, 1964) horizon of meaning than that provided by Bourdieu.

Indeed, contemporary interpretation of psychoanalysis shows convincingly why we should not regard psychoanalytic interpretation as a *discovery* of a hidden reality but as a *meaning-reorganization* (Fingarette, 1963; Schafer, 1980; Spence, 1982, 1983). Consider, for example, a person reading a poem; even though he understands all of the words, he does not appreciate the poem. A friend then comes along and “suggests to him an over-all organization or unifying meaning-scheme which had not occurred to him. Suddenly, it clicks” (Fingarette, 1963, p. 21). He also notes that the poem may click *again* under still different meaning-scheme. According to Fingarette, exactly the same thing happens in a therapeutic discourse; a patient coming to the therapist is experiencing an interpretive failure, finding himself unable to organize the bits and pieces of his life into a coherent, meaningful whole. The new meaning-scheme suggested by the therapist helps her reinterpret and reorganize the hitherto meaningless fragments of her life into a structured whole. By furnishing new description, new meaning now for the same events that were described or conceived differently then, the therapist makes those events hang together in a much more unified and meaningful way.

Although agreeing with Freud’s argument that such a success in “gaining a new meaning” not only justifies the use of the concept of the unconscious but also gives us an incontrovertible proof of the existence of what was assumed (i.e., the unconscious), Fingarette (1963, p. 30) nevertheless argued that the incontrovertible proof can be nothing other than showing how patient’s acceptance and use of the new language makes her see herself in different light and, as a consequence, act differently hereafter. In such a therapeutic process, the truth of the narrative cannot be predicted or deduced from the patient’s past (Spence, 1983, p. 467). Rather, it *emerges* through the dialogue between the therapist

and the patient. Here, the therapist does not speak *about* his patient as a specimen or an object that could be analyzed by using theoretical—be it physical, neurological, or sociological—language but speaks *with* the individual patient in crisis in “the dialogue of commitment” to bring about the reformulation of the fixed conception of the patient (Fingarette, 1963, p. 65).

If social agents find Bourdieu's picture of social reality—which conjures up an image of society in which agents are in permanent struggle against one another—unilluminating and unpersuasive, there is no way for Bourdieu to coerce them to accept his narrative, because a point-by-point verification of his theory is not available. Instead, what is available is to invent a “probable, workable, [and] fruitful way” of talking about reality that, by evoking a new gestalt image, “allows us to see things differently and think differently” (Denzin, 2001, p. 31).

Paradoxically, this line of criticism is strengthened by Bourdieu's own argument against the foundationalist philosophers. To argue against the foundationalist philosophers and social theorists, Bourdieu distinguishes the anthropological classification from the natural classification, such as zoological and botanical taxonomies. According to Bourdieu (1990a, p. 179), unlike the latter, in which the classified animals and plants cannot protest that the positions assigned to them by the analyst are inappropriate and unjustified, in the former the classified men and women are themselves “classifying subjects” and can therefore *reject* the classification schema imposed on them by the classifier.

In short, to the great despair of the philosopher-king who by assigning an essence to them claims to enjoin them to be and do what by definition they are meant to be and do, classified and lowly classified men and women may *reject* the principle of classification that gives them the worst place. (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 179, italics added)

Being a social construction of the classifying subjects, the social world we live in includes theories among their constituents. The problem for Bourdieu is that while he is so contemptuous of the role of the philosopher-king, he is in fact playing the same role by aspiring to obtain a theoretical mastery of all other masteries. Accordingly, in contrast to what he preaches, he never allows his subjects—who are classifying subjects themselves—to participate in the act of classification.

Second, his argument for the epistemic authority of the sociologist becomes all the more impotent when we consider his notion of *illusio*. Sociologists, Bourdieu argued, must be *in favor of* the scientific option of demystification and should unmask the collective self-deception entertained and encouraged by the ontological complicity between the social space and the habitus—a self-deception that there is a world of disembodied and transcendental objects that exists independently of the collective beliefs produced through the historical

formation of the field.<sup>2</sup> Just as Durkheim (1912/1954) argued that society is God, Bourdieu here argued that the definition of social reality legitimated by the most powerful is exactly what the social actors worship.

When reflexively applied to Bourdieu himself, however, such an argument implies that Bourdieu can never get out of his own sociological *illuso* and get a privileged epistemological point of view from which he can criticize the actions of the agents. Just as the vision of a social actors is clouded by the fact of having an *illuso* engendered by the complicity of the specific field and habitus, so, too, Bourdieu's vision is clouded by the simple fact that he is just one of those sociologists who have created their own sociological *illuso* within the social space of their competition.

Once again, my argument that Bourdieu cannot get a privileged epistemological standpoint is supported, paradoxically, by his own argument as to the nature of *illuso*. For Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Waquant, 1992) the term *illuso* refers to an "axiological state," which is "both presupposed and produced by the functioning of the historically delimited fields" (p. 115). Thus,

To understand the notion of interest, it is necessary to see that it is opposed not only to that of disinterestedness or gratuitousness but also to that of *indifference*. To be indifferent is to be unmoved by the game: like Buridan's donkey, this game makes no difference to me. Indifference is an axiological state, an ethical state of nonpreference as well as a state of knowledge in which I am not capable of differentiating the stakes proposed. Such was the goal of the Stoics: to reach a state of ataraxy (*ataraxia* means the fact of not being troubled). *Illuso* is the very opposite of ataraxy: it is to be invested, taken in and by the game. To be interested is to accord a given social game that what happens in it matters, that its stakes are important . . . and worth pursuing. (p. 116)

It is now clear why Bourdieu cannot justify his interest in demystification in a noncircular way. Bourdieu's sociological interest in demystifying the ordinary way of looking at the world, as Bourdieu himself might concede, has been engendered meaningful and important through his embodiment of the *particular* sociological habitus (or tradition) that in itself has evolved against the competing sociological traditions. And as such, it cannot have the required objectivity that transcends the historical specificity of the habitus that Bourdieu embodies. If Bourdieu (2000; Bourdieu & Waquant, 1992, p. 117) is right about the axiological and hence "incommensurable" character of *illuso*,<sup>3</sup> he must give up epistemologically privileging his argument and bear the agents' simple retort that they are not interested in and above all indifferent to what Bourdieu says about their practice. Indeed, the mutual impenetrability of *illusios* *logically precludes* the possibility of establishing a feedback loop via which Bourdieu's sociology can liberate the lay people from the grip of social domination.

## Conclusion

Bourdieu's argument that sociology can demystify the life-world of the social agents may encourage some sociologists to feel powerful and righteous. Although such a demystification is possible only when the social agents ascribe an unassailable epistemic authority to Bourdieu's theoretical version of their life-world, Bourdieu does not provide us with a cause to believe why social agents (and other sociologists) should invest immense epistemic authority in his theory.

In this article, I have argued that Bourdieu's attempt to establish the epistemic authority of his sociology fails on two counts. First, being unable to show that the method of proving his theory is the same as that used in the natural sciences, Bourdieu tries to ward off any criticism against his theory by using psychoanalysis. For Bourdieu, anyone who rejects his sociological analysis should be psychoanalyzed simply because they deny the truth allegedly discovered by him. Thus, the more the social agents deny the meaning imposed upon their actions by Bourdieu, the more Bourdieu is convinced about the truth of his theory (see also Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1993).

Perhaps more serious than the problem of circularity involved in such a defense is the fact that psychoanalytic interpretation is in no sense equivalent to the scientific discoveries made in the natural sciences. Unlike the natural scientific discoveries that, whether we like them or not, influence our lives, psychoanalytic interpretation cannot influence us unless we accept that interpretation and act accordingly. Let us suppose that social agents are psychoanalyzed by Bourdieu, and Bourdieu succeeds in identifying the causes of rejecting his theory; if, however, social agents find Bourdieu's narrative about the causes of their rejection of his theory unintelligible and unconvincing, Bourdieu's alleged discovery loses its force and cannot have any influence on them. Psychoanalysis does not have any power on the patient if it is done as a *theoretical contemplation* about the objects it deals with. Instead, it comes to have power only when it is done with a *pragmatic intent* to replace the concepts and language that govern the patient's world with another language charged with different meaning.

I have also argued that Bourdieu does not know how to break the shackle of his own *illusio* and can have a privileged epistemological point of view. Even when he thought he had escaped from his own *illusio*, he would have found himself powerless because of the mutual impenetrability of *illusios*. In Bourdieu's theory, unless agents have already embodied the sociological *habitus* that is historically conditioned by the field, they would not find interesting and revelatory the arguments and demonstrations of the sociologists such as Bourdieu. But it is very unlikely, if not impossible, that practitioners can obtain the specific sociological *habitus* that is necessary for the appreciation of Bourdieu's sociological interpretation of their practice because they are indif-

ferent to what Bourdieu says about their practice. Such a vicious circle logically precludes the possibility that Bourdieu's theory can liberate the practitioners from the symbolic violence.

If sociologists want their findings to have an impact on the ordinary practice, they should not, as Bourdieu did, claim to have discovered an allegedly true model of social struggles that objectifies all other attempts to objectify, but admit that sociology is "only another way of addressing people, who do not wait on science, still less on sociology, for their living" (O'Neill, 1995, p. 188). Which means that rather than insisting that the sociologists have an epistemic authority over the practitioners, sociologists should not only give up a position of epistemic superiority to the social agents but also confront the issue of context dependency of their understanding of ordinary practice. Only through such a performative and egalitarian communicative practice can sociology influence the process of social transformation.

## Notes

1. Michael Lynch (1992) argued that it is quite mistaken to assume that all sorts of ethnomethodology are concerned with elucidating the "implicit" presuppositions, meanings, and self-understanding that are supposed to be operating in all communicative actions. For Lynch, ethnomethodology need not assume the existence of such metaphysical and subjective entities as implicit presuppositions and meanings, for it can demonstrate what he calls the rationality of the "singular occasions" of conduct without presupposing such metaphysical entities (personal communications). But apart from the behavioristic pitfall entailed by it, such an approach does not tell us how, without assuming a certain shared cognitive framework or consensus, members can immediately capture the rationality of the singular occasions of conduct, that is, the sense and meaning of indexical expressions (see Kim, 1999, for details). Thus, in contrast to what he preaches, in his debate with Bloor (1992), Lynch admitted that a "quiet consensus" exists among members regarding the proper interpretation of indexical expressions. I do not think anyone can clearly differentiate a quiet consensus from an implicitly shared set of presuppositions and background assumptions that Lynch identifies as composing the core of the subjective ethnomethodology as opposed to his more objective ethnomethodology.

2. In his book on the sociology of philosophers, Randall Collins (1998) made exactly the same point. But his Durkheimian interpretation of the intellectual community is rather peculiar because, unlike Bourdieu, he uses Durkheimian argument to support a kind of sociological realism. Collins argued that although a reflexive analysis of the intellectual community reveals that it is, after all, the intellectual networks and their products that the intellectuals worship, this fact does not undermine the validity of the claims made within such a scholastic community. In contrast to Bourdieu, Collins rejected the "ironic" stance toward his explanandum and argued that the reflexive analysis of the intellectual practice does not lead sociologists to a discovery of a transcenden-

tal reality that is independent from the intellectual products produced within the social network of intellectuals. This argument of Collins's also applies to the social world of the lay practitioners because, as I shall argue below, Bourdieu's sociological analysis of the lay practice does not lead him to discover a transcendental reality in terms of which he can criticize their practice.

3. Quoting Pascal's remark, Bourdieu (2000) wrote that

Each field, like Pascal's order, thus involves its agents in its own stakes, which from another point of view, the point of view of another game, become invisible or at least insignificant or even illusory. . . . For example, the career ambition of a senior civil servant can leave a researcher indifferent. (p. 97)

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