



Does Bourdieu “Extend” Marx’s Concept of Capital?

Mathieu Hikaru Desan

INTRODUCTION

Although Bourdieu was clearly a close and appreciative reader of Marx, his relationship to Marxism was fraught and ambivalent.¹ In this chapter, I consider one particularly common interpretation of Bourdieu’s relationship to Marxism: that he transcends Marxism’s narrow economism by extending its critical problematic beyond the economic sphere and into the cultural and symbolic spheres. I look specifically at the concept of capital, which is central to both Bourdieu and Marx, and whose cultural and symbolic forms in Bourdieusian theory mark that theory’s originality and constitute the basis for the perception that Bourdieu extends Marxism. I argue that this model of extension must ultimately be rejected. Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural and symbolic capital are not extensions of an

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M. H. Desan (✉)
University of Colorado, Boulder, CO, USA
e-mail: mathieu.desan@colorado.edu

economic capital conceived in a Marxist sense, and the concept of economic capital of which the other capitals are extended forms is not Marxist.

I end with a discussion of Bourdieu's treatment of the economic sphere, which constitutes a kind of empty referent in his theory of capital. I show how, inconsistent with the critical epistemology that characterizes his sociology of culture, Bourdieu has a tendency to treat economic phenomena, including economic capital, as self-evident. I compare this unfavourably to Marx's concept of capital, the point of which was to theoretically reconstruct the social and historical relations of exploitation that fetishized economic practices concealed. I conclude that we must not only reject the idea that Bourdieu extended Marx's analysis of capital into non-economic spheres of practice, but also the notion that through this extension Bourdieu transcended the economism that Marxism is (falsely) thought to represent.

THE EXTENSION MODEL

A particularly persistent interpretation of Bourdieu's relation to Marxism is that he extends Marxism's critical problematic to the cultural and symbolic spheres, thereby transcending its narrow economism. So, for example, according to Swartz, "the first way Bourdieu distances himself from Marxism is by extending the notion of economic interest to ostensibly noneconomic goods and services" (1997: 66). The second way, Swartz goes on, "is by extending the idea of capital to all forms of power, whether they be material, cultural, social, or symbolic" (p. 73). More recently, Joas and Knöbl have written that the particular way in which Bourdieu develops his theory

does not entail a complete break with utilitarian or Marxian notions ... Bourdieu deploys the term 'capital', which originates in 'bourgeois' and Marxian economics, but he extends its meaning and distinguishes between *different forms* of capital. (2009: 385)

In the same vein, Paulle, van Heerikhuizen, and Emirbayer have claimed that Bourdieu "tried to escape from ... Marxist 'economism' by adding to the classical concept of economic capital other types of capital: cultural, social, and symbolic types of assets being the most noteworthy" (2011: 161). Fowler goes so far as to argue that Bourdieu "effectively operates within the Marxist tradition" and that he "neither abandons the Marxist

method of historical materialism ... nor repudiates Marx’s own texts” (2011: 33–5). She claims that Bourdieu “provides his most powerful critique of orthodox Marxism ... by taking up and extending Marx’s own analytical instruments to great sociological effect” (p. 36). Indeed, she praises Bourdieu for drawing attention to “misrecognized or misunderstood features of social action, particularly those that function analogously to the extraction of surplus value in the labour process” (p. 34). To be fair, these interpretations roughly correspond with how Bourdieu understood his own relation to Marxism. His frequent use of Weber, for example, was not meant to negate Marxism entirely, but rather to “close one of the gaps in Marxism” by elaborating a “materialist theory of the ‘symbolic’” (Bourdieu, Schultheis, and Pfeuffer 2011: 115–116).

In evaluating the claim that Bourdieu’s “general theory of the economy of practices” extends or generalizes the Marxist problematic and thereby transcends its economic distortions, it is helpful to examine Marx’s and Bourdieu’s concepts of capital. Not only is capital the conceptual glue holding Bourdieu’s “general theory of the economy of practices” together, it is also an obvious point of terminological convergence between Marxism and Bourdieu. If Bourdieu does in fact extend Marxism, then one might expect this to be especially the case in his theory of the different forms of capital. Indeed, this extension is precisely what Bourdieu seems to suggest, albeit in an ultimately problematic way.

THE MARXIAN CONCEPT OF CAPITAL

It is easy to forget that Marx himself conceived of his project as a *critique* of political economy. This seems to have eluded even Bourdieu, who, although sympathetic to Marx in some ways, often criticized Marxism for its supposed economism (e.g. 1987, 1998, 2015). Bourdieu even claimed that Marxism was “the most economic tradition that we know” (Bourdieu and Eagleton 1992: 114). But how fair is this charge?

In fact, it was Marx’s project to criticize the self-evidence of political economy’s fetishized categories and to demonstrate how “a world’s history” was implicated in them (1977: 274). Indeed, the theoretical impasse presented by capitalist circulation, which appears as “the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property, and Bentham,” is precisely what Marx’s concept of capital was meant to overcome (p. 280). The main contours of Marx’s theory of capital are well known. The fetishized experience of economic production and exchange conceals capital’s essence as a social

relation of exploitation. Only by constructing a theoretical concept of capital that broke from this fetishized experience was Marx able to show, first, that the valorization process only exists in and through the concrete labour process and, second, that the production of surplus-value is a historically specific form of extracting surplus-labour from direct producers.

Moreover, for Marx capital is doubly social in that it entails in the first instance a social relation of exploitation, and in the second instance the totality of social relations that reproduce this fundamental relation's conditions of possibility. Class struggles are not struggles *over* capital but struggles *within* it. What this indicates is that the relation of exploitation that capital denotes is overdetermined by the various instances in the social structure as a whole. The concept of capital thus does not refer exclusively to the "economic" sphere. In fact, Marx's point is to demonstrate how even apparently straightforwardly "economic" phenomena are constitutively social, political, and historical. So whereas capital may appear here as money and there as means of production, Marx's concept of capital allows us to pierce this fetishized form and to see capital not as a thing, but as a process; and not just a process, but a process of exploitation; and, finally, not only a process of exploitation, but also a social totality.

BOURDIEU'S NEW CAPITALS

Bourdieu rejects the philosophical-anthropological foundations of economism while at the same time demonstrating the interestedness of supposedly disinterested fields of practice. The dynamics of power are not, according to Bourdieu, limited to the economic sphere but pervade the cultural and symbolic spheres as well. The theory of economic practices is thus only "a particular case of a general theory of the economy of practices" (1990: 122). It is as part of this general theory that Bourdieu develops his notion of the different forms of capital. Bourdieu attempts to break from the common-sense experience of capital as "economic" and demonstrate instead how the power dynamics designated by the term *capital* are also operative in non-economic spheres of social life, albeit in misrecognized forms. As Lebaron (2003) and Heilbron (2011) point out, Bourdieu's importation of economic language in extending the concept of capital to culture, far from implying a kind of economic reductionism, was intended as a sort of epistemological shock challenging both the enchanted view of culture as disinterested and the economic view that sees all power and interest as ultimately economic. Like Marx, then,

Bourdieu seems to be sharply critical of economism’s fetishized conceptions of capital, and fully committed to an understanding of it that highlights its social and historical quality. A close reading of his concept of capital, however, reveals a more ambiguous picture.

Consider the concept of cultural capital. Used for the first time in 1966 (Bourdieu 1966), the concept was developed by Bourdieu (with various collaborators) during his research in the 1960s on the relationship between education, cultural reproduction, and social reproduction, which resulted in the publication of *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture* (1977), co-written with Jean-Claude Passeron. In this work, the concept of cultural capital is not conceived as an objective principle of stratification. It is not a resource that confers power upon its holder. Rather, it is an effect of power, a sort of shorthand for the set of competencies specific to the dominant class which become misrecognized as objective resources. There are two moments of misrecognition in the process of reproduction. The first is that the unequal distribution of cultural capital is misrecognized as unequal merit, objectified in academic credentials. The second, which actually precedes the first and without which cultural reproduction could not contribute to social reproduction, is that the concept of cultural capital itself is already a class power misrecognized as a bundle of objective properties. Cultural capital is the name given to the dominant class habitus when it is apprehended symbolically within the context of a relation of class power. Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital is here far from being a fetishized category. It implies, as a condition of its own existence, an understanding of the production and reproduction of class relations. Consequently, if conceived as a theory of ideology and legitimation, it is compatible with—if not an extension of—a Marxist theory of class exploitation and the reproduction of the relations of production.²

But why call it cultural *capital*? *Reproduction* suggests a more or less metaphorical usage of the term. Cultural capital is profitable in the sense that it is a kind of self-expanding cultural recognition. But there is not yet a notion of capital as such, or economic capital, to which cultural capital is conceptually linked. What process is denoted by the term capital, and why the set of cultural privileges designated as cultural capital should specifically be considered capital, remains largely unspecified.

This changes with *Distinction* (1984). There Bourdieu’s understanding of the social order and the places of class and capital within it changes

²Jacques Bidet and Anne Bailey (1979) make a similar point.

significantly. Cultural and economic capital are now construed as objective categories of analysis that, rather than presupposing a theory of class, constitute it.³ Capital becomes a principle of differentiation within a scientifically constructed social space, and classes refer above all to proximities in this space effected by similar endowments of capital.

The difference with *Reproduction* is clear. Earlier, the entire analysis presupposed an unspecified relation of class power. The concept of cultural capital did not really belong to the social space as an objective principle of differentiation. Rather, it was the symbolically unrecognized habitus of the dominant class. Following *Distinction*, Bourdieu recasts the social space as a “multi-dimensional space that can be constructed empirically by discovering the main factors of differentiation which account for the differences observed in a given social universe, or, in other words, by discovering the powers or *forms of capital* which are or can become efficient...in this particular universe” (Bourdieu 1987: 3–4). Capital steps forward as a foundational concept. As a concept pertaining to the objectivist moment of analysis that seeks to scientifically construct the space of socially determinant positions, capital becomes the principal explanatory factor in *Distinction*, determining both class and habitus and, through them, agents’ position-takings in the symbolic space.

These changes are problematic from the point of view of Bourdieu’s relationship to Marxism. The concept of capital remains undertheorized. In *Distinction* unlike in *Reproduction*, Bourdieu relates economic and cultural capital as two commensurable forms of something common such that one can intelligibly speak of a total volume of capital. But what generic understanding of capital authorizes this move? Bourdieu defines capital in *Distinction* as “actually usable resources and powers” (Bourdieu 1984: 114). It seems, then, that capital is deployed in a rather capacious and banal, or fetishized, sense, as a power-conferring or profit-generating resource—hardly an “extension” of the Marxist concept of capital.

The conceptualization of class is also problematic from a Marxist point of view. For Bourdieu, objective classes and their fractions are determined by volume and composition of capital, and as such are essentially quantitatively defined constructs. But such a definition of class is analytically limited. The only relationship one can construct between classes so defined is one between dominant and dominated. Such a notion of class gives no

³This is not to suggest that cultural capital is “objective” in an essentialist or substantialist way for Bourdieu.

indication of its historical conditions of possibility. One might wonder what determines the distribution of effective capitals in the social space. Answering this question requires a concept of class that goes beyond simply describing a given state of the distribution of effective resources. Moreover, by redefining class broadly as a particular distribution of all forms of capital effective within a social space, Bourdieu loses any theoretical traction for accounting for exploitation as a mode of power distinct from domination or exclusion.⁴ In the social space, there are only “continuous distributions” (Bourdieu 1984: 175). It is hard to see how a social space constructed in this way can render exploitation theoretically legible.

In *Distinction* and subsequent works, Bourdieu thus seems to limit the points of possible convergence with a Marxist theory of class exploitation and social reproduction that existed in *Reproduction*. The conceptual commensuration of economic and cultural capital within a newly developed theory of the social space raises the question of the fundamental social processes or relations that capital as such, whatever its form, denotes. But far from even attempting to extend a Marxist problematic that would define capital in terms of a socio-historical relation of class exploitation, Bourdieu instead puts forth an undertheorized and fetishized notion of capital.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION: THE FORMS OF CAPITAL

In “The Forms of Capital” (1986), Bourdieu attempts a rare systematic formulation of his theory of the different forms of capital. I have already noted how the common conceptual designation of cultural, social, and economic capital *as capital* raises the question of their relation to each other as different manifestations of the same social process. Here Bourdieu explicitly addresses this question. But the way in which he does so is far from satisfying, especially if one is expecting to find there a solid basis for the claim that he extends or generalizes a Marxist theory of capital.

In the section on “conversions,” Bourdieu argues that “economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital” and that these other capitals are “transformed, disguised forms of economic capital” (p. 252). So what is it that is common to the different forms of capital and that underlies their theoretical commensurability? Bourdieu defines the substance of capital as “accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its

⁴See Erik Olin Wright (2009) for this distinction.

‘incorporated,’ embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor” (p. 241). As for the measure of this substance, Bourdieu argues that “the universal equivalent, the measure of all equivalences, is nothing other than labor-time” (p. 253).

These passages of course evoke the labour theory of value and imply an affinity between Bourdieu’s concept of capital and Marx’s. But a closer reading suggests otherwise. For example, while Marx posits the theory of value as a premise for establishing a condition of equal exchange between commodities, it is not in itself a theory of capital. In fact, Marx shows how the production of surplus-value is possible despite the fact that commodities exchange at their values. That labour is accumulated in things and that those things become exchangeable according to the amount of labour accumulated is merely descriptive of commodities. Capital entails a relation of exploitation that is not reducible to the circuit of commodity production and exchange.

Consider also Bourdieu’s conception of profit. He says,

capital, in the sense of the means of appropriating the product of accumulated labor in the objectified state which is held by a given agent, depends for its real efficacy on the form of the distribution of the means of appropriating the accumulated and objectively available resources; and the relationship of appropriation between an agent and the resources objectively available, and hence the profits they produce, is mediated by the relationship of (objective and/or subjective) competition between himself and the other possessors of capital competing for the same goods, in which scarcity—and through it social value—is generated. The structure of the field, i.e., the unequal distribution of capital, is the source of the specific effects of capital, i.e., the appropriation of profits and the power to impose the laws of functioning of the field most favorable to capital and its reproduction. (pp. 245–246)

There are two competing principles of value here. On the one hand, labour-time is the “measure of all equivalences” and is the principle that determines the exchangeability of the different capitals. But on the other hand, inasmuch as Bourdieu is interested in accounting for the profitability of capital, its value is determined by its scarcity. Bourdieu here seems to

be confronted by the same problem that confronted classical political economy: namely, how to account for profits when assuming that things exchange at their equivalents? Marx’s solution to this problem was to develop a concept of the relations of production as relations of exploitation. But Bourdieu, like those political economists criticized by Marx, assimilates profits entirely to the sphere of circulation, which forces him to either abandon the assumption of equal exchange or to accept a notion of self-valorizing value.

For Bourdieu, insofar as the different forms of capital are considered only in their dimension as embodiments of accumulated labour, they are commodities. But what defines capital *as capital* for Bourdieu is not its nature as accumulated labour, but its exclusive appropriation and subsequent investment as a weapon and a stake within a field. In other words, commodities become capital insofar as they are put to profitable use. But profit, for Bourdieu, has little to do with production. It is a closure effect, that is, a consequence of the leverage entailed by exclusive appropriation. As such, it belongs entirely to the sphere of circulation.

From a Marxist perspective, while Bourdieu’s concept of profit might account for the struggle over the distribution of the available surplus-value, it cannot account for its production in the first place. Bourdieu’s invocation of a *marxisant* theory of value thus does not actually shed any light on his theory of profit. For Bourdieu, the profitability of any given commodity is completely independent of both the relations of production and the concrete labour process within which it is produced. So whereas for Marx capital denotes the social relation of exploitation—that is, the extraction of surplus-labour—in the production of commodities, for Bourdieu capital designates an object that, due to its unequal distribution within a field, is capable of accruing benefits to its owner. Hence Bourdieu often speaks of the exploitation *of capital*, and not the social relation of exploitation denoted *by* capital.

Following Craig Calhoun (1993) we could say that what Bourdieu’s theory ultimately lacks is an idea of capitalism. Bourdieu’s generic concept of capital is transhistorical. As Calhoun notes, by capital Bourdieu seems to mean simply any resource insofar as it yields power (p. 69). In the end, what Bourdieu’s notion of capital lacks is not only an idea of capitalism as a particular historical formation, but more fundamentally an idea of exploitation as a particular form of power.

CAPITAL, EXPLOITATION, AND THE ECONOMIC FIELD: THE LIMITS OF BOURDIEU'S CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Bourdieu's theory of the different forms of capital has as its reference point a concept of economic capital, just as the economic field of interested action is the reference point for his "general science of the economy of practices." It would thus seem necessary to understand the role that capital plays in the economic field. But Bourdieu rarely attempted to define economic capital, saying that he did not want to "dwell on the notion of economic capital," and suggesting that "it's not [his] area" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 119; Bourdieu 1993: 32). This abdication of conceptual definition is surprising. A Marxist conception of capital has sometimes been projected into this void, but as I have suggested, this is a dubious assumption. Rather, this absence is indicative of a critical weakness in Bourdieu: he sometimes takes the economic field at face value, and as such grasps capital only in the fetishized form in which it appears in this field. Marx constructed a concept of capital precisely to demonstrate its constitutively historical and social character and to render legible the relations of exploitation presupposed yet concealed by its reified form. Bourdieu's theory of capital has been praised for extending the scope of the concept beyond the economic field, but what it extends is not a Marxist concept of capital, but only capital's appearance as a power resource. Bourdieu insists on calling these different power resources "capital" without developing a concept of capital as such, and thereby obscures the relations of exploitation which Marx revealed.

How does Bourdieu conceptualize the "economic" sphere? According to Bourdieu, "archaic" societies euphemize the objective facts of interest, competition, and exploitation by transmuting these practices into a symbolic "good faith" economy. But the necessity for such symbolic dissimulation is, Bourdieu suggests, historically specific:

If it be true that symbolic violence is the gentle, hidden form which violence takes when overt violence is impossible, it is understandable why symbolic forms of domination should have progressively withered away as objective mechanisms came to be constituted which, in rendering superfluous the work of euphemization, tended to produce the "disenchanted" dispositions their development demanded. (1977: 196)

This process of disenchantment corresponds to the historical constitution of the economy *as* an economy, free from the work of euphemization and dissimulation. Indeed, Bourdieu argues that “only at the end of a slow evolution tending to strip away the specifically symbolic aspect of the acts and relations of production was the economy able to constitute itself *as such*, in the objectivity of a separate universe, governed by its own rules, those of self-interested calculation, competition, and exploitation” (2000: 19). A universe is thus established “in which the law of exchange of exact equivalents becomes the explicit rule and can be expressed *publicly*, in an almost cynical manner” (1998: 105). There “one can call a spade a spade, an interest an interest, a profit a profit. Gone is the work of euphemization which, among the Kabyle, was imposed even on the market” (p. 105). The emergence of the economic field thus:

marks the appearance of a universe in which social agents can admit to themselves and admit publicly that they have interests and can tear themselves away from collective misrecognition; a universe in which they not only can do business, but can also admit to themselves that they are there to do business, that is, to conduct themselves in a self-interested manner, to calculate, make a profit, accumulate, and exploit. (pp. 105–106)

Bourdieu here seems content to take the economic field at face value. While the symbolic order dissimulates the economic field, the economic field is supposedly an arena free from any misrecognition. Marx, of course, showed that it was precisely the fetishized experience of the economy *as such* that was, in the first place, ideological. The whole point of Marx’s concept of capital was to give the lie to the notion that in the economic field of circulation everything appears as it really is, that profit and exploitation are immediately available to experience.

In the passages above, Bourdieu, unlike Marx, locates equal exchange, profits, and exploitation on the same experiential plane and refuses to recognize the truth of these in a different analytical space. While the economic field is conceived in some sense as the truth of the cultural and symbolic fields, the truth of the economic field is apparently found within itself, on its surface.

This is not to argue that Bourdieu always took the economic field at face value (e.g. Bourdieu 2005). Yet Bourdieu was rather inconsistent in his characterization of the economic field. So while his study of the housing market is exemplary of what a critical sociology of the economy might

look like, when it comes to theorizing the place of interests, profit, exploitation, and hence capital, in the economic field, Bourdieu too readily suspends his critical epistemology. Whereas the importation of terms such as capital from the economic to the cultural sphere was meant to provoke an epistemological break with an enchanted view of culture, in elaborating a critique of economic reason Bourdieu is often content only to historicize economic practices whose disenchanting nature he accepts. Telling in this regard have been the responses to the critique of Bourdieu as a closet utilitarian and economic reductionist (Caillé 1981; Favereau 2001). Bourdieu's defenders, including Bourdieu himself, have responded to this charge by rejecting any foundationalist anthropology and pointing out that interests and practices are the socio-historical products of specific fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Boyer 2003; Convert 2003; Lebaron 2003). But even if we accept that Bourdieu was neither essentialist nor reductionist, it remains the case that within advanced societies the economic sphere is held up as a space wherein the logic of power is uniquely transparent. So while in pre-capitalist or symbolic worlds the (economic) truth of practices and the experience of those practices do not coincide, the "instituted cynicism" of the economic economy "means that in this case the boundary between the native representation and the scientific description is less marked" (Bourdieu 2005: 200).

The kinds of critique to which Bourdieu subjects the non-economic and economic spheres are thus subtly different. Whereas his critical sociology generally consists in theoretically unmasking the hidden logic of power within cultural fields, Bourdieu implies that for the economy, where science and native experience coincide, critique consists only in historicizing its already transparent logic. Power being transparent in the economy, critical sociology is left without an object and gives way to economic anthropology. Consequently, phenomena such as exploitation are conceived not as the dissimulated structural relations of capitalist production, but rather as dispositional features, albeit historically contingent, of economic actors.

Consider the more programmatic sections of *The Social Structures of the Economy*. In the introduction Bourdieu writes that, "against the ahistorical vision of economics," we must reconstitute the history of the genesis of economic dispositions on the one hand and the economic field on the other (2005: 5). But once this economic field is constituted:

in a kind of confession to itself, capitalist society stops ‘deluding itself with dreams of disinterestedness and generosity’: registering an awareness, as it were, that it has an economy, it constitutes the acts of production, exchange or exploitation as ‘economic’, recognizing explicitly as such the economic ends by which these things have been guided. (p. 7)

The “economy” is here equated with economic “ends.” The question of exploitation is reduced to one of intention, that is, of the genesis of a disposition to exploit. Bourdieu may historicize this disposition to exploit, but the objective relation of exploitation is not in itself considered a theoretical object, presumably because it is transparent in the economic field. Bourdieu assimilates all “economic” phenomena—profit, exploitation, accumulation—to an economic field considered only in its dimension as a sphere of circulation and exchange, and wherein the truth of these phenomena is immediately given to experience.

Where exploitation is transparent, capital has no secrets to betray. For Bourdieu, economic capital has an objective existence in the social space and serves as a reference point for all other capitals—that is, as a universal equivalent. But Bourdieu does not consider, as Marx did, that this objective economic capital is itself symbolic in that it denotes a social relation of exploitation. Capital is taken for granted within a taken-for-granted economic field. Whereas capital in the cultural and symbolic orders is dissimulated, in the economic field capital, like profits and exploitation, can be admitted as such and hence does not require a conceptual definition separate from the way in which it appears to native experience. In Bourdieu’s rendering, economic capital as such denotes only a commodity or a resource insofar as it is struggled *over* within a transparent economic field. He has little to say about the appropriation of surplus-labour and the social and historical relations that make it possible. And although Bourdieu is sensitive to class conflict, this conflict is typically treated as a conflict over the distribution of capital, or as a conflict between the holders of different capitals.

Whatever the virtues of Bourdieu’s (1987, 2013) reconceptualization of class, its capaciousness in including within the category any and all potential processes of group-formation based on the distribution of multiple capitals is in this instance a liability. Bourdieu is off the mark in criticizing the Marxist concept of class for restricting itself to the relations of production (1985: 736). The particularity of the Marxist concept lies not in some economistic bias that dismisses all other collectivities and forms of

power; rather, it lies in the particularity of the form of power, that is, exploitation as the historically variable form of appropriating surplus-labour from the direct producers, that it seeks to render legible. This is lost on Bourdieu, who in broadening the concept of class loses sight of the qualitatively different relations of power that characterize the relations between differently constructed groups. For Bourdieu, exploitation has no distinct conceptual content.

In the end, Bourdieu's notions of capital and class remain firmly within a Weberian problematic of social closure and its distributional effects. Marx is not even met, much less transcended.

CONCLUSION

The merits of Bourdieusian sociology are clear. I do not claim that any rapprochement between Bourdieusian theory and Marxism is doomed from the start, nor do I claim that it is impossible for one to build off the other. Indeed, for Marxism to have a future it must recognize its explanatory limits and open itself up to the best that sociology has to offer. Likewise, for Bourdieusian sociology to be true to its critical vocation it must take Marxism more seriously than it has in the past.

Any future rapprochement between Bourdieusian theory and Marxism will have to think through the nature of their relation. My goal in this chapter has been to evaluate one particular understanding of this relation: that Bourdieu *extends* Marx's critical analysis beyond the economy and thereby transcends Marxism's economism. I did this by looking at the concept of capital, which has been the most obvious point of potential convergence between Marx and Bourdieu.

Two conclusions impose themselves. First, if the different forms of capital are but extended forms of economic capital, the notion of economic capital that they extend is not a Marxist one. Nowhere does Bourdieu define capital as a historically specific mode of extracting and appropriating surplus-labour, nor is it clear what extending such a notion of capital to the disparate phenomena designated by cultural, social, and symbolic capital would mean. Second, the claim that Bourdieu transcends Marxism's economism by extending a concept of capital is dubious for the reasons that Marx's concept of capital was never economic in that it always denoted an overdetermined socio-historical relation of exploitation, and that what Bourdieu supposedly extends is a conception of economic

capital that, because grasped only in its fetishized form, is itself marked by an economistic belief in the transparency of economic experience.

It is possible, however, to think of the relation between Marx and Bourdieu differently. Rather than positing a relation of extension, the search for possible points of articulation between Bourdieusian sociology and Marxism seems a more fruitful approach. In the spirit of theoretical pluralism, the question should not be about who transcends or surpasses whom, but about what processes each approach can uniquely render legible and how these theories can be used together in such ways that better explain concrete social phenomena. Still, a commitment to pluralism should not gloss over problems in compatibility where they do exist. Bourdieu’s notion of capital became less compatible with Marx’s precisely as it sought to subsume different principles of power under a single concept. In order to bring Marx and Bourdieu together, then, it might be necessary to loosen the screws a bit on the totalizing project of a “general theory of the economy of practices.”

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