

Crossfires. Bourdieu, Criticism of Social Phenomenology and Habitus*

[*English Version*]

Fuegos cruzados. Bourdieu, la crítica a la fenomenología social y el habitus

Fogos cruzados. Bourdieu, crítica à fenomenologia social e ao habitus

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Abstract

Objective: to propose an alternative reading of Bourdieu's notion of habitus inspired by the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, based on the analysis of Bourdieu's criticism of "social phenomenology" and of the objections produced by sociologists with a phenomenological orientation. **Methodology:** an analytical reading of the works of Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty and of the phenomenologically oriented critical exegeses of Thoop & Murphy and Belvedere was applied. **Results:** Thoop and Murphy object to the accusation about the determinism of *habitus* and Bourdieu's lack of

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input, pointing to the development of a Merleau-Pontyan theory of domination focused on the formation of corporal *habitus*. Faced with Belvedere's criticism of the notion of *habitus*, a reply was proposed, consisting on a reworking based on Merleau-Ponty in which the agent-body is partially structured by a *habitus* intertwined to a actual dimension. In opposition to theoreticism and determinism, the proposal was illustrated with the results of an investigation of scholarship students from upper class high school in Buenos Aires, Argentina. **Conclusions:** it is concluded that the criticisms of Bourdieu fall into theoreticism, ignoring the empirical analyses where phenomenology is appropriated. In addition, it is pointed out that by recovering the MerleauPontian perspective, a reflexive anthropology of the powers and modes of domination can be founded and praxeology can be restored to the phenomenological tradition.

Keywords: Bourdieu; Social phenomenology; Sociology; Ethnomethodology; Schutz; Habitus; Merleau-Ponty.

Resumen

Objetivo: proponer una lectura alternativa de la noción de habitus de Bourdieu inspirada en la fenomenología de Merleau-Ponty, con base en el análisis de la crítica bourdeana a la "fenomenología social" y de las objeciones producidas por sociólogos de orientación fenomenológica. **Metodología:** se aplicó una lectura analítica de las obras de Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty y de las exégesis críticas de orientación fenomenológicas de Thoop & Murphy y Belvedere. **Resultados:** se objeta en Thoop & Murphy la acusación sobre el determinismo del *habitus* y la falta de aportes de Bourdieu, señalando el desarrollo de una teoría de la dominación merleauPontyana centrada en la formación de *habitus* corporales. Frente a las críticas de Belvedere a la noción de *habitus*, se respondió con una reelaboración basada en Merleau-Ponty donde el cuerpo-agente es parcialmente estructurado por un *habitus* entrelazado a una dimensión actual. Contra el theoreticismo y el determinismo, se ilustró con resultados de una investigación sobre becarias de un colegio de clases altas de Buenos Aires, Argentina. **Conclusiones:** se concluye que las críticas a Bourdieu caen en el theoreticismo, obviando los análisis empíricos donde se apropia de la fenomenología. Se señala que recuperando la perspectiva merleauPontyana se puede fundamentar una antropología reflexiva de los poderes y modos de dominación y restituir la praxeología a la tradición fenomenológica.

Palabras-clave: Bourdieu; Fenomenología social; Sociología; Etnometodología; Schutz; Habitus; Merleau-Ponty.

Resumo

Objetivo: propor uma leitura alternativa da noção de habitus de Bourdieu inspirada na fenomenologia de Merleau-Ponty, com base na análise da crítica de Bourdieu à "fenomenologia social" e das objeções produzidas por sociólogos com orientação fenomenológica. **Metodologia:** foi aplicada uma leitura analítica dos trabalhos de Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty e da exegese crítica orientada à fenomenologia de Thoop & Murphy e Belvedere. **Resultados:** A acusação sobre o determinismo do *habitus* e a falta de contribuições de Bourdieu, objetivando o desenvolvimento de uma teoria de dominação Merleaupontyana focada na formação do *habitus* corporais, é objetada por Thoop & Murphy. Diante da crítica de Belvedere à noção de *habitus*, foi respondida com um retrabalho baseado em Merleau-Ponty, onde o corpo do agente é parcialmente estruturado por um *habitus* entrelaçado a uma dimensão atual. Contra o teorismo e o determinismo, foi ilustrado com os resultados de uma investigação de bolsistas de uma faculdade de alta classe em Buenos Aires, Argentina. **Conclusões:** conclui-se que as críticas de Bourdieu se enquadram no teorismo, ignorando as análises empíricas em que a fenomenologia é apropriada. conclui-se que as críticas de Bourdieu se enquadram no teorismo, ignorando as análises empíricas em que a fenomenologia é apropriada. Assinala-se que, ao recuperar a perspectiva merleaupontiana, uma antropologia reflexiva dos poderes e modos de dominação pode ser fundada e a praxeologia pode ser restaurada à tradição fenomenológica.

Palavras-chave: Bourdieu; Fenomenologia social; Sociologia; Etnometodologia; Schutz; Habitus; Merleau-Ponty. Introduction

Introduction

In the last three decades, various studies point to the productive relationship between Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice and the phenomenological tradition (Heran, 1987; Hong, 1999; Throop & Murphy, 2002; Haber, 2004, Martin-Criado, 2006; Bimbenet, 2011; Martínez, 2007; Ralón, 2010; Ralón and Dukuen, 2013; Csordas, 2011; Dukuen, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018b; Perreau, 2019).

Recent analyses show that previously in his first empirical investigations on the brutal imposition of capitalism in Algerian society and the celibacy of the firstborn in the French Béarn, Bourdieu (1962, 1963), a philosopher-turned-ethnologist, already performs an "anthropologization" of phenomenological problems (Martínez, 2007; Dukuen, 2011, 2013, 2018b) that refer to one's own body (*Leib*) and the pre-objective temporality that are based on the investigations of Husserl (2002) and Merleau-Ponty (1942, 1945). This "anthropologization" will contribute to the genesis of the Bourdieuan concept of *habitus* as a "system of dispositions"¹ (which initially coexists with *ethos* and *hexis*, in the extensive genealogy that goes from Aristóteles (1997) to Thomas de Aquino (1993), reactivated in the XX century by Husserl (1966), Merleau-Ponty (1945), Durkheim (1990), Weber (2009) and Mauss (1979)) and to the formation of *dispositional theory* of practice or *praxeology* in the 1960's and 1970's (Hong, 1999; Martínez, 2007).

However, it should be remembered that in the first systematization of *praxeology*, in *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*, Bourdieu (1972) demonstrated a critical attitude towards the *phenomenological mode of knowledge*, which he will categorize from *Le sens pratique* (Bourdieu, 1980a) onwards as a "subjectivism" expressed by Sartre in philosophy, and by Schutz (1993) and Garfinkel (1967) in sociology. His misreading of Schutz in particular makes it no easy task to understand *praxeology* as an anthropology of phenomenological orientation (Dukuen, 2013, 2018b) because it has generated a well-founded rejection of those who retake the phenomenological tradition in social science (Throop & Murphy, 2002; Belvedere, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013; Endress, 2005; Dreher, 2014, 2019)².

1. The standard definition of *habitus* is found in *Le sens pratique*: "The conditioning associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations" (Bourdieu, 1980a, pp. 88-89).

2. For a critique of the critique developed by Dreher (2014) around a phenomenology of power, consult Dukuen (2018b).

Having in mind that the inspiration of Bourdieu's work on the phenomenological tradition is being questioned with a focus on the notion of habitus, Bourdieu's critique of "social phenomenology" is described in this paper, and objections made by Belvedere and Throop & Murphy are resumed afterwards in order to propose an alternative reading inspired by the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty.

Methodology

This work is based on an analytical reading of the works of Bourdieu³, from which a specific corpus was constituted relative to its references to the phenomenological mode of knowledge in the social sciences. That is why it focuses especially on *Esquisse* and *Le sens pratique*. Criticisms of Sartre and Husserl, which specifically refer to differences and disagreements around ontology and phenomenological reduction, are not dealt with here, as they are in Dukuen (2018b).

Nor does the article stop at Bourdieu's *General Sociology Courses* (2015, 2016) because they do not add pertinent nuances to the proposed debate and have a different theoretical status and pedagogical function to research / reflective / programmatic texts, which are discussed here. Considering the large bibliography on Bourdieu (Dukuen, 2013, 2018b), this paper is based on the essential exegesis. The phenomenologically-oriented criticisms by Throop & Murphy and Belvedere that refer to the concept of habitus are analyzed here, with and against which a re-elaboration, based on a reading of the Merleau-Ponty phenomenology, is proposed.

Results

Bourdieu's Criticism of "Social Phenomenology"

To understand Bourdieu's criticisms of the so-called "social phenomenology" (Bourdieu, 1980a pp. 43-45), one must analyze his first reading of this perspective –with antecedents in *Un art moyen* (1965, p. 22)–, present in *Esquisse*, published in 1972. This key text (ground for *Le sens pratique* of 1980) begins with a section entitled "The Observed Observer" which is a critique of the ob-

3. All translations are by the author of this article.

jectivist mode of knowledge, expressed according to Bourdieu in the structural ethnology of Lévi-Strauss (2001) under the language of the *rule*, and that extends and deepens in the second section entitled "The three modes of theoretical knowledge". There it is pointed out that the social world can be approached by means of these "three modes", which, although they differ according to the anthropological theses they present, have in common "the fact that they are opposed to practical knowledge" (Bourdieu, 1972, p. 162). Those theoretical modes of knowledge are *the phenomenological, the objectivist and the praxeological*, and each of them involves a more or less explicitly different theory of practice.

Bourdieu focuses his criticism on objectivism, extending it to Saussure's linguistics (1980) as the basis of Lévi-Strauss's (2001) structuralism. It is striking that the criticism of the phenomenological point of view is less strong than compared to that of "objectivism", considering that the critical analysis of Sartre's work as the basis of this position appears in an extensive footnote (Bourdieu, 1972, pp. 248-250) and does not occupy an entire chapter -The Imaginary Anthropology of Subjectivism- as if it will in *Le sens pratique*. The praxeological mode of knowledge, where the notion of habitus plays a central role, is presented here as an overcoming of the errors that the other two modes would incur.

Following the objective of this work, this is how Bourdieu describes the *phenomenological* mode of knowledge:

The knowledge we shall call phenomenological... (or, to speak in terms of currently active schools, "ethnomethodological") sets out to make explicit the truth of primary experience of the social world, i.e all that is inscribed in the relationship of *familiarity* with the familiar environment, the unquestioning apprehension of the social world which, by definition, does not reflect on itself and excludes the question of the conditions of its own possibility (Bourdieu, 1972, pp. 162-163).

Firstly, Bourdieu explains a mode of knowledge that seeks to account for the practical experience of the agents in their "natural and evident" relationship with the lived world. We consider this part of the "description" to be correct in very general terms. However, we do not see in what sense he places symbolic interactionism as a phenomenological perspective, something that is pointed out without any clarification. This assignment would be partially correct for Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology that uses elements of Schutz's social phenomenology to discuss Parsons (Fornel, 2005). In other words, the primary problem is the imprecise generality with which Bourdieu constructs this kind

of ideal type called "phenomenological mode of knowledge". However, from his point of view, both theories share a first "mistake", relative to forgetting that:

... the truth of the interaction is never entirely constrained in the interaction. This is what social psychology and interactionism or ethnomethodology forget when, reducing the objective structure of the relationship between the assembled individuals to the conjunctural structures of their interaction in a particular situation and group, they seek to explain everything...in terms of the experimentally controlled characteristics of the situation (Bourdieu, 1972, p. 184).

The construction of this "indigestible conglomerate" –paraphrasing Gramsci (1976)– where, under the same umbrella he places sociological perspectives with enormous differences between each other –and inside each one of them– without in-depth analysis⁴, allows us to understand the rejection generated by Bourdieu's superficial criticisms of Schutz and / or Garfinkel, among scholars who take up the phenomenological tradition in the social sciences (Throop and Murphy, 2002; Belvedere, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013; Endress, 2005; Dreher, 2014, 2019) according to whom they criticisms are based on partial and reductionist readings. Particularly in the case of the ethnomethodology practiced by Garfinkel, it should be noted that rather than reducing objective structures to the interactional order, this approach describes procedures by which agents contribute to producing and reproducing "social structures" through objectification practices. This is already clearly seen already in the works grouped by Garfinkel (1967, pp. 76-103) in *Studies in ethnomethodology*, especially in chapters 2 and 3, which deal with common-sense knowledge of activities and social structures, making reference to the pioneering writings of Schutz (1993).

However, from Perreau's (2019) perspective, Bourdieu's first strong criticism of the phenomenological mode of knowledge points to "the restriction of the object domain of social phenomenology" (Perreau, 2019, p. 74): it "excludes the question about the conditions of possibility" of the first, doxic or "natural" relationship with the social world (Bourdieu, 1972, pp. 162-163; Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 44; Bourdieu, 1977). This would lead to not taking into account the unequal class conditions that make the different doxic relations with the social world typical of different class habitus and the relations of domination that take place in the interactions.

The second criticism can be described as "methodological" (Perreau, 2019, p. 75): descriptions of the interactional order, to which the objective structure would be reduced, imply that Schutz and Garfinkel produce "constructs of the

4. For example, the differences between Cicourel and Garfinkel (Miceli, 2006).

second degree” or “accounts of the accounts”, as will be pointed out in *Le sens pratique* (Bourdieu, 1980a, pp. 44-45). On the contrary, for Bourdieu (1972, pp. 184-185) what happens in interaction (for example, “keeping or reducing distances”) finds its truth in the relationship between the positions of each agent in the objective structures and the dispositions (*habitus*) that constitute the social trajectories that lead to that position. In both cases, the phenomenological mode of knowledge would not adopt a critical position (it would not see domination) because it was trapped in a description of the world given as such: this would be the political neutralization of the phenomenology that Bourdieu will talk about (1997, p. 249) in *Méditations pascaliennes*, a thesis that has been fairly contested by Belvedere (2011b) and Dreher (2019).

The Criticism of the Criticism

Schutz is usually cited by Bourdieu as the representative of “social phenomenology”. However, as Belvedere (2011b, p. 41; 2012) has shown against the “orthodox dissent” of contemporary social theory –incarnated by Bourdieu, Giddens and Habermas– his work is not a “subjectivism”, but is a fundamental antecedent in the phenomenological overcoming of the dualist opposition between objectivism and subjectivism, from a “complex monism” (Belvedere, 2011b, p. 86). In regard to the triple “reduction”⁵ of Schutz's work to subjectivism, constructivism and idealism, promoted by Bourdieu, Belvedere (2011b, pp. 41-94) shows his inconsistency –with a detail that cannot be reproduced here– pointing out that Schutz's notion of “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*) (reworked in relation to Husserl's) is not reduced to “the world of the natural attitude” or to a “set of common sense representations articulated through language” and “it has a social structure” (Belvedere, 2011b, pp. 86, 88). These issues were discussed in Schutz's posthumous work, edited by Luckmann, the title of which meaningful: *The Structures of the Life-World* (SLW in following quote) and indicate the wrong criticism about the absence of an investigation on the conditions of possibility of the relationship with the social world as evident (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 44). Referring to SLW, Belvedere points out that for Schutz:

The life-world is stratified on various levels and dimensions, some of which transcend all representations such as spatial structure, temporal structure, physical world, objective time, history, and my death (SLW, 166-167). The same

5. As Belvedere (2011b) clarifies, “reduction” is not used in this case in its “technical phenomenological sense but rather as a restrictive operation of complexity to one-dimensional and simplifying representations” (p. 48).

goes for the world of common sense; that transcends the reality of my daily life insofar as it presupposes a pre-organized social form, the permanence of the social world beyond my death, the organization of men into groups, social distance, and a sequence of overlapping generations (Belvedere, 2011b, p. 277).

This shows that Schutz, more than an adversary, indicates Belvedere (2011a, 2012), could well have been considered by Bourdieu as a reference. This sometimes occurs, for example in the "interview on phenomenology" given to Sapiro (2007) and in his Self-analysis (Bourdieu, 2004).

Throop and Murphy (2002) –in a reference text on this topic– made a critique of Bourdieu's critique to phenomenology, indicating that it is based on a "misinterpretation" of Husserl and Schutz –as Endress (2005) and Dreher (2014, 2019) will also say years later–. They claim that Bourdieu's theory presents many points in common with Schutz and, as an example, point out that for the Austrian sociologist, individuals "enter into an already constituted social world that has previously been created by other individuals and communities" and that in the relationship with this social world, with friends, parents, teachers, they acquire " 'knowledge at hand' [to] function as a scheme of reference' in [the] understanding particular aspects of the perceived environment" (Throop and Murphy, 2002, p. 196). On the contrary:

Bourdieu ignores the fact that, except for the notion of habitus as a thing, all of the points he claims to find in his rereading were already present in phenomenological texts (...) Bourdieu seems to be merely rephrasing some of Schutz's premises in his own idiosyncratic and overly deterministic vocabulary so as to make them sound new, when in reality they are not (Throop and Murphy, 2002, p.197).

Although Throop and Murphy are correct in the biased character of Bourdieu's critique of phenomenology, it is not possible to agree with the imputation of "deterministic", a common place of criticism (Alexander, 1995)⁶. To accept it, would also mean to operate a "misinterpretation" of his work, such as the one that Bourdieu perpetrates on Schutz. It should be noted that Throop & Murphy build their objections from a partial reading of Bourdieu's research, leaving out anthropological analyses of the Kabyle rites in which he pays particular attention to the *indeterminate and ambiguous* nature of practice (Bourdieu, 1980a, pp. 333-440), clearly inspired by the Merleau-Pontyan perspective (Dukuen, 2018b, pp. 183-233). This does not exempt Bourdieu from making biased readings of

6. For a critique of Bourdieu's attribution of determinism see Dukuen (2018b, 2019).

concurrent theories, but neither does it exempt his critics from ignoring the empirical analyses in which theoretical reappropriations are involved.

The same can be said of the character of reformulation that Bourdieu operates on notions and problems worked on by phenomenology. In his “Response to Throop & Murphy”, written shortly before dying (2002), he points out that in the resumption he carries out, the theoretical ideas from phenomenology “are designed to guide empirical research and to solve specific problems of anthropology and sociology ... such as the problem of gift-exchange” (p. 209). Far from not being newfangled, Bourdieu introduces the problem of temporality and the formation of bodily *habitus* in the development of a theory of powers and modes of domination that is not found in Husserl, Schutz or Merleau-Ponty, as observed in his early texts on the conception of time in the Algerian peasants and in the approach of the corporal *hexis* of the celibate bearsneses (Bourdieu, 1962, 1963; Dukuen, 2013, 2015; Dukuen, 2016, 2018b). It is worth adding that the relationship between corporal *hexis*, *habitus* and domination is key in later works such as *La distinction* (Bourdieu, 1979), *Le sens pratique* (Bourdieu, 1980a) and *Méditations pascaliennes* (Bourdieu, 1997). In this sense, García (2012a), taking up analysis of the book *La domination masculine* by Bourdieu (1998), states:

His notions of *hexis* and *habitus* result from a political interpretation of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of embodiment: arms and legs not only have their peculiar knowledge, as Merleau-Ponty says, but to the extent that this knowledge is adjusted to cultural norms, arms and legs are also “full of mute imperatives” (García, 2012a, pp. 378-370).

The *Habitus* in Question

The notion of *habitus* has been the subject of numerous criticisms, among which that of Lahire (2004), who, against the stability and uniqueness of the concept, points out the plural nature of the dispositions, blaming the shortcomings of Bourdieu’s proposal to its foundation in the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty⁷. However, less well-known are the objections from the phenomenological tradition that will be analyzed in this section.

In one of his paraphrases to Husserl on the relationship between *habitus*, intentionality and temporality, Bourdieu (1987) points out:

7. For a critique of Lahire’s position see Frère (2011) and Dukuen (2018b).

The habitus entertains with the social world that has produced it a real ontological complicity, the source of cognition without consciousness, intentionality without intention, and a practical mastery of the world's regularities which allows one to anticipate the future, without even needing to posit it as such. We here find the foundations of the difference established by Husserl, in *Ideen I*, between protensions as the practical aiming at a yet-to-come inscribed in the present, thus apprehended as already there and endowed with the doxic modality of the present, and the project as the position of a futurity constituted as such, that is, as capable of happening or of not happening (p. 22).

Belvedere (2004) takes up this quote to carry out a criticism focused on the filiation between the *habitus* and the Husserlian notions of retention and protension: “beyond the relatively precise character of the reference, what is not clear is how the *habitus*, as incorporation of the operated and operating social structures in the practices, could found the temporality, since rather it presupposes it” (Belvedere, 2004, p. 67). Indeed, habitus cannot be the foundation of temporality, since it is formed in and by the temporality that it presupposes. Generally speaking, this is correct. However, Bourdieu's approach also correct, but before explaining why, there is a series of clarifications: the quoted extract is part of an interview in which the author is pointing out his differences with Sartre (1943) and Elster (1979), that from other philosophical positions would privilege the reflective conscience and the project⁸. As noted in other writings (Dukuen, 2011, 2013, 2016, 2018b) in Bourdieu's early research (1963, 1964) on the Kabyle society, the “anthropologization” of Husserl's studies on temporality (2002) becomes evident, which was his basic training in philosophy and the framework of his unfinished doctoral thesis –directed by Canguilhem– on the “temporal structures of affective life” (Martínez, 2007; Dukuen 2013, 2018b).

This anthropological research allowed Bourdieu to describe in action the practical primacy of one of the modalities of the experience of time that is not objectifying; that is to say, *protension*, developed by Husserl: perceptual anticipation founded on belief and tradition (in an *ethos*), as a practical induction of a quasi-present future. In the belief or *doxic* relationship, the “ontological complicity” (Bourdieu, 1980b, p. 7; 1987, p. 22) with the world is established, which implies an “intentionality without intention” in the sense that it does not imply an objectified project for the objectifying conscience but bodily operations belonging to the Merleau-Pontyan *operative intentionality*. In a previous article (Bourdieu, 1980b) the reference to ontological complicity is referred to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty:

8. For a discussion of Bourdieu's critique of Sartre see Hong (1999) and Dukuen (2018b).

The relationship with the social world is not the mechanical causal relationship that is usually assumed between an "environment" (milieu) and consciousness, but rather a kind of ontological complicity: when the same history inhabits habit and habitat, the dispositions and positions, the king and his court, the employer and his company, the bishop and his diocese, the story communicates in a sense with itself (...). History as "subject" discovers itself in history as "object", it is recognized in "passive synthesis", "prepredicative", structured structures before any structuring operation and all linguistic expression. The doxic relationship with the homeworld, that kind of ontological commitment that practical sense establishes, is a relationship of belonging and possession in which the body, appropriated by history, appropriates in an absolute and immediate way the things inhabited by the same story (10) (...) This is what I think that the last Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty (especially in *The Visible and the Invisible*) tried to express in the language of ontology, that is to say, a rather "wild" or "barbaric" -I would simply say practical- of intentional relationship with the object (Bourdieu, 1980b, pp. 6-7).

As it was clarified, Bourdieu does not suggest that *habitus* is a condition of possibility of temporality *in general*, but under certain conditions of existence and domains of practice (Dukuen, 2013, 2018b) agents own bodies structured in *habitus*, "privilege" the protensional-retensional modality as a relationship with the social world, while under other conditions of existence and domains of practice "privilege" secondary memory and project. For Bourdieu: a) pre-objective temporality is the basis of objective temporality, (b) both modalities are typical of human experience in general, being the diverse embodied social conditions (e.g. those that differentiate the kabil peasant, from the worker from the suburbs of Paris) the ones that foundate the primacy of one or another in any mastery of practice.

It should also be clarified that the fact that Bourdieu places the habitus in the empirical agent and not in the transcendental subject does not mean rejecting, nor refuting Husserl's perspective (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 209), but pointing out different levels of analysis: in phenomenological terms, it could be said that Bourdieu would subscribe to the description of natural attitude before transcendental reduction, while Husserl, does not renounce to the transcendental subjectivity. These two instances are pointed out by Merleau-Ponty (1945, p. 419)⁹ and lead to reflections on the intertwining between the empirical and the

9. "Husserl in his last period concedes that all reflection should in the first place return to the description of the world of living experience (*Lebenswelt*). But he adds that, by means of a second 'reduction' the structures of the world experience must be reinstated in the transcendental flow of a universal constitution

transcendental, which exceed the limits of this paper (Bourdieu, 1997; García, 2012; Dukuen, 2018b).

These clarifications then make it possible to refer to the problem of fundamentation, pointed out by Belvedere (2011a, p. 5): while the *habitus* in Husserl is a possession of the ego, in Bourdieu it would not be clear what is the substrate of social action, whether the *habitus* or the agent. From the Husserlian perspective "It is never the habitus itself who acts or explains the social action but the concrete ego, endowed with a habitus which allows her to enter into a personality of a higher order and become a social agent" (p. 5). In a later paper, Belvedere (2013) proposes a solution to the problem of fundamentation from Schutz's perspective:

We can finally establish a hierarchy between the three overlapping elements in Bourdieu's work: social agents (or "social persons," as Schutz states) are founded on shared habitus, which are practical principles acquired by the personal ego in embodied actions in common environments or settings. Thus, it can be said that the phenomenological perspective grounds the agent in the habitus and the habitus in the monad. Now we know that it is not the habitus itself which acts but the concrete embodied ego, with habitus which allows her/him to become in part a social person (Belvedere, 2013, p. 1106).

When reading the paper written by Belvedere in 2011, a merleau-pontyan foundation of Bourdieu's approach had been proposed, focus on a sociogenesis of habitus in one's own body, in which practices result from a social agent that is a *partially structured body in terms of habitus*. It means, according to Merleau-Ponty, to understand the *body-agent as a link between two dimensions: habitual body and actual body* (Dukuen, 2013). After reading new Belvedere's (2013) article, it was necessary to deepen some key points of this sociogenesis (Dukuen, 2018b), which are presented below.

For a Merleau-pontyan Reformulation of Bourdieu's Notion of Habitus

To understand *habitus* as a *partial* structuring of one's own body, formed by different dispositional layers (primary, secondary, etc.) more or less *integrated*,

in which all world's obscurities are elucidated. It is clear, however, that we are faced with a dilemma: either the constitution makes the world transparent, in which case it is not obvious why reflection needs to pass through the world of experience, or else it retains something of that world, and never rids it of its opacity. Husserl's thought moves increasingly in this second direction, despite many throwbacks to the logicist period - as is seen when he makes a problem of rationality, when he allows significances which are in the last resort 'fluid' (...), when he bases knowledge on a basic *doxa*." (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 419).

that is, not necessarily systematic –Bourdieu and Sayad (1964) suggested in *Le déracinement*– that allows to develop theoretically, for example, the possibility of transformation and incorporation of new more or less contradictory dispositions, an issue that Bourdieu points out (1982, 1997) but not clearly. It also allows as to emphasize the criticism of determinism referred by Throop and Murphy, which relies on Bourdieu's thesis on the "adjustment" between subjective (*habitus*) and objective structures –inspired by Leibniz and Durkheim– and the hysteresis of *habitus* as a tendency to persevere in its being –*conatus* in Spinoza– that explains the reproduction of practices and social world (Bourdieu, 1980a; Dukuen, 2013, 2018b, 2019).

However –and this is what makes it interesting– even in the *same books*¹⁰ these Bourdieu's thesis are in tension with some other ones in which the author insists on *habitus* as instituted by a *dialectic* (Bourdieu, 1972, pp. 163, 175, 178, 179; Bourdieu, 1980a, pp. 70, 88, 242) where the *logic of practice and the practical sense, are characterized by ambiguity and indeterminacy* (Bourdieu, 1980a, pp. 28, 142, 146, 160, 177, 426-427), which has been widely analyzed by Dukuen (2018b). The assumptions of these thesis come from Husserl and Merleau-Ponty phenomenology. For example, in Bourdieu's (1980a, pp. 167-230) analyses of gift-exchange and symbolic violence, *habitus* is a "sense of play", dispositions that allow the agent to develop *strategies*, that is, stakes in the fight (*enjeux*) against other agents, based on and by the unequal appropriation or distribution of specific-efficient capitals (powers) in those practice domains and/or fields¹¹ where one is involved.

These strategies allow one to play with the *tempo*, improvise in situations and contribute to the game with charm, unpredictability, and uncertainty (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 168; Dukuen, 2018b). Bourdieu (1987) states that the notion of "strategy", produced both against the theory of rational actor and structuralism, is the result of reading Merleau-Ponty (Sapiro, 2007) and a "free" appropriation of Wittgenstein's developments on "following a rule" (Taylor, 1993).

In this sense, the proposal of understanding *habitus* as partial structuring of one's own body (Dukuen, 2013) is particularly inspired by Merleau-Ponty

10. As it has been shown in extensive terms through a genetic reading of the production of concepts in Bourdieu (Dukuen 2018b), these theoretical differences are clearly seen in the development of a theory of practice, from a first crystallization in *Esquisse* (1972) to *Le sens pratique* (1980) and *La distinction* (1979), to the latest publications in *Méditations pascaliennes* (1997).

11. Refers to "domains of practice" to explain "social games" studied by Bourdieu in "traditional" societies in which by definition there are no relatively autonomous "fields" (i.e. the exchange of gifts in lobbying society) and for those "games" that in "modern" societies are played "off-field", such as affective relationships. On this point, see discussions on the scope of the Bourdean notion of "field" in Lahire (2004), Lemieux (2011) and Dukuen (2013, 2018b).

and allows as to question the objectivistic thesis of "adjustment" and *hysteresis*, avoiding falling in determinism and mechanicism, within Bourdieu's praxeology and phenomenological foundation. Here, more than the *tout court* determinism attributed by critics, what is found in Bourdieu is a tension between "objectivist" theis and phenomenological thesis (Dukuen, 2018b).

To advance on this point, we must focus on the relationship between three dimensions of the body, in Merleau-Ponty, as García (2012b) states on exegesis: *organic body, habitual body and actual body*. In response to the analysis of the French phenomenologist (Merleau-Ponty, 1945) on the anosognosia and phantom limb syndrome, it is observed that the mutilated does not live his body as a mental representation, nor with its observable characteristics in the present, nor with all anatomophysiological components, but as a habitual body, as "repertoire of movements that have been sedimented by behavioral habits in the world". It is observed that between the *actual body* "with its observable characteristics and is moved on purpose" and the *organic body*, the *habitual body* it is stated "that connects and also provides a common ontological field, as both are dimensions". It is remarkable that the original and central phenomenon is the *habitual body* "as a take-off platform", and that the differences in dimensions are entangled in one's own experience (García, 2012b, pp. 111, 112). The dialectic between the *habitual body* and the *actual body* is particularly interesting because it is within the anthropological research domain where *praxeology* operates.

From this review, it is proposed to rethink the concept of *habitus* in Bourdieu and to understand it within the *order of practical transformations*: a) transformation from "objective conditions" to practical experiences; (b) transformations in the incorporation of practical experiences as dispositions; c) transformations in the passage from dispositions/schemes to practices (Dukuen, 2013, 2018b). For space reasons, it is not possible to expand on a) and b) transformations –aspects related to the genesis of different modes of existence and strata of sense– but briefly on c) *transformations in the passage from dispositions to practice*.

From a phenomenological approach, every implementation of dispositions by an agent implies its transformation into a practical practice in the practical social world; a situation that demands an action, and may have different degrees of sense affinity, it is never the same as the one that formed the disposition. Thus, if the practice is considered to be the result of the encounter between a body-agent partially structured by a *habitus* and a situation in a practical social world work as a sollicitation, that encounter is *centrifuge and centripetal* in terms of sense donation (*Sinngebung*) (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 501).

This dialectic indicates that in the logic of practice, there is always a degree of indeterminacy and ambiguity, as Merleau-Ponty (1942, 1945) and Bourdieu stated in his anthropological works on the *Kabyle people* (1980a, pp. 347-440) –ig-

nored by critics— and that the agent to the world's requests can *invent* a response from acquired dispositions. Thus, the problem lies in what power of solicitation the situation has, when there is not structural affinity of sense with the dispositions the agent has to respond to. This depends on the power given to *habitus* in the structure of one's own body.

At this point, it may be useful to recall the case of the "sick Schneider" studied by Merleau-Ponty (1945, pp.114-172). Schneider, who had suffered an injury in the occipital region, was "locked up" in his habitual body, in his acquired dispositions, and therefore he had great difficulty in producing virtual practices, such as playing or performing spontaneous "free" actions. He could only carry out his habitual practices, but could not renew his body schema. In this case, the entanglement between the habitual body and actual body, sedimentation and transcendence, was cut off. Merleau-Ponty uses this case to show, on the contrary, that the dialectic of the body in the world is characterized by an "existential ambiguity" (Waldenfels, 1987, p.175; Ralon, 2005, p. 237) still has past dispositions but it is open to the possible. The temporalization expresses that in each new present, the dispositions can be re-resigned and, at the same time, the possibility of creating others is opened up.

In this sense, taken to the extreme, Bourdieu's thesis on the *hysteresis* of the *primary habitus* formed in the family microcosm, restricts the possibility of incorporating new dispositions except those that are similar and tends to transform the human dialectic into a fictional rhetoric that limits the body to its habitual dimension. Bourdieu does not distinguish the double aspect of the body, habitual and actual, nor does he take into account its *intertwining* in dialectics with the human world. Hence, the criticism made by Bimbenet (2011) when he points out that Bourdieu shares with Merleau-Ponty the concern for the archaeological, but disregards the teleological. For this reason, our proposal not only debates with the phenomenological critical perspectives that we have analyzed, but also with Bourdieu's proposal.

It is proposed, then, to recover the dynamic character of the body schema and to postulate that the body is *partially* structured by a *habitus* as a habitual body, and therefore, it remains a "can" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 160), although it is not at every step an "I". This means recovering the open character of the actual body in its intertwining with the habitual body. Thus, the *habitus* does not totally structure the agent, but partially and precisely for that reason, we can think of the dialectic of practical sense in its *ambiguity and indeterminacy in a positive way*.

Now, we are in a position to return to the problem of the foundation pointed out by Belvedere (2011b, 2013) and present an outline of the sociogenesis of the *habitus*: the child's own body is structured from the hierarchical practical

relationships in the microcosm of the family –or its practical equivalent– where dispositions / schemes are incorporated that make up an embodied primary habitus, the principle of incorporation of power and domination relations related to gender, ethnic and class symbolic violence¹².

At this original level of incorporation/action, it is one's own body that acts, and recalls what Merleau-Ponty (1997) worked on in his course at The Sorbonne on the formation of body schema: "The Child's Relations with Others". In the process of incorporation, in which the child's own body (its body schema) is "formed" and a primary *habitus* is configured, what we can call a *body-social agent* that produces practices in situ is emerging. In the framework of the various social trajectories, when that *body-agent* is introduced into other domains of practice (such as school) or fields, which involve other more or less distant situations-interactions, the primary dispositions are reworked by new practices and also new secondary dispositions are formed from the *actual dimension of the body*.

So, we agree with Belvedere that in any case it is *habitus* that acts, instead it is *body-social agent* as an intertwining between a dimension that is partially structured in terms of *habitus and an actual dimension that is open to new possibilities*. In the perspective that is developed here from Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu, the body-social agent is neither determined or closed by the *habitus*, instead it is conditioned by it, by the social trajectories in which it was formed (with its intersections of gender, ethnic, class) and the specific practical relationships in which it is involved, which act as restrictions and possibilities to acquire new dispositions/schemes, transform old ones and even eliminate them. The actual dimension of the body and the possibility of entering into other relationships are the forms of *opening* of the body-agent in the dialectic of the human world.

This proposal involves debating the deterministic critique of the theory of practice through a break with the "logic of adjustment" between *habitus* and objective conditions, also proposing an approach that allows us to account for the power and domination relationships in a non-mechanistic way.

In this sense, understanding the body-agent as habitual/actual intertwining gives meaning to the notion of "countertraining", the possibility of transforming the *habitus* pointed out by Bourdieu (1997, p. 248) in *Méditations pascaliennes*, which would be a rhetorical fiction if the body did not have an actual dimension that is open to the possible. This, too, would give meaning to the proposal of a "reflexive anthropology" (Bourdieu, 1980a, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), insofar as, in order to effectively "objectify objectification", and more generally, so that the taking of critical-reflective distance with the incorporated conditions

12. Bourdieu approaches these issues from a cross between sociology, anthropology and Freudian psychoanalysis in *Méditations pascaliennes* and *La domination masculine* (Dukuen, 2018b, pp. 275-278).

of existence produce lasting transformations in the bodies and practices, the body must have a sense-instituting power (actual dimension), which allows it to apprehend metadiscursive reflective practices, and incorporate them as embodied disposition and schemes.

Now, the open and transcendent dimensions of the body, of Merleau-Pontyan roots, is a substantial contribution to Bourdieu's critical anthropology of domination. Upon analyzing the modes of domination, describing how they are somatized, it makes sense in his perspective to what extent the dominated can apprehend critical dispositions reappropriating their experiences, that is, that the body can work through a *countertraining* that is only possible if the *habitus* is not a self-unfolding closed whole. This effectively means that the habitual body configures a "conditioned freedom", the one that Merleau-Ponty (1945, p. 518) took back from Husserl as the soil of our existence: there, *also deposited* dispositions related to the domination relationship. But if it is true that there is "conditioned and conditional freedom" and "a margin of freedom" as Bourdieu says (1980a, p. 92; 1997, pp. 236-240) it is necessary to renounce the pure extremes of determinism and freedom, to recognize the existence of *degrees of domination* (Nordmann, 2010).

In effect, the body keeps a sense-instituting power, a dimension open to the virtual (actual body), which can allow "rebellious" dispositions to be incorporated into lasting practical relationships with others on specific social trajectories and in collective experiences, that by means of a *countertraining* re-elaborate dominated dispositions, in "the margins of maneuver left to liberty, that is, to political action" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 944).

This point can be illustrated from a practical case. In a recent fieldwork on youth, school, morals and politics¹³, the trajectories of two seventeen-year-old lower-middle-class scholarship students educated in a private bilingual high school for upper classes in the City of Buenos Aires, were analyzed (Kriger and Dukuen, 2017; Dukuen, 2018a). In the framework of atypical class trajectories that break with the "causality of the probable" (Bourdieu, 1979), in their day to day they transit non-linear socializations where agents and practical experiences of deeply heterogeneous social class circulate: there is pure social and cultural discontinuity when they go from their homes and neighborhoods to school.

In those experiences, processes of *countertraining* were observed, where certain dispositions were reworked, new ones were incorporated and others disappeared, instituting *splitted habitus* (Bourdieu, 1993, 1997) that make up *di-*

13. Research led by Ph.D. M. Kriger, PICT 2012-2751 (2014-2017) Between 2015-2016 we conducted semi-structured interviews at the school with 15 5th grade students. Between 2016-2018 Juan Dukuen conducted field work, "participant observation" in different activities and more than 50 interviews with students, teachers, preceptors and managers (Dukuen, 2018a).

fferent degrees of ontological complicity and tension with those social worlds. This heterogeneity and splitting of the experiences and dispositions of the scholarship holders are expressed in their critical lucidity about politics. They declare themselves “leftist” based on experiences in political groups: an exception both in front of their upper class peers and the “other” world that surrounds them *in school*, which they carefully examine, and in front of their own families; while recognizing the unique opportunity for an elite education.

This practical case is not understandable from a logic that moves between the pure extremes of adjustment or mismatch with objective conditions, or from the *hysteresis* of the *habitus*, that would have impossible the *countertraining*. For this reason, glimpsing these possibilities implies leaving the “bad dialectic” criticized by Merleau-Ponty (1964, pp. 127-128) and understanding social conditioning, power and domination relations within the framework of ambiguous dialectic *of social practices*.

Conclusions

In this work, Bourdieu's criticisms of “social phenomenology” were analyzed, as well as the objections of Throop & Murphy (2002) and Belvedere (2011a, 2011b) who are right in indicating the equivocal nature of his reading of Schutz. Agreeing on this point, in the case of Throop & Murphy the accusation about determinism and the lack of “novel” contributions by Bourdieu is rejected. Going even further than what Bourdieu (2002) points out in his answer to Throop & Murphy, it is claimed that he introduces the problem of temporality and the formation of embodied *habitus* in the development of a theory of domination that we do not find in Husserl, Schutz, or Merleau-Ponty, as seen from his early anthropological works on Algerian peasants and Celibacy in the Béarn (Bourdieu, 1962, 1963, 1980a). Thus, this debate faces a paradox: those who criticize the simplistic readings of Bourdieu on phenomenology, do exactly the same by not giving importance to their empirical investigations, falling into theoreticism.

Then, after reviewing Belvedere's criticisms of the notion of *habitus* and the problem of the fundamentation of temporality and action, a reworking based on Merleau-Ponty has been proposed, without abandoning Bourdean praxeology. It consists of understanding the body-agent as partially structured by a *habitus* that is intertwined with an actual dimension, open to the possible. Certainly, this proposal is also made with and against Bourdieu, insofar as it contends against the tension between the theses on adjustment-hysteresis of *habitus* (which support the accusations of determinism) and the theses stemming from

the phenomenological imprint of *praxeology*. For this reason, by recovering the dialectic between the habitual body and the actual body, not developed by Bourdieu, a reflexive anthropology can be more solidly founded, as a key liberating vocation of the theory of powers and modes of domination. Against theoreticism, the brief reference to scholarship research was intended to be an empirical illustration of this approach.

In an eloquent piece of writing, the expert on Merleau-Ponty's work, Étienne Bimbenet, pointed out that "the Bourdian definition of practical sense, and correlatively of *habitus*, can be read as a faithful sociological exemplification of Merleau-Pontyan phenomenology of perception" (2011, p. 167). With this paper it is hoped to have contributed to restore Bourdieu's praxeology to phenomenologically oriented social sciences.

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