

PIERRE BOURDIEU

1930–2002

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu demonstrates that the aesthetic is a historically produced category. The qualities of artworks, the aims of creative artists, and the taste exhibited by various audiences derive from a social “field” in which agents maneuver for status and power. His influential book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979) is nothing less than an attempt to rewrite IMMANUEL KANT’s landmark *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790). Bourdieu challenges Kant’s claim that our judgments about art are disinterested, arguing instead that cultivated sensibilities both derive from and produce a “cultural capital” that is tied to economic and social advantages. In *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (1992), which focuses mainly on the producers, in contrast to the consumers, of art, Bourdieu traces the historical rise of the modern notion of aesthetic autonomy. Literary theorists have found Bourdieu’s work congenial to their own questioning of aesthetic theories that make art a realm entirely separate from worldly ambitions and consumer culture.

Bourdieu comes from the provincial petit bourgeoisie (lower middle class); he was born in the village of Denguin, in the Pyrénées district of southwestern France, where his father was the village postmaster. A star rugby player in school, he was also a scholarship student, eventually receiving his degree in philosophy from the École Normale Supérieure, perhaps the most elite university in France. (JACQUES DERRIDA was a classmate.) After a year teaching high school, Bourdieu was drafted into the army and served for two years in Algeria during the bloody and controversial war between the Algerians seeking their independence and the French colonizers. Bourdieu stayed in Algeria after his army stint, eventually writing two books during the 1950s that he hoped would “highlight the plight of the Algerian people and, also, that of the French settlers. . . . I was appalled by the gap between the views of French intellectuals about this war and how it should be brought to an end, and my own experiences.” Returning to France in 1960, Bourdieu began to study anthropology and sociology, and in 1964 he joined the faculty of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (School for Advanced Studies). In 1981 Bourdieu was appointed to the prestigious chair of sociology at the Collège de France, a position he held until his death.

Our first selection captures Bourdieu’s antagonistic response to Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the founding text of modern aestheticism. For Bourdieu, aesthetic judgment (the ability to distinguish between good and bad art, to appreciate the truly fine as opposed to the vulgar) is a sorting process through which modern societies both produce and legitimate economic and status inequalities. The concepts central to Kant’s work—disinterestedness, taste, and autonomy—point toward an effort to shelter art and its reception from worldly concerns. Many theories of art since Kant have repeated this attempt to secure art’s purity, to insist that the essence of the artwork’s value lies in qualities completely separable from any popular or commercial success the artist might achieve by producing the work, or from any pleasure or social prestige the audience might gain by consuming the work. “Disinterestedness”—especially prominent in Kant and MATTHEW ARNOLD, but found throughout the modern tradition—insists that art is adulterated if mundane purposes influence either artist or audience. Only aesthetic concerns (defined circularly as concerns having to do only with art) are legitimate; otherwise, the artist is corrupted by material considerations and the audience’s judgments of artistic value are clouded by nonaesthetic aims. Art is to exist in its own autonomous realm.

Bourdieu shows that aesthetic disinterestedness and autonomy are historically formed class-based notions impossible to achieve. All acts of aesthetic production and

consumption, like all other human actions, take place within social fields. Most importantly, their performance has consequences for the agents’ social standing. Modern societies, Bourdieu argues, contain two distinct systems of social hierarchization that operate side by side. One is economic; in it, position and power are determined by financial capital (money, property, and other such resources). Another, whose logic he seeks to describe, is cultural; in it, status is determined by how much “cultural capital” one possesses. We might think of certain newly rich working- or middle-class business moguls who, for all their economic power, will always be deemed “vulgar.” No amount of money can buy them respect from the cultural elites.

Bourdieu argues that cultural capital is central to the cultural elite’s self-understanding and to the general willingness of society to grant it authority and prestige. Although this elite is produced, the process of its production is obscured so that its existence is accepted without question. Particularly mystified is the marker of the cultural elite: “taste” is regarded as a “natural” endowment. That taste (as displayed through the judgment of artworks) is notoriously difficult to define and to impart to others had already been made clear in the earlier works of EDMUND BURKE and DAVID HUME. But we do speak of “acquired tastes,” and Bourdieu is determined to show quite specifically how taste is acquired, how it is socially produced in connection with very concrete material goals, and how spectators and readers respond in coded, habitual ways.

Setting aside those who inherit significant economic capital, we can make a rough distinction between those who do physical labor and those who do some kind of mental work to command a salary. Bourdieu favors calling the latter “intellectuals,” and he memorably designates this group “the dominated faction of the dominant class” because they remain dependent on economic capital for their salaries. However, intellectuals possess (and fiercely defend) a semiautonomous source of social prestige and power: “cultural capital,” which stems from their family backgrounds, their educational training, their post graduate degrees, and their displayed taste for “high culture.” In *Distinction* Bourdieu further divides the cultural elite into subspecies marked by linguistic, literary, musical, artistic, and scientific expertise. He provides a series of elaborate tables and graphs, based on extensive survey research, that correlate class standing with taste in music, literature, furniture, food, sports, TV shows, movies, and beauty products. People both demonstrate and create their social position through the tastes revealed by what they consume.

The vast differences in wages and employment opportunities in modern societies are justified as meritocratic, the rise to the top of the best and the brightest. Bourdieu aims to explode the myth of merit. The two great predictors of success in contemporary society are the socioeconomic status of one’s parents and one’s success in school. There is not a level playing field, Bourdieu insists. But taste, an acquired “cultural competence,” is used to disguise this fact. “Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier,” Bourdieu writes, by which he means that merit and status accrue to those who have the right tastes—and that their having those tastes circularly proves the legitimacy of their claim to various economic and social privileges.

Aestheticism thus both mystifies taste and makes its possession prestigious. Bourdieu’s argument is complex because aestheticism paradoxically turns the economic and material worlds upside down. “The progress of the literary field toward autonomy is marked by the fact that . . . the hierarchy among genres (and authors) . . . is almost exactly the inverse of the hierarchy according to commercial success.” Taste is revealed through an (acquired) appreciation for everything that is nonmaterial: mind over body, intellectual over sensual, muted over gaudy, austere over pleasurable, nonpopular over commercial, and, crucially, form over content, “the mode of representation over the object of representation.” Prestigious taste’s pursuit of nonutilitarian disinterestedness and purity leads it to shun everything that might appeal to “lower,” popular appetites. The role of taste in securing concrete

economic advantages is thus masked by taste's attachment to artworks and genres esteemed precisely for their apparent unconcern for commercial success. The rarity of taste is ensured because it works against nature; it depends on "sublimating primary needs and impulses."

Since taste functions to make social "distinctions" (hence the title of Bourdieu's most famous book), intellectuals are driven by the desire to stay ahead of the crowd by displaying their appreciation for works often unknown or distasteful to the many. The shifts in reputation of various artists and various artworks can be traced back to the efforts of different groups or individuals to gain a leg up in the continual jockeying for position, prestige, and status. Modern culture's preference for the immaterial and the pure is encoded in the aesthetic ideology, and it helps explain why mental labor is so much more highly paid than the physical labor that is often more difficult, more dangerous, and arguably more necessary. Cultural capital—acquired through schooling and family upbringing, and maintained through a hierarchization of tastes and pleasures—plays an important role in securing the privileges of the upper classes in modern societies.

In our second selection (from *Rules of Art*), Bourdieu indicates how bringing the concept of a "social field" to bear on the question of artistic production changes our understanding of art. Crucially, a field—like the aesthetic—emerges historically and is dynamic over time. Various forces contend within the field of modern art: artists, critics, patrons, gallery owners, and audiences among them. Artists, critics, and experts strive to establish their authority over the field, demonstrating their ability to define what counts as a work of art or not, and what counts as a superb work instead of a mundane or bad one. They try to shape an audience who will appreciate and value art. That effort involves such cultural institutions as schools, museums, galleries, and the press, each of which acquires some power to label and consecrate certain works as masterpieces, to declare some works inferior, to dismiss some as obsolete. For Bourdieu, the whole process is relentlessly hierarchical; the social field is a site of endless struggle for prestige and success.

Crucially, these dynamic struggles are played out against the backdrop of *habitus*, a term that Bourdieu appropriates from medieval readers of Aristotle by way of the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1872–1950). Acquired through early socialization, *habitus* designates dispositions to act, think, perceive, and feel in certain ways and not others. *Habitus* is nondiscursive knowledge about how to act within a certain field, neither wholly unconscious nor involuntary. The routinized behaviors that *habitus* generates are "second nature" and difficult (although not impossible) to change. Different groups and classes are marked by their distinctive *habitus*—and a whole society may contain several competing or conflicting sets of dispositions.

The Rules of Art provides a historical account of how the *habitus* of modern aestheticism and its hierarchy of genres were created. The pure gaze of the modern art lover derives from the Renaissance cult of the artist-god, the Romantic sacralization of art, and the Victorian era's celebration of charismatic aesthetic critics such as WALTER PATER and OSCAR WILDE. The dispositions (coded as "talents" and "taste") required to produce and appreciate fine art are available only to a privileged few. A network of institutions reinforces the instruction in aesthetic distinctions that begins in the family and in school. Salons, academies, museums, institutes for arts and humanities, and galleries display works of art and elicit the proper stances toward them, as they are revered, acclaimed, or rejected. A host of experts—curators, reviewers, art historians, literary critics and the like—police the boundaries of the field, determining both what genres and what people are deemed worthy of admittance. Rooted in the minutiae of everyday life, in the taken-for-granted understandings of what art is and how it should be experienced, the aesthetic *habitus* clearly distinguishes the leisured and educated classes from a working class made to feel its inferiority.

A major objection to Bourdieu's work—as to much materialist work—is that he is

be the whole. Few would deny that issues of social prestige and status influence judgments of artworks, but we might argue that a variety of desires and motives enter into our responses to art. We regularly distinguish the art snob from someone who values a work apart from the social standing that such appreciation affords. In addition, many people cling to frowned-on pleasures and tastes in defiance of the social costs. A different objection is that while Bourdieu's picture of idealist aestheticism and artistic autonomy applies to high modernism, it has much less relevance now that clear markers between high and low have dissolved. In the more mixed forms characteristic of postmodernist art, bodily pleasures are not outlawed and outright commercial ambitions on the part of artists do not lead to immediate condemnation by the elites. Surprisingly, in the last decade of his life, Bourdieu began to defend the autonomy of aesthetic, educational, literary, and scientific fields against what he deemed the threatening encroachments of the economic and political. Like THEODOR ADORNO, Bourdieu came to believe that such autonomy offered a crucial resource for independent thinking and critique in a world where globalized capital and mass media were swallowing up everything. As a champion of freedom, he wrote passionately against the growth of censorship in the name of religious or nationalist values and against increased demands that artistic and scientific work yield demonstrable profits.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bourdieu's published works (almost all of which are available in English; the date of the original French is given first) fall into three groups: his work in sociological and anthropological theory; his work on art, intellectuals, and the school system; and his directly political works. In the first group, the major texts are *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972; 1977); *The Logic of Practice* (1980; 1990); *Sociology in Question* (1980; 1993); *In Other Words: Essays towards a Reflexive Sociology* (1987; 1990); *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, with Loïc Wacquant (1992); *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (1994; 1998); *Pascalian Meditations* (1997; 2000); *The Social Structures of the Economy* (2000; 2005); and *Science of Science and Reflexivity* (2001; 2004). On intellectuals, art, and schooling the major books are *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, with Luc Boltanski et al. (1965; 1990); *Academic Discourse: Linguistic Misunderstanding and Professorial Power*, with Jean-Claude Passeron and Monique de Saint Martin (1965; 1994); *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, with Jean-Claude Passeron (1970; 1977); *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979; 1984); *Language and Symbolic Power* (1982; 1991); *Homo Academicus* (1984; 1988); *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (1989; 1996); *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (1992; 1995); *Free Exchange*, with the artist Hans Haacke (1993; 1995); and *On Television* (1996; 1998). His political writings include *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (1988; 1991); *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, with Alain Accardo et al. (1993; 1999); *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of Our Time* (1998; 1998); *Masculine Domination* (1998; 2001); *Firing Back: Against the Tyranny of the Market 2* (2001; 2003); and *Political Interventions: Social Science and Political Action* (2002; 2008). An important selection of translated essays has been collected in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, edited by Randal Johnson (1993). The most detailed biography is *Pierre Bourdieu: Vers une économie du bonheur* (2008) by Marie-Anne Lescourret.

Richard Jenkins's *Pierre Bourdieu* (rev. ed., 2002) offers a brief biographical sketch and is also an excellent general introduction. David Swartz's *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (1997) provides a fuller account of Bourdieu's career and intellectual formation. *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Edward LiPuma, and Moishe Postone (1993); *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, edited by Richard Shusterman (1999); and *Pierre Bourdieu 2*, edited by Derek Robbins (4 vols.,

in *Culture*, edited by Nicholas Brown and Imre Szeman (2000), provides essays directly related to Bourdieu's work in aesthetics. Bridget Fowler's *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory: Critical Investigations* (1997), Michael Grenfell's *Pierre Bourdieu: Agent Provocateur* (2004), and Deborah Reed-Danahay's *Locating Bourdieu* (2005) all offer thoughtful and wide-ranging engagements with Bourdieu's thought. John Guillory's award-winning *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (1993) addresses the issue of canons and of the institutionalization of literary theory in ways that creatively employ and expand Bourdieu's work. Joan Nordquist's *Pierre Bourdieu: A Bibliography* (1997) lists the works in French, the available translations, and the commentaries written in English; it can be supplemented with the excellent, though not comprehensive, bibliographies in the books by Grenfell and Reed-Danahay listed above.

From Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste¹

Introduction

You said it, my good knight! There ought to be laws to protect the body of acquired knowledge.

Take one of our good pupils, for example: modest and diligent, from his earliest grammar classes he's kept a little notebook full of phrases.

After hanging on the lips of his teachers for twenty years, he's managed to build up an intellectual stock in trade; doesn't it belong to him as if it were a house, or money?

Paul Claudel,² *Le soulier de satin*, Day III, Scene ii

There is an economy of cultural goods, but it has a specific logic. Sociology endeavors to establish the conditions in which the consumers of cultural goods, and their taste for them, are produced, and at the same time to describe the different ways of appropriating such of these objects as are regarded at a particular moment as works of art, and the social conditions of the constitution of the mode of appropriation that is considered legitimate. But one cannot fully understand cultural practices unless 'culture', in the restricted, normative sense of ordinary usage, is brought back into 'culture' in the anthropological sense, and the elaborated taste for the most refined objects is reconnected with the elementary taste for the flavors of food.

Whereas the ideology of charisma regards taste in legitimate culture as a gift of nature, scientific observation shows that cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education: surveys establish that all cultural practices (museum visits, concert-going, reading etc.), and preferences in literature, painting or music, are closely linked to educational level (measured by qualifications or length of schooling) and secondarily to social origin.³ The relative weight of home background and of formal education (the effectiveness and duration of which are closely dependent on social origin) varies according to the extent to which the different cultural practices are recognized and taught

1. Translated by Richard Nice, who occasionally retains the original French in parentheses.

2. French poet (1868–1955); the final version of his play *The Satin Slipper* was published in 1928–29.

3. Bourdieu et al., *Photography: A Middle-brow Art* (1996); P. Bourdieu and A. Darbel, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public* (1991) [Bourdieu's note].

by the educational system, and the influence of social origin is strongest—other things being equal—in 'extra-curricular' and *avant-garde* culture. To the socially recognized hierarchy of the arts, and within each of them, of genres, schools or periods, corresponds a social hierarchy of the consumers. This predisposes tastes to function as markers of class. The manner in which culture has been acquired lives on in the manner of using it: the importance attached to manners can be understood once it is seen that it is these imponderables of practice which distinguish the different—and ranked—modes of culture acquisition, early or late, domestic or scholastic, and the classes of individuals which they characterize (such as 'pedants' and *mondains*⁴). Culture also has its titles of nobility—awarded by the educational system—and its pedigrees, measured by seniority in admission to the nobility.

The definition of cultural nobility is the stake in a struggle which has gone on unceasingly, from the seventeenth century to the present day, between groups differing in their ideas of culture and of the legitimate relation to culture and to works of art, and therefore differing in the conditions of acquisition of which these dispositions are the product.⁵ Even in the classroom, the dominant definition of the legitimate way of appropriating culture and works of art favours those who have had early access to legitimate culture, in a cultured household, outside of scholastic disciplines, since even within the educational system it devalues scholarly knowledge and interpretation as 'scholastic' or even 'pedantic' in favour of direct experience and simple delight.

The logic of what is sometimes called, in typically 'pedantic' language, the 'reading' of a work of art, offers an objective basis for this opposition. Consumption is, in this case, a stage in a process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code. In a sense, one can say that the capacity to see (*voir*) is a function of the knowledge (*savoir*), or concepts, that is, the words, that are available to name visible things, and which are, as it were, programmes for perception. 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 conscious or unconscious implementation of explicit or implicit schemes of perception and appreciation which constitutes pictorial or musical culture is the hidden condition for recognizing the styles characteristic of a period, a school or an author, and, more generally, for the familiarity with the internal logic of works that aesthetic enjoyment presupposes. A beholder who lacks the specific code feels lost in a chaos of sounds and rhythms, colours and lines, without rhyme or reason. Not having learnt to adopt the adequate disposition, he stops short at what Erwin Panofsky⁶ calls the 'sensible properties', perceiving a skin as downy or lace-work as delicate, or at the emotional resonances aroused by these properties, referring to 'austere' colours or a

4. Sophisticated, fashionable people (French).

5. The word *disposition* seems particularly suited to express what is covered by the concept of *habitus* (defined as a system of dispositions)—used later in this chapter. It expresses first the result of an organizing action, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a way

of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a *predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination*. P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), p. 214, n. 1 [Bourdieu's note].

6. German-born American art historian and theorist (1892–1968).

'joyful' melody. He cannot move from the 'primary stratum of the meaning we can grasp on the basis of our ordinary experience' to the 'stratum of secondary meanings', i.e., the 'level of the meaning of what is signified', unless he possesses the concepts which go beyond the sensible properties and which identify the specifically stylistic properties of the work.⁷ Thus the encounter with a work of art is not 'love at first sight' as is generally supposed, and the act of empathy, *Einfühlung*,⁸ which is the art-lover's pleasure, presupposes an act of cognition, a decoding operation, which implies the implementation of a cognitive acquirement, a cultural code.⁹

This typically intellectualist theory of artistic perception directly contradicts the experience of the art-lovers closest to the legitimate definition; acquisition of legitimate culture by insensible familiarization within the family circle tends to favour an enchanted experience of culture which implies forgetting the acquisition.¹ The 'eye' is a product of history reproduced by education. This is true of the mode of artistic perception now accepted as legitimate, that is, the aesthetic disposition, the capacity to consider in and for themselves, as form rather than function, not only the works designated for such apprehension, i.e., legitimate works of art, but everything in the world, including cultural objects which are not yet consecrated—such as, at one time, primitive arts, or, nowadays, popular photography or kitsch—and natural objects. The 'pure' gaze is a historical invention linked to the emergence of an autonomous field of artistic production, that is, a field capable of imposing its own norms on both the production and the consumption of its products.² An art which, like all Post-Impressionist painting,³ is the product of an artistic intention which asserts the primacy of the mode of representation over the object of representation demands categorically an attention to form which previous art only demanded conditionally.

The pure intention of the artist is that of a producer who aims to be autonomous, that is, entirely the master of his product, who tends to reject not only the 'programmes' imposed a priori by scholars and scribes, but also—following the old hierarchy of doing and saying—the interpretations superimposed a posteriori on his work. The production of an 'open work', intrinsically and deliberately polysemic,⁴ can thus be understood as the final stage in the conquest of artistic autonomy by poets and, following in their footsteps, by painters, who had long been reliant on writers and their work of 'showing' and 'illustrating'. To assert the autonomy of production is to give primacy to that

of which the artist is master, i.e., form, manner, style, rather than the 'subject', the external referent, which involves subordination to functions—even if only the most elementary one, that of representing, signifying, saying something. It also means a refusal to recognize any necessity other than that inscribed in the specific tradition of the artistic discipline in question: the shift from an art which imitates nature to an art which imitates art, deriving from its own history the exclusive source of its experiments and even of its breaks with tradition. An art which ever increasingly contains reference to its own history demands to be perceived historically; it asks to be referred not to an external referent, the represented or designated 'reality', but to the universe of past and present works of art. Like artistic production, in that it is generated in a field, aesthetic perception is necessarily historical, inasmuch as it is differential, relational, attentive to the deviations (*écarts*) which make styles. Like the so-called naive painter who, operating outside the field and its specific traditions, remains external to the history of the art, the 'naive' spectator cannot attain a specific grasp of works of art which only have meaning—or value—in relation to the specific history of an artistic tradition. The aesthetic disposition demanded by the products of a highly autonomous field of production is inseparable from a specific cultural competence. This historical culture functions as a principle of pertinence which enables one to identify, among the elements offered to the gaze, all the distinctive features and only these, by referring them, consciously or unconsciously, to the universe of possible alternatives. This mastery is, for the most part, acquired simply by contact with works of art—that is, through an implicit learning analogous to that which makes it possible to recognize familiar faces without explicit rules or criteria—and it generally remains at a practical level; it is what makes it possible to identify styles, i.e., modes of expression characteristic of a period, a civilization or a school, without having to distinguish clearly, or state explicitly, the features which constitute their originality. Everything seems to suggest that even among professional valuers, the criteria which define the stylistic properties of the 'typical works' on which all their judgments are based usually remain implicit.

The pure gaze implies a break with the ordinary attitude towards the world, which, given the conditions in which it is performed, is also a social separation. Ortega y Gasset⁵ can be believed when he attributes to modern art a systematic refusal of all that is 'human', i.e., generic, common—as opposed to distinctive, or distinguished—namely, the passions, emotions and feelings which 'ordinary' people invest in their 'ordinary' lives. It is as if the 'popular aesthetic' (the quotation marks are there to indicate that this is an aesthetic 'in itself' not 'for itself'⁶) were based on the affirmation of the continuity between art and life, which implies the subordination of form to function. This is seen clearly in the case of the novel and especially the theatre, where the working-class audience refuses any sort of formal experimentation and all the effects which, by introducing a distance from the accepted conventions (as regards scenery, plot etc.), tend to distance the spectator, preventing him

7. E. Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (1955), p. 28 [Bourdieu's note].

8. Empathy (German).

9. It will be seen that this internalized code called culture functions as cultural capital owing to the fact that, being unequally distributed, it secures profits of distinction [Bourdieu's note].

1. The sense of familiarity in no way excludes the ethnocentric misunderstanding which results from applying the wrong code. Thus, Michael Baxandall's work in historical ethnology enables us to measure all that separates the perceptual schemes that now tend to be applied to Quattrocento [14th-c. Italian] paintings and those which their immediate addressees applied. The "moral and spiritual eye" of Quattrocento man, that is,

the set of cognitive and evaluative dispositions which were the basis of his perception of the world and his perception of pictorial representation of the world, differs radically from the "pure" gaze (purified, first of all, from all reference to economic value) with which the modern cultivated spectator looks at works of art.⁷ M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (1972) [Bourdieu's note].

2. See P. Bourdieu, "The Market of Symbolic Goods" and "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception" in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) [Bourdieu's note].

3. Styles developed in the last two decades of the 19th century, especially by Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, and Vincent van Gogh.

4. Having many meanings.

5. Jose Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955). Spanish philosopher and social critic.

6. Terms derived from GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL'S "Master-Slave dialectic" in *Phenomenol-*

ogy of Spirit (1807; see above). The "in itself" exists passively as a material embodiment of an entity, while the "for itself" self-consciously shapes its identity as a particular kind of entity.

from getting involved and fully identifying with the characters (I am thinking of Brechtian 'alienation' or the disruption of plot in the *nouveau roman*⁷). In contrast to the detachment and disinterestedness which aesthetic theory regards as the only way of recognizing the work of art for what it is, i.e., autonomous, *selbständig*,⁸ the 'popular aesthetic' ignores or refuses the refusal of 'facile' involvement and 'vulgar' enjoyment, a refusal which is the basis of the taste for formal experiment. And popular judgments of paintings or photographs spring from an 'aesthetic' (in fact it is an ethos) which is the exact opposite of the Kantian aesthetic.⁹ Whereas, in order to grasp the specificity of the aesthetic judgment, Kant strove to distinguish that which pleases from that which gratifies and, more generally, to distinguish disinterestedness, the sole guarantor of the specifically aesthetic quality of contemplation, from the interest of reason which defines the Good, working-class people expect every image to explicitly perform a function, if only that of a sign, and their judgments make reference, often explicitly, to the norms of morality or agreeableness. Whether rejecting or praising, their appreciation always has an ethical basis.

Popular taste applies the schemes of the ethos, which pertain in the ordinary circumstances of life, to legitimate works of art, and so performs a systematic reduction of the things of art to the things of life. The very seriousness (or naivety) which this taste invests in fictions and representations demonstrates a *contrario*¹ that pure taste performs a suspension of 'naive' involvement which is one dimension of a 'quasi-ludic' relationship with the necessities of the world. Intellectuals could be said to believe in the representation—literature, theatre, painting—more than in the things represented, whereas the people chiefly expect representations and the conventions which govern them to allow them to believe 'naively' in the things represented. The pure aesthetic is rooted in an ethic, or rather, an ethos of elective distance from the necessities of the natural and social world, which may take the form of moral agnosticism (visible when ethical transgression becomes an artistic *parti pris*²) or of an aestheticism which presents the aesthetic disposition as a universally valid principle and takes the bourgeois denial of the social world to its limit. The detachment of the pure gaze cannot be dissociated from a general disposition towards the world which is the paradoxical product of conditioning by negative economic necessities—a life of ease—that tends to induce an active distance from necessity.

Although art obviously offers the greatest scope to the aesthetic disposition, there is no area of practice in which the aim of purifying, refining and sublimating primary needs and impulses cannot assert itself, no area in which the stylization of life, that is, the primacy of forms over function, of manner over matter, does not produce the same effects. And nothing is more distinctive,

more distinguished, than the capacity to confer aesthetic status on objects that are banal or even 'common' (because the 'common' people make them their own, especially for aesthetic purposes), or the ability to apply the principles of a 'pure' aesthetic to the most everyday choices of everyday life, e.g., in cooking, clothing or decoration, completely reversing the popular disposition which annexes aesthetics to ethics.

In fact, through the economic and social conditions which they presuppose, the different ways of relating to realities and fictions, of believing in fictions and the realities they simulate, with more or less distance and detachment, are very closely linked to the different possible positions in social space and, consequently, bound up with the systems of dispositions (habitus)³ characteristic of the different classes and class fractions. 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. And statistical analysis does indeed show that oppositions similar in structure to those found in cultural practices also appear in eating habits. The antithesis between quantity and quality, substance and form, corresponds to the opposition—linked to different distances from necessity—between the taste of necessity, which favours the most 'filling' and most economical foods, and the taste of liberty—or luxury—which shifts the emphasis to the manner (of presenting, serving, eating etc.) and tends to use stylized forms to deny function.

The science of taste and of cultural consumption begins with a transgression that is in no way aesthetic: it has to abolish the sacred frontier which makes legitimate culture a separate universe, in order to discover the intelligible relations which unite apparently incommensurable 'choices', such as preferences in music and food, painting and sport, literature and hairstyle. This barbarous reintegration of aesthetic consumption into the world of ordinary consumption abolishes the opposition, which has been the basis of high aesthetic since Kant, between the 'taste of sense' and the 'taste of reflection', and between facile pleasure, pleasure reduced to a pleasure of the senses, and pure pleasure, pleasure purified of pleasure, which is predisposed to become a symbol of moral excellence and a measure of the capacity for sublimation which defines the truly human man. The culture which results from this magical division is sacred. Cultural consecration does indeed confer on the objects, persons and situations it touches, a sort of ontological promotion akin to a transubstantiation. Proof enough of this is found in the two following quotations, which might almost have been written for the delight of the sociologist:

'What struck me most is this: nothing could be obscene on the stage of our premier theatre, and the ballerinas of the Opera, even as naked dancers, sylphs, sprites or Bacchae, retain an inviolable purity.'⁴

7. New novel (French). The "new novel" of Alain Robbe-Grillet and other French novelists of the 1950s and 1960s disoriented readers by using narrative techniques that made time, place, and narrative point of view difficult to discern. "Brechtian alienation": the German playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) advocated a political theater that prevented audiences from "identifying" with the characters or taking the events on stage as real.

tanced spectators from what they were viewing.

8. Self-standing, self-sufficient (German).

9. The highly influential view of art and its appreciation put forward by German philosopher IMMANUEL KANT (1724–1804) in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790; see above).

1. By way of contrast (Italian).

2. A preconceived opinion, or bias; a position (French).

3. A key term in Bourdieu's work, defined elsewhere by him as "a system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment . . . as well as being the organizing principles of action." In other words, habitus names the cultural categories through which individuals process the world along with

the bodily habits that characterize their interactions with things external to the body.

4. O. Merlin, "Mlle. Thibon dans la vision de Marguerite," *Le Monde*, 9 December 1965 (Bourdieu's note). Bacchae: in the classical world, the frenzied female worshippers of Dionysus or Bacchus.

There are obscene postures: the simulated intercourse which offends the eye. Clearly, it is impossible to approve, although the interpolation of such gestures in dance routines does give them a symbolic and aesthetic quality which is absent from the intimate scenes the cinema daily flaunts before its spectators' eyes . . . As for the nude scene, what can one say, except that it is brief and theatrically not very effective? I will not say it is chaste or innocent, for nothing commercial can be so described. Let us say it is not shocking, and that the chief objection is that it serves as a box-office gimmick. . . . In *Hair*, the nakedness fails to be symbolic.⁵

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.

1979

From The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field¹

From Part I. Three States of the Field

CHAPTER 2. THE EMERGENCE OF A DUALIST STRUCTURE

The Particularities of Genres

The progress of the literary field towards autonomy is marked by the fact that, at the end of the nineteenth century, the hierarchy among genres (and authors) according to specific criteria of peer judgement is almost exactly the inverse of the hierarchy according to commercial success. This is different from what was to be observed in the seventeenth century, when the two hierarchies were almost merged, with those most consecrated among people of letters, especially poets and scientists, being the best provided with pensions and profits.²

From the economic point of view, the hierarchy is simple, and relatively constant, despite conjunctural fluctuations. At the summit stands the theatre, providing large and immediate profits for a very small number of authors in return for a relatively small cultural investment. At the bottom of the

5. F. Chenique, "Hair est-il immoral?" *Le Monde*, 28 January 1970 (Bourdieu's note). The anti-Vietnam War rock musical *Hair* (1967), by Jerome Ragni, James Rado, and Galt MacDermot, was a long-running Broadway hit.

1. Translated by Susan Emanuel.

2. Cf. A. Viala, *Naissance de l'écrivain* (Paris: Minuit, 1984). One must be careful of reading clues of a sort of absolute beginning into the first signs of the institutionalization of the personage of the writer, such as the appearance of specific apparatuses of consecration. In effect, for a long

time this process remains ambiguous, even contradictory, to the extent that artists must pay with a statutory dependence on the state for the recognition and official status that it accords them. And it is only at the end of the 19th century that the system of characteristics constitutive of an autonomous field is found assembled together (without ever excluding completely the possibility of regressions to heteronomy, such as the one starting today, thanks to new forms of patronage, public or private, and because of the encroachment of journalism) [Bourdieu's note].

hierarchy, there is poetry which, with very few exceptions (such as some successes in verse theatre), procures extremely small profits for a small number of producers. Situated in an intermediate position, the novel can assure large profits to a relatively large number of authors, but only so long as it extends its public well beyond the literary world itself (to which poetry is confined) and beyond the bourgeois world (as is the case for theatre), that is, to the *petite-bourgeoisie* or even, especially by the intermediary of municipal libraries, as far as to the 'labour aristocracy'.

From the point of view of the criteria of appreciation that dominate inside the field, things are less simple. Nevertheless, we see by a number of indices that, under the Second Empire,³ the summit of the hierarchy is occupied by poetry. Consecrated as the art *par excellence* by the romantic tradition, it retains all its prestige; despite fluctuations—with the decline of Romanticism, never totally equalled by Théophile Gautier or Parnassus, and with the rise of the enigmatic and sulphurous figure of Baudelaire⁴—it continues to attract a large number of writers, even if it is almost totally devoid of a market: most poetic works reach at most a few hundred readers. At the opposite end, the theatre—with its direct exposure to the immediate sanction of the bourgeois public, its values and orthodoxies—procures, besides money, the institutionalized consecration of the academies and official honours. As for the novel, situated in a central position between the two poles of the literary space, it presents the largest dispersion from the viewpoint of symbolic status: even though it has acquired its marks of nobility, at least within the field, and even beyond it, with Stendhal and Balzac and especially Flaubert,⁵ it remains associated with the image of mercantile literature, tied to journalism by the *feuilleton* (serial).⁶ It acquires considerable weight in the literary field when with Zola⁷ it achieves the success of exceptional sales (hence very substantial earnings that allow it to break free from the press and the serial), reaching a much wider public than any other mode of expression, but without letting go of specific requirements regarding form (it will even manage to obtain through the society novel a bourgeois consecration until then reserved to the theatre).

One can assess the chiasmatic⁸ structure of this space, in which the hierarchy according to commercial profit (theatre, novel, poetry) coexists with an inverted hierarchy according to prestige (poetry, novel, theatre), by a simple model taking account of two principles of differentiation. On the one hand, the different genres, considered as economic enterprises, are distinguished in three respects: firstly, as a function of the price of the product or the act of symbolic consumption, relatively high in the case of theatre or the concert, low in the case of the book, the musical score or the museum or gallery visit (with the unit cost of a painting putting pictorial production in a completely separate situation); secondly, as a function of the numbers and the social qualities of the consumers, hence of the size of the economic but also

3. The period when France was ruled by Napoléon III (1852–70).

4. CHARLES BAUDELAIRE (1821–1867), French poet. Gautier (1811–1872), French writer and aesthete. Parnassus: a short-lived (1866–76) movement in French poetry, influenced by Gautier's call for an "art for art's sake."

5. The three most celebrated French novelists of

the 19th century: Stendhal (pen name of Henri-Marie Beyle, 1783–1842), Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), and Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880).

6. That is, a story published in installments.

7. Émile Zola (1840–1902), French naturalist novelist and critic.

8. That is, inverted (inversion is the main feature of the rhetorical figure called chiasmus).

symbolic profits (linked to the social standing of the public) assured by these enterprises; thirdly, as a function of the length of the production cycle, and in particular how quickly profits, material as much as symbolic, are obtained and for how long they are guaranteed.

On the other hand, to the extent that the field progressively gains in autonomy and imposes its own logic, these genres also grow more distinct from each other, and more clearly so, according to the degree of intrinsically symbolic credit they possess and confer, this tending to vary in inverse relation to economic profit. In effect, the credit attached to any cultural practice tends to decrease with the numbers and especially the social spread of the audience, because the value of the credit of recognition ensured by consumption decreases when the specific competence recognized in the consumer decreases (and even tends to change sign when it descends below a certain threshold).

This model takes account of the major oppositions among genres, but also the more subtle differences observed inside the same genre, as it does of the diverse forms that the consecration accorded to genres or authors may assume. It is in effect the social quality of the audience (measured principally by its volume) and the symbolic profit it assures which determine the specific hierarchy established among works and authors within each genre, with the hierarchized categories detected there corresponding rather closely to the social hierarchy of the respective audiences. This can be clearly seen in the case of theatre, with the opposition between classical theatre, boulevard theatre,⁹ vaudeville and cabaret, or more sharply still in the case of the novel, where the hierarchy of specialties—the society novel that will become the psychological novel, the naturalist novel, the novel of manners, the regionalist novel, the popular novel—corresponds quite directly with the social hierarchy of the readerships concerned, and also, rather closely, with the hierarchy of the social universes represented in them, and even with the hierarchy of authors according to social origin and sex.

It also allows us to understand similarities and differences between the novel and the theatre. Boulevard theatre, able to provide established authors with considerable economic profits thanks to repeated performances of the same work before a limited and bourgeois public, brings to authors, almost all of them from the bourgeoisie, one form of social respectability, that consecrated by the Académie.¹ The very particular social characteristics of playwrights result from the fact that they are the product of a two-stage selection: the theatres being very few and their directors having an interest in keeping plays on the bill for as long as possible, the authors must first face a terrible competition for their work to be staged, and there the major trump is the social capital of relationships within the theatrical milieu; they must then face the competition for an audience, and there there is the factor (besides mastery of the tricks of the trade, itself also linked to familiarity with the world of the theatre) of closeness to the values of the audience, largely bourgeois and Parisian, and hence more 'distinguished' socially than culturally.

In contrast, the novelists cannot realize profits equal to those of playwrights unless they reach a 'broad audience' [*le grand public*], which means, as the pejorative connotations of the expression indicate, exposing oneself to the discredit attached to commercial success. Thus it is that Zola, whose novels met the most compromising success, no doubt owes his escape from the social destiny marked out for him by his large print runs and his vulgar subjects in part to the conversion of the 'commercial', negative and 'vulgar' into the 'popular', charged with all the positive prestiges of political progressivism—a conversion made possible by the role of social prophet that was vested in him at the heart of the field and which was acknowledged well beyond it with the help of militant devotion (and also, but much later, of professional progressivism).²

* * *

From Part III. To Understand Understanding

CHAPTER I. THE HISTORICAL GENESIS OF THE PURE AESTHETIC

Analysis of Essence and Illusion of the Absolute

* * *

Although it appears to itself like a gift of nature, the eye of the nineteenth-century art-lover is the product of history. From the angle of phylogenesis,³ the pure gaze capable of apprehending the work of art as it demands to be apprehended (in itself and for itself, as form and not as function) is inseparable from the appearance of producers motivated by a pure artistic intention, itself indissociable from the emergence of an autonomous artistic field capable of posing and imposing its own goals in the face of external demands; and it is also inseparable from the corresponding appearance of a population of 'amateurs' or 'connoisseurs' capable of applying to the works thus produced the 'pure' gaze which they call for. And from the angle of ontogenesis,⁴ it is associated with very particular conditions of training, such as the precocious frequenting of museums and the prolonged exposure to school teaching and especially to the *skholè*⁵ as a form of leisure, and the distance with respect to the constraints and urgencies of necessity which such training presupposes. This means, it must be said in passing, that an analysis of essence which passes these conditions over in silence tacitly elevates into a universal norm of all practice claiming to be aesthetic these particular properties of an experience which is in fact the product of privilege.

What the ahistorical analysis of the work of art and of aesthetic experience really describes is an *institution* which, as such, enjoys a kind of twofold existence, in things and in minds. In things, it exists in the form of an artistic field, a relatively autonomous social universe which is the result of a slow

9. That is, the melodramas and murder stories that appealed to a bourgeois audience and dominated the Paris stage during the Second Empire.
1. The Académie française (French Academy), a

learned society established in 1635 that serves as the authority on the French language and on literary matters.

2. If, Courbet apart, painters have rarely invoked populist justification, it is perhaps because they are not confronted by the problem of mass diffusion since their products are unique and of a relatively high unit price, and since the only success they can know is worldly success, close in its social effects to success in the theatre [Bourdieu's note].

Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), French realist painter.

3. The history or course of development of a kind of organism.

4. The course of development of an individual organism.

5. Leisure: discussion, lecture; school (Greek).

process of emergence. In minds, it exists in the form of dispositions which invent themselves through the very movement of self-invention of the field to which they are adjusted. When things and dispositions are directly in accord with each other, meaning when the eye is the product of the field to which it relates, then everything appears to be immediately endowed with meaning and value. This is so clearly the case that in order for a totally extraordinary question to be posed about the foundation of the meaning and value of the work of art, something usually taken for granted by all those who swim like fish in the water of the cultural world, an experience has to arise which a cultivated person finds totally exceptional—even though it is, on the contrary, totally ordinary, as empirical observation shows,⁶ for those who have not had the occasion or the chance to acquire the dispositions objectively required by the work of art. An example is Arthur Danto's visit to the exhibition of Warhol's Brillo boxes at the Stable Gallery,⁷ when he discovered the arbitrary (*ex instituto*, as Leibniz⁸ would have said) character of the imposition of value carried out by the field through exhibition in a place both consecrated and capable of consecrating.⁹

The experience of the work of art as immediately endowed with meaning and value is an effect of the harmony between the two aspects of the same historical institution, the cultivated *habitus*¹ and the artistic field, which mutually ground each other. Given that the work of art does not exist as such, meaning as an object symbolically endowed with meaning and value, unless it is apprehended by spectators possessing the aesthetic disposition and competence which it tacitly requires, one could say that it is the eye of the aesthete which constitutes the work of art—but only if one immediately remembers that it can only do so to the extent that it is itself the product of a long collective history, that is, of the progressive invention of the 'connoisseur', and of a long individual history, that is, of prolonged exposure to the work of art. This relation of circular causality, that of belief and the sacred, characterizes any institution which can only function if it is established simultaneously within the objectivity of a social game and within dispositions ready to enter into the game and participate in it. Museums could say at their gates—but they do not need to, since it so goes without saying—'Let no one enter here unless they are lovers of art.' The game makes up the *illusio*,² the investment in the game by the informed player who, possessing

a sense of the game because made by the game, plays the game, and thereby makes it exist.

It is clear that one does not need to choose between, on the one hand, the subjectivism of theories of the 'aesthetic consciousness' which reduce the aesthetic quality of a natural thing or a human work to a simple correlate of a purely contemplative attitude of consciousness, neither theoretical nor practical, and on the other hand an ontology of the work of art such as that proposed by Gadamer in *Truth and Method*.³ Questions of the meaning and value of the work of art, like the question of the specificity of aesthetic judgement, can only find solutions in a social history of the field, linked to a sociology of the conditions of the constitution of the particular disposition which the field calls for in each of its states.

Historical Anamnesis⁴ and the Return of the Repressed

What makes a work of art a work of art and not a mundane thing or a simple utensil? What makes an artist an artist, as opposed to a craftsman or a Sunday painter? What makes a urinal or a bottle rack that is exhibited in a museum into a work of art? Is it the fact that it is signed by Duchamp, a recognized artist (and recognized first and foremost as an artist) and not by a wine merchant or a plumber? But is that not simply replacing the work-of-art-as-fetish with the 'fetish of the name of the master' of which Benjamin⁵ spoke? Who, in other words, has created the 'creator' as a recognized producer of fetishes? And what confers its magic efficacy on his name, whose celebrity is the measure of his pretension to exist as an artist? What makes the affixing of his name, like the label of a famous designer, multiply the value of the object (which helps to raise the stakes in attribution disputes and to establish the power of experts)? Where does the ultimate principle reside of the effect of nomination or of theory (a particularly appropriate word since it is a matter of seeing, *theorein*,⁶ and of giving to be seen)—that ultimate principle which, by introducing difference, division and separation, produces the sacred?

Such questions are analogous in type to those raised by Mauss⁷ in his *Theory of Magic*, when he pondered on the principle of magic's effectiveness and found himself moving back from the instruments employed by the sorcerer to the sorcerer himself, and from there to the belief of his clients, and little by little back to the whole social universe amidst which magic is evolved and practised. But in the infinite regress towards the primary cause and the ultimate foundation of the work of art's value, one must stop somewhere. And in order to explain this sort of miracle of transubstantiation⁸ which is the source of the work of art's existence—and which, though commonly forgotten, is brutally recalled through moves à la Duchamp—one must replace the

6. On the confusion besetting the most culturally deprived museum visitors for lack of a minimal mastery of the instruments of perception and appreciation, and in particular of reference points such as names of genres, schools, epochs, artists, etc., see P. Bourdieu and A. Darbel, with D. Schnapper, *Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*, trans. D. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), and P. Bourdieu, "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity, 1992) [Bourdieu's note].

7. Site of the first solo exhibition by the American pop artist Andy Warhol (1928–1987), including his large-scale reproductions of such commercial products as Brillo boxes and Campbell Soup cans. Danto (b. 1924), American philosopher and art critic.

8. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716). Ger-

man rationalist philosopher; he described the meaning of words as *ex instituto* (literally, "according to custom"; Latin).

9. And if one wants to exhaust the analysis of the social conditions of the possibility of this extraordinary experience, one must add further the prophetic intervention of the artist (in these circumstances, Marcel Duchamp) who was the first to expose the effect of the aesthetic institution of the museum and the artists, in his case by exhibiting a urinal or a bottle rack [Bourdieu's note]. Duchamp (1887–1968), French avant-garde artist, famous for his 'ready-mades'—found objects, such as the urinal that he displayed unchanged and titled *Fountain*.

1. The system of durable dispositions and beliefs that underlies a given culture, acquired by individual members through socialization (a key term throughout Bourdieu's writings).

2. Illusion (Latin).

3. The major work on hermeneutics by the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002).

4. Recollection—according to the Greek philosopher PLATO, the process by which the soul recalls ideas present in it before birth.

5. WALTER BENJAMIN (1892–1940), German literary and cultural theorist. "Fetish": an inanimate object to which special powers are attributed; in the psychoanalytic theory of SIGMUND FREUD, an object or body part to which special sexual signifi-

cance becomes attached.

6. To look at, to contemplate or consider (Greek); the root of the English word *theory*.

7. Marcel Mauss (1872–1950), French anthropologist; author of *The Gift* (1925) and *A General Theory of Magic* (1904).

8. Transformation into another substance; in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox rites, the change of the eucharistic bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

ontological question⁹ with the historical question of the genesis of the universe in which the value of the work of art is ceaselessly produced and reproduced in a veritable continuous creation—that is, the artistic field.

The analysis of essence merely records the outcome of the analysis which history itself has performed objectively through the process of autonomization of the field and through the progressive invention by agents (artists, critics, historians, curators, experts, etc.) of techniques and concepts (genres, mannerisms, periods, styles, etc.) which are characteristic of this universe. The science of works will not free itself completely from an 'essentialist' vision unless it successfully carries out a historical analysis of the genesis of those central figures in the artistic game, the artist and the expert, and of the dispositions they put to work in the production and reception of works of art. Notions which have become obvious and banal such as those of the artist or 'creator', like the very words which designate and constitute them, are the products of a long historical process.

This is often forgotten by art historians themselves when they ponder the emergence of the artist in the modern sense of the term, still without avoiding completely the trap of 'essentialist thought' inscribed in the use (always haunted by anachronism) of historically invented, and therefore dated, words. Unable to question everything implicitly involved in the modern notion of the artist, and in particular the professional ideology of the uncreated 'creator' which evolved throughout the nineteenth century, they stop at the apparent object, meaning the artist (or, elsewhere, the writer, the philosopher, the scholar), instead of constructing and analysing the field of production of which the artist, socially instituted as a 'creator', is the product. They do not see that the ritual inquiry concerning the place and time of the appearance of the figure of the artist (as opposed to the craftsman) in fact leads back to the question of the economic and social conditions of the gradual constitution of an artistic field capable of grounding belief in the quasi-magical powers attributed to the artist.

It is not merely a matter of exorcizing the 'fetish of the name of the master' by a simple sacrilegious and slightly childish inversion—whether one wishes it or not, the name of the master is indeed a fetish. Rather, it is a matter of describing the gradual emergence of the entire set of social mechanisms which make possible the figure of the artist as producer of that fetish which is the work of art—in other words, the constitution of the artistic field (in which analysts and art historians themselves are included) as the locus where belief in the value of art—and in that power to create value which belongs to the artist—is constantly produced and reproduced. This leads to surveying not only the indices of the artist's autonomy (such as those revealed through the analysis of contracts, like the appearance of the signature, affirmations of the artist's specific competence, recourse in cases of dispute to arbitration by peers, etc.), but also the indices of the field's autonomy, such as the emergence of a set of specific institutions which are required for the functioning of the economy of cultural goods—places of exhibition (galleries, museums, etc.), institutions of consecration (academies, salons, etc.), institutions for the reproduction of producers (art schools, etc.), and specialized agents (dealers, critics, art historians, collectors, etc.), endowed with

the dispositions objectively required by the field and with specific categories of perception and appreciation which are irreducible to those in common use and which are capable of imposing a specific measure on the value of artists and their products.

As long as painting is measured by surface covered or by length of labour, or by the quantity and price of the raw materials used (gold or ultramarine paints), the artist-painter is not radically different from a house painter. This is why, among all the inventions which accompany the emergence of the field of production, one of the most important is undoubtedly the elaboration of a properly artistic language: first a way of naming painters and of speaking about them and about the nature and the mode of remunerating their work, and through this elaborating an autonomous definition of properly artistic value, irreducible as such to strictly economic value; and also, in the same way, a way of speaking about painting itself, using appropriate words, often pairs of adjectives, which enable one to talk about the specificity of pictorial technique, the *manifattura*,¹ even the particular manner of a painter, which it helps to make exist socially by naming it. By the same logic, the discourse of celebration, especially the biography, plays a determining role, probably less by what it says about painters and their work than by the fact of establishing the painter as a memorable figure, one worthy of a historical account, like a statesman or poet (we know that the ennobling comparison—*ut pictura poesis*²—contributes (at least for a while, until it becomes a hindrance) to the affirmation of the irreducibility of pictorial art).

A genetic sociology³ should also include in its model the action of producers themselves, their claim to the right to be the sole judges of pictorial production, to make their own criteria for the perception and appreciation of their products. It should take into account the effect exercised on them and on the image they have of themselves and their production (and thereby, the effect exercised on their actual production) by the images of painters and their production which comes back to them from other agents engaged in the field—other artists but also critics, clients, patrons, collectors, etc. (One may assume, for example, that the interest which certain collectors started to take in sketches and cartoons from the quattrocento⁴ on could only have helped to exalt the impression the artist had of his own dignity.)

The history of the specific institutions which are indispensable to artistic production should be backed up with a history of the institutions which are indispensable to consumption; and hence to the production of consumers and in particular, of taste,⁵ as disposition and as competence. The inclination of the expert to consecrate a part of his or her time to the contemplation of works of art for the sole purpose of the pleasure to be enjoyed from them cannot become an essential dimension of the lifestyle of the gentleman or the aristocrat (increasingly identified, at least in England and France, with the person of taste) without the whole collective labour necessary to

1. The process of making or manufacturing (Italian).

2. Poetry is like painting (Latin); HORACE, *Ars Poetica* (ca. 10 B.C.E.; see above), line 361.

3. A systematic study that explains objects, agents, and behavior in terms of their origin and development within a social field.

4. The 15th century, as a period of Italian literature and art. "Cartoons": drawings made in preparation for a painting.

5. A key term—especially for DAVID HUME and IMMANUEL KANT—in the establishment of aesthetics and literary theory as distinct fields of inquiry during the 18th century.

9. A question related to the nature of being or the unchanging essence of a thing.

produce the instruments of the cult of the work of art: one thinks of notions such as 'good taste', undergoing constant elaboration, or of designations like *virtuoso*, borrowed from the Italian, or *connoisseur*, taken from the French, characterizing and producing figures in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England who are able to boast an art of living freed from the utilitarian and basely material ends to which vulgar people sacrifice themselves. But one must also take into account practices as highly ritualized as the 'Grand Tour', a cultural pilgrimage lasting several years and culminating in a visit to Italy and Rome, which constitutes the almost obligatory crowning achievement of their studies for the children of the great aristocracy of England and elsewhere; we must consider as well the institutions offering, usually for payment, cultural products to a broader and broader public, the specialized periodical publications, magazines and works of criticism, literary and artistic newspapers and weeklies, private galleries (gradually converted into museums), annual exhibitions, guidebooks aimed at visitors to the painting and sculpture collections of aristocratic palaces or museums, public concerts and so forth.

Besides the fact they foster the growth of a public for cultural works, which is thereby given the means (and required) to acquire a cultivated disposition, public institutions like museums, which have no other purpose than to offer for contemplation works often produced with quite other destinations in mind (such as religious paintings, dance or ceremonial music, etc.), have the effect of bringing about a social rupture which, by tearing works out of their original context, strips them of their diverse religious or political functions and thus reduces them, by a sort of active *epochè*,⁶ to their properly artistic function. The museum, as it isolates and separates (*frames apart*), is undoubtedly the site *par excellence* of that act of constitution, continually repeated with the untiring constancy of things, through which both the status of the sacred conferred on works of art and the sacralizing disposition they call for are affirmed and continually reproduced.⁷ The experience of the pictorial work as it has been asserted by this site in its exclusive devotion to pure contemplation tends to become the norm for the experience of all objects belonging to the very category which has been constituted by the fact of their being exhibited.

Everything inclines us to think that the history of aesthetic theory and of the philosophy of art is closely linked (without being its direct reflection, since it, too, develops in a field) to the history of the institutions suited to fostering access to pure delectation and disinterested contemplation, such as museums or those practical manuals of visual gymnastics called tourist guides or writings on art (among which must be included innumerable travel writings). In fact, it is clear that the theoretical writings which the history of traditional philosophy treats as contributions to the knowledge of the object are also (and more especially) contributions to the social construction of the

very reality of this object, and hence of the theoretical and practical conditions of its existence (the same thing may be said about treatises on political theory by Machiavelli, Bodin or Montesquieu⁸).

It would be necessary to rewrite the history of pure aesthetics from this perspective, showing, for example, how professional philosophers have imported into the domain of art certain concepts originally developed in the theological tradition, especially a conception of the artist as a 'creator' endowed with an almost divine faculty called 'imagination' and capable of producing a 'second nature', a 'second world', *sui generis* and autonomous; how Alexandre Baumgarten,⁹ in his *Philosophical Reflections on Poetry* of 1735, transposed into the aesthetic order a Leibnizian cosmogony¹ according to which God, in the creation of the best of all possible worlds, chose ours among an infinity of worlds, all formed of compossible² elements and governed by specific internal laws, making of the poet a creator and of the poem a world subject to its own laws, whose truth does not reside in its correspondence with the real, but in its internal coherence; how Karl Philipp Moritz³ tried to prove that the work of art is a microcosm whose beauty 'has no need of being useful' because it has 'within itself the purpose of its existence'; how, following another theoretical line (which must also be considered in its social dimension, by situating each thinker in his field), the idea that supreme good consists of the contemplation of the Beautiful (with its different theoretical foundations, Platonic and Plotinian,⁴ but also Leibnizian) was developed by different writers, and in particular Shaftesbury,⁵ Karl Philipp Moritz and Kant (who adopts⁶ the viewpoint of the receiver rather than the producer of the work of art, meaning the stance of contemplation), and then Schiller, Schlegel, Schopenhauer⁷ and many others; and how this predominantly German philosophical tradition was connected through the intermediary of Victor Cousin⁸ with French writers of art for art's sake, especially Baudelaire or Flaubert, who reinvented in their own fashion the theory of the 'creator', of the 'other world' and of pure contemplation.⁹

It would be necessary also to reveal in each case, as I have tried to do with respect to Kant, the indices of a social relation which is always implicated in the relationship to the work of art (for example in pairs of adjectives such as pure and impure, intelligible and sensory, refined and vulgar, etc.), and to put this hidden but fundamental relationship in turn into relation with the position and trajectory of the author in the field (philosophical, artistic, etc.) and in social space. This genealogy, which would probably rather irksomely record

8. French political philosopher (1689–1755). Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), Italian political philosopher. Jean Bodin (1530–1596), French jurist and political philosopher.

9. German philosopher (1714–1762), founder of aesthetics as a distinct field within European philosophy.

1. Theory of the origin of the universe.

2. Possible in coexistence with something else.

3. German author and critic (1756–1793).

4. Derived from the theories of the Greek Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus (ca. 204/5–270); like Plato, he located the Beautiful (together with reality and truth) in a transcendental spiritual realm.

5. Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3d earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), English philosopher. He viewed the sympathy that beauty awakens in us as central to

ethics.

6. In *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790; see above), the most important text in modern aesthetics.

7. German philosopher (1788–1860), who saw art as expressing mysteries and paradoxes that eluded philosophy. FRIEDRICH SCHILLER (1759–1805), German poet and philosopher. Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), German Romantic essayist and critic.

8. French philosopher (1792–1867).

9. A deeper view of this history of aesthetic theory is to be found in M. H. Abrams, *Doing Things with Texts*, especially in the chapter entitled "From Addison to Kant: Modern Aesthetics and the Exemplary Art," pp. 159–87 [Bourdieu's note].

6. Suspension (Greek); a term used by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and other phenomenologists to refer to the "bracketing" of historical and natural assumptions and knowledge undertaken before the analysis of an object or phenomenon itself.

7. This rapid and at best schematic sketch of what might make up a social history of the aesthetic

disposition with respect to painting relies in part on the observations of M. H. Abrams, *Doing Things with Texts* (New York: Norton, 1989), esp. pp. 135–38, and also on those of W. E. Houghton Jr., "The English Virtuoso in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 3 (1942): 51–73 and 190–219 [Bourdieu's note].

~~1686-1700-1710-1720-1730-1740-1750-1760-1770-1780-1790-1800-1810-1820-1830-1840-1850-1860-1870-1880-1890-1900-1910-1920-1930-1940-1950-1960-1970-1980-1990-2000~~

returns and repetitions which are linked, often in an indiscernible manner, to conscious or unconscious borrowings or to reinventions, would constitute the surest and most radical exploration of that unconscious which all cultivated people, because they have it in common, are ready to uphold as a universal (a priori) form of knowledge.

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