

## INTERFACES BETWEEN MAX WEBER AND PIERRE BOURDIEU IN CLASS ANALYSIS

### *INTERFACES ENTRE MAX WEBER E PIERRE BOURDIEU NA ANÁLISE DE CLASSES*

### *INTERFACES ENTRE MAX WEBER Y PIERRE BOURDIEU EN EL ANÁLISIS DE CLASES*

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**ABSTRACT:** This article focuses on similarities and disagreements between Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu in class analysis. For this, four themes are discussed: the Weberian contribution regarding types of social stratification, notably class and status; the class analysis presented in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, focusing on dispositions related to competitive capitalism; the Bourdieusian proposal on class positions, resulting from expressive procedures and differential access to capital species; and the incorporation of *habitus* based on socialization experiences.

**KEYWORDS:** Class. Socialization. Max Weber. Pierre Bourdieu.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo aborda as proximidades e discordâncias entre Max Weber e Pierre Bourdieu na análise de classes. Para isso, são discutidos quatro temas: a contribuição weberiana sobre os tipos de estratificação social, notadamente classe e status; a análise de classes presente n’A *Ética Protestante e o Espírito do Capitalismo*, com foco no aprendizado de disposições afinadas ao capitalismo competitivo; a proposta bourdieusiana sobre as posições de classe, decorrentes de procedimentos expressivos e do acesso diferencial às espécies de capital; e a incorporação dos *habitus* a partir das experiências de socialização.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Classe. Socialização. Max Weber. Pierre Bourdieu.

**RESÚMEN:** Este artículo aborda las proximidades y desacuerdos entre Max Weber y Pierre Bourdieu en el análisis de clases. Para ello, se discuten cuatro temas: la contribución weberiana sobre los tipos de estratificación social, en particular la clase y el estatus; el análisis de clase presente en *La Ética Protestante y el Espíritu del Capitalismo*, centrado en el aprendizaje de las disposiciones en consonancia con el capitalismo competitivo; la propuesta bourdieusiana sobre las posiciones de clase, derivadas de los procedimientos expresivos y del acceso diferencial a las especies de capital; y la incorporación del *habitus* a partir de las experiencias de socialización.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Clase. Socialización. Max Weber. Pierre Bourdieu.

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## Introduction

Class analysis constitutes one of the pillars of Sociology, which has dedicated itself to discussing, since the mid-nineteenth century, power relations in modern societies. This article addresses the contributions of two of the most important authors in the field, Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu, highlighting the implicit and explicit interfaces between their works.

Undoubtedly, Weber's influence is manifested in several Bourdieusian writings. Benson (2006) states, for example, that the starting point for the concept of field was the understanding, originally Weberian, that modernity would be responsible for differentiating societies into specialized and partially autonomous spheres of action. However, if the Weberian writings on personality and ordering life served as an inspiration, the French author analyzed the forms of behavior that could be consolidated without “real interactions”, which distanced him from methodological individualism (BOURDIEU; SCHULTEIS; PFEUFFER, 2011). Certainly, Bourdieu's posture is similar when referring to class analysis. The sociology that is conventionally called “dispositionalist” defended Weber's basic assumptions so that, based on changes and additions, “restore to Weberian analyzes all their strength and scope” (BOURDIEU, 2007b, p. 15, our translation).

Authors such as Joppke (1986), Henry (2005) and Weininger (2005) claim that Bourdieu integrated the Weberian concepts of class and status into the same theoretical construct. We will return to the subject later, but it is surprising that other aspects, perhaps even more significant, have received little attention from the academic literature, such as the class analysis present in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and its influence on Bourdieusian thought. The same can be said about the stratified character of individual dispositions and the study of socialization practices. Therefore, I aim to fill a gap opportunely pointed out by Sell (2016), comparing, within a circumscribed theme, the contributions of Weber and Bourdieu to investigations on social stratification.

This article is divided into four more sections. In the first, I present the Weberian contributions that are commonly evoked in studies about classes, for in the second, I discuss elements of *The Ethic* that deepen the theme. In the third, I introduce the mapping of class positions in Bourdieu, an effort complemented by a fourth section, which reflects the learning of dispositions through continued socialization.



## Class and status in Max Weber

Translating power relations into specific historical individualities, the concepts of class and status express differential access to resources and opportunities in stratified societies (WEBER, 1982)<sup>2</sup>. Class, constitutive of the economic order, concerns the way in which goods are produced and appropriated from specific positions in the market. Status, on the other hand, refers to access to immaterial resources, such as esteem and prestige, in a system of symbolic hierarchies. The groups produced in this way, which make up the social order, result from the principles of consumption of goods, creating different lifestyles (WEBER, 1982).

To characterize a group as a class, three special conditions are necessary: individuals share a causal element in their life chances; this element is defined exclusively by income and property; and it comes from market conditions, products or work. The intersection between these points produces a class situation, “a typical opportunity for an offer of goods, external living conditions and personal life experiences” (WEBER, 1982, p. 212, our translation).

Living conditions and personal experiences synthesize the antagonism between ownership and non-ownership. On the subject, the author gives importance to the type of property to be used for profit and the types of services that can be offered in the competitive market. In addition to enabling the identification of a class situation, these components characterize the meaning given to the use of property, which distinguishes, for example, leaseholders owners from business owners (WEBER, 2012).

While the property/non-property binomial refers to the positions assumed by individuals in the market, the term “social class” contemplates the changing nature of economic life, encompassing class situations in which personal change, as well as in the succession between generations, is “easily possible and typically occurs” (WEBER, 2012, p. 199, our translation). So, we would have social classes in four types of class situation: in workers in general, and more intensely with the automation of the work process; in the petty bourgeoisie; on non-proprietary intellectuals and professional specialists; and in the classes of proprietors and “privileged by education”.

However, a class does not necessarily correspond to a defined community guided by belonging relationships. For Weber (1982), classes, as effective dimensions of motivation for action, represent something to be produced, not defined a priori, since the “creation” of classes depends on economic interests focused on the existence of the market. Class interest is a

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<sup>2</sup> Sell (2016) states that the first Weberian contribution on the subject included the “party”, which was modified in a later text, which was part of the collection *Economy and Society (Economia e Sociedade - WEBER, 2012)*. For this reason, I stick only to the concepts of class and status.



direction of interests that develops with a certain probability for an average of people subjected to the same class situation. For corresponding community actions to take place, it is necessary that general cultural conditions, mainly of an intellectual type, be able to create categories with relative importance for the orientation and motivation of actions. In addition, contrasts between classes must become more or less visible, revealing the link between causes and consequences of the class situation. This link, perceived and operated by individuals and groups, empties the absolutization of the economic order, converting it into something subject to appreciation and historical change.

The strata constitute communities in themselves, although often of the amorphous type, associated with “every typical component of the destiny of men, determined by a specific estimate, positive or negative, of honor” (WEBER, 1982, p. 218, our translation). If the class situation comes from the dispute in a given economic order, conditioned to the possession of certain resources, the status derives from belonging to a group or social circle that establishes, based on perceived differences, a certain position in a symbolic hierarchy.

Commonly, stratum honor is established in a terrain different from possession in the competitive market. Although material monopolies provide grounds for status categorization, they are not sufficient in themselves. That said, a specific lifestyle is expected for everyone who wants to belong to a social circle, with the development of the social class linked to the experimentation of the social order as something “lived” (WEBER, 1982, p. 218). It is seen that stratum honor is associated with values that go beyond the market situation, instilling the need for distinctive symbols such as tastes, clothing, housing characteristics, etiquette and friendship network.

The excerpts above allow us to foresee that class and status do not exist in empirical reality, but represent ideal types, that is, abstract models that integrate a homogeneous framework of thought. The ideal types are obtained through the selection and unilateral accentuation of the dimensions understood as significant in a phenomenon. Its purpose is to connect and organize empirically diffuse, isolated and ambiguous phenomena, proving to be useful for sociological research insofar as it serves as a comparative reference to empirical data. For Weber (2003, p. 105-106, our translation):

It offers us an ideal picture of events in the consumer goods market, in the case of a society organized according to the principle of exchange, free competition and strictly rational action [...]. Due to its content, this construction has the character of a utopia, obtained through the mental accentuation of certain elements of reality [...]. Although it does not constitute an exposition of reality, it intends to give it unambiguous expressive means.



It is, therefore, the “idea” of the modern and historically given organization of society in a market economy [...]. It is not by establishing an average of the economic principles that actually existed in all the cities examined, but rather by constructing an ideal type, that in the latter case the concept of “urban economy” is formed.

Class constitutes an “idea” about the distribution of power. However, concrete cases show the interface between the two types of stratification, when the “place” occupied by the individual in the market corresponds to a certain degree of prestige and a “way of life”. Weber (1982) exemplifies from the categorization of urban space in the United States, in a context of “traditional democracy”. Only residents of certain areas would be considered full members of society, qualified for everyday relationships. In this case, there is a convergence between status and class situation, to the extent that the differentiated use of urban space stems from access to housing as a commodity, subject to the “price war”. “By far”, the class situation is the predominant factor for the expression of expected lifestyles in a status group, since these styles are economically conditioned<sup>3</sup> (WEBER, 1982).

The above ideas underlie much of the neo-Weberian studies on classes. In particular, Goldthorpe (2012) and Chan and Goldthorpe (2007) departed from the concepts of class and status to state that inequality is a two-dimensional phenomenon. On the one hand, classes translate the positions of individuals in the labor market, considering employment relationships in an occupational structure, which condition individual behaviors and “life choices”. On the other hand, status manifests itself through friendship bonds, translating perceptions of proximity and distance into a system of symbolic hierarchies.

It is, in a way, a common procedure to resort to these references to account for Weber's contributions on social stratification. But one of his most robust analyzes is found in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which still has little echo in this field of study.

### **Class analysis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism***

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber (2004) highlights a historical fact that was easily observable: the greater presence of Protestants in the capital-owning strata, as well as in the upper layers of skilled labor. The author explained the phenomenon based on the propensities to see and act that differentiate religious doctrines. Protestants, with “a specific

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<sup>3</sup> For Weber (2003), economic phenomena are associated with the satisfaction of needs through the use of limited resources. Economically relevant phenomena, on the other hand, have, under certain circumstances, an economic significance, even though they are not representative of conscious acts aimed at economic ends. Finally, economically conditioned phenomena are to a certain degree determined or influenced by economic phenomena, as happens in the distribution of artistic taste, which stems from the social composition of the appreciating public.



inclination towards economic rationalism”, were endowed with dispositions adjusted to the competitive market (WEBER, 2004, p. 33, our translation).

However, the adequacy between the capitalist economic form and its “spirit” (the daily conduct of life by agents, based on intramundane asceticism) does not result from a universal law. To this adequacy, Weber (2004) gives the name of elective affinity, through which Protestantism and the capitalist enterprise reinforced each other, the first as a form and the second as a driving force<sup>4</sup>. Being a “proof” of the authenticity of human faith, methodical and tireless work was valued by the new doctrines, underlining the influence of social groups on economic behavior (DENHARDT; JEFFRESS, 1971). The two poles of the binomial property (owners of possessions and capital goods) and non-property (expropriated of the means of production) assumed the exercise of work as a “mission” to be accomplished on land, based on the idea of a professional vocation.

But for it to be widely disseminated, the capitalist ethic had to overcome some obstacles, especially traditionalism. A *gesinnung* was needed to work that would emancipate individuals from customary living standards, guided by minimum-effort calculations. In the English-language version, Talcott Parsons translated *gesinnung* to *attitude* or *frame of mind*, while in the French version, Isabelle Kalinowski opted for *disposition*. A similar term (*disposição*) was used by José Mariani de Macedo in the Brazilian edition edited by Antônio Flávio Pierucci.

Swedberg (2005) recognizes the semantic plurality that *gesinnung* assumes in neo-Weberian studies, albeit with a certain unity of thought, by evoking lifestyles, *ethos* and mentalities that would be typical of religious companies. Grossein (1999) departed from a similar understanding, when he stated that *gesinnung* addresses, in the original text, the inclinations and internal logic of economic action. The emergence of a *gesinnung* adjusted to the competitive market would not be possible through an external action, such as an increase in wages, but as a result of an educational process. That was what allowed the “subjective appropriation of ascetic religiosity by the individual”, carving out a new “conduct of life” (WEBER, 2004, p. 137, our translation). Overcoming the traditionalist routine through religious education, an economically relevant phenomenon that cuts across classes, constitutes the central problem of *The Ethic*.

As an example, Weber (2004) confronts the behavior of pietist workers with the so-called traditional ones. Unlike the latter, the pietist workers had “soberness, a spirit of saving and self-control”, characteristics that increased the productivity of work (WEBER, 2004, p. 56).

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<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the role of the Protestant Reformation should not be understood as a “necessary cause” in the genesis of capitalism, but as an active element in a “historical constellation” (WEBER, 2004).



It is worth noting that religious education did not provide upward socioeconomic mobility, but on the other hand, a class learning, internal to the working class itself, guaranteed the fulfillment of the demands submitted to the factory workforce. The capitalist business community, on the other hand, began to see, also as a result of an educational process, profit as something not reprehensible and subject to prosecution.

If economic rationality cut across classes, pointing to convergences in religious education, it also manifested itself as a socially stratified phenomenon. The bearers of modern dispositions were, above all, the representatives of the rising industrial middle class, for some special reasons: far from the mercantile patriciate, which possessed family fortunes accumulated over generations, the “new rich” were agents who did not benefit from the traditional impositions on economic action. On the other hand, the rising middle class differed from the workers due to class situation, as they enjoyed property and capital goods. Although dispositions attuned to the capitalist spirit later manifested themselves in other groups, it was the rising middle class that was the stratum capable of pushing forward a new economic order, both in its form, based on material investments, and in its content, based on an instrumental rationality (WEBER, 2004).

When talking about capitalist entrepreneurs, Weber (2004, p. 63, our translation) states that this group did not correspond to the “wealthy people with a more obvious or refined appearance”, since they were opposed to “ostentation and useless spending [...] and feel rather bothered by the external signs of the social deference he enjoys”. Utilitarian in nature, the order of life focused on economically interested behavior, which guaranteed financial return and capital investment. An ideal type that opposed the status, based on distinctive lifestyles and resources, producers of esteem. It is worth stating that these entrepreneurs were the bearers of a historically new pattern of stratification, extrapolating a specific individual conduct and marking the split between modern society and feudal traditionalism.

Elsewhere, Weber (2004, p. 161, our translation) states:

A specifically bourgeois professional *ethos* had emerged. With the awareness of being in the full grace of God and being visibly blessed by him, the bourgeois entrepreneur, on condition that he keeps himself within the limits of formal correction, that his moral conduct is irreproachable and that he does not make a scandalous use of his wealth, could pursue its profit interests and should do so. The power of religious asceticism, moreover, made available sober, conscientious, extraordinarily efficient workers who were committed to work as the purpose of their lives, willed by God.

Economically conditioned, “personal life experiences” shaped the exercise of Protestant doctrine in different classes. Separated into owners and non-owners, holders of capital and



sellers of labor power, individuals expressed their faith based on their class situation. On the one hand, the adoption of modern provisions, associated with instrumental rationality, allowed the liberation of the pursuit of profit as something worthy and ethically crowned. On the other hand, disciplined work, as an end to be pursued, subsidized the formation of a “willing” workforce to assume ways of seeing and acting consistent with modern capitalism.

However, the means of incorporating *gesinnung* have only been suggested. Weber (1982, p. 309, our translation) states that “economic ethics refers to the practical impulses of action found in the psychological and pragmatic contexts of religions”. Indeed, Kemper (1968) says that the Protestant ethic, as a value system based on individualism, asceticism and rationality, was perpetuated through the commitment of individuals to the search for salvation. It is coherent to point out that the socio-psychology of *The Ethic* focuses on the cognitive dimension of behavior, since personality and the conduct of life are shaped by “total” views of the world (SPENCER, 1979). When discussing the influence of these views on personal motivations and stimuli, *The Ethic* did not present a more systematic theory on socialization, even though Weber has touched on the subject in other writings<sup>5</sup>. The adoption of ascetic behavior stems from the legitimacy of the new religious doctrines, holders of the monopoly of salvation, which guaranteed the commitment of individuals to their normative guidelines.

If, in Weber, we can speak of an “ethical socialization” (BARBALET, 2008), responsible for disseminating patterns of behavior adjusted to the functioning of the competitive market, this type of socialization is more announced than analyzed. The educational process, which reinforces and justifies the capitalist spirit in different class positions, remained far from an empirical instrumentalization. Before, it was already possible to punctuate the dialogues between Weber and the so-called “dispositionalist sociology”, but here, the similarities and differences stand out.

To advance this investigative agenda, the next section discusses how in Pierre Bourdieu class positions are produced, and then, how dispositions to see and act in the world are introjected. The interfaces between the two approaches will be presented gradually throughout the text.

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<sup>5</sup> As, for example, when Weber (2012, p.141) recognizes that the domination exercised by the family and the school provides the “formation of the character of young people”, in addition to the circulation of cultural goods.





## **The “creation” of classes in Pierre Bourdieu**

According to Bourdieu (2011), each individual occupies a “position” in life in society, responsible for determining their preferences and behavior patterns. These positions underlie the dispute for scarce resources, conditioning the enjoyment of material goods and recognition (BOURDIEU, 2007a).

The position occupied by an individual or group comes from access to the kinds of capital, material and incorporated, that circulate and are appropriated in particular contexts. In developed capitalist societies, positions derive especially from two types of capital (BOURDIEU, 2001): economic capital, materialized and defined by the possession of wealth and belongings; and cultural capital, related to incorporated knowledge and formation with institutional validity. Added to these types is social capital, with less relative weight, which concerns social relationships capable of guaranteeing access to opportunities, influence and esteem.

The types of capital give individuals the ability to exercise power in certain fields. About this concept, the author oscillates between a broader and a more restricted sense. According to Peters (2006), the field represents, in the first case, a comprehensive social space, as a class space. In the second, the concept portrays a specialized field of practices, in a “game” defined by the ability of individuals to take possession of material and immaterial resources.

In addition to the momentary configuration of the fields, the author includes a diachronic view in his model, based on what he calls the “path effect”. When an individual occupies a place in the social space, he does not necessarily remain in it over time. It is common for him to go through different positions, synthesizing changes in behavior patterns and access to capital (BOURDIEU, 2011; 2007a). Occasionally, trajectories manifest themselves as collective experiences, when a fraction of the class “is destined to deviate from the most frequent trajectory for the class as a whole”, disqualifying itself “by the high or low” (BOURDIEU, 2007, p. 104, our translation). But the trajectories do not depend entirely on personal will. The origin position already determines which paths are possible, defining the possibilities that are “objectively offered” to individuals.

To this objective aspect, which institutes classes as components of reality, the author adds another, of a symbolic nature, which aims to account for the processes of classification and reclassification that “manufacture” groups. Bourdieu (2013; 2007a) argues that social positions are not only a reflection of indicators such as income and education, but are also associated with language acts, responsible for defining relevant social practices and boundaries



between groups. For this reason, Wacquant (2013, p. 96) states that one of the main innovations of Bourdieu's analysis was the questioning of the “ontological status of groups”, considering the practical and appreciation schemes that are shared in everyday life.

In short, positions in the social space are endowed with meaning from categories that distinguish individuals and groups. Differences in access to goods, services and powers, perceived through these categories, become symbolic differences and start to compose a specific language (BOURDIEU, 2013). The main idea is that the individual, by being in a social space, cannot be indifferent. Each person is endowed with representations that allow him to establish value judgments. A difference only becomes a socially “pertinent” difference, or we could say, recognized and effective, when it is perceived by an agent or group endowed with the ability to convert, based on a classificatory scheme, the observable difference into a significant distinction (BOURDIEU, 2007a).

Individuals who occupy the same place in the social space, although not necessarily going through the same experiences, are more likely to share everyday situations than “distant” individuals (BOURDIEU, 2013). By assuming a social position, an individual becomes subject to particular social experiences, partially shared by “close” agents. This is what allows sociological knowledge to outline theoretical classes “as homogeneous as possible”, even if they do not match “current” or “real” classes, as groups effectively mobilized and unified by interests (BOURDIEU, 2011, p. 24). The knowledge of juxtaposed positions in a social space allows the analytical cut of classes in their “logical” sense, represented by agents in identical or close positions and who, subjected to similar conditions, tend to perform similar practices and “position positions” (BOURDIEU, 2011).

In other words, explanatory classes are “probable” classes, bringing together individuals who share everyday social experiences, therefore more likely to endorse common mobilization projects (BOURDIEU, 1989; 2011). It should be noted that proximity in the social space does not immediately result in the unity of individuals. The passage from the theoretical and probable to the real and concrete, “something that is about doing”, stems from the circulation of a set of symbolic resources, producing perceptions of belonging to a social position and of distinction towards other “distant” agents (BOURDIEU, 2011). As summarized by Bottero (2004), Bourdieu's proposal is fundamentally relational, since a class, following the “logic of distinction”, is always defined based on its position in relation to others.

It's no secret that Bourdieu was heavily inspired by Weberian writings. As the French author points out, the position occupied in the social space gives the agent a set of intrinsic properties (proper to the position, associated with the conditions of existence) and relational



(relative to other positions) (BOURDIEU, 1989). This duality had already been pointed out earlier by Weber, according to whom the peasant condition could be defined both by elements inherent in working with the land and by the position in relation to other social groups (BOURDIEU, 2007b). In empirical reality, the first element (the properties of the class situation) is closely related to the second (the properties of the class position), leaving the sociologist to isolate them through an effort of abstraction.

Bourdieu (2007b, p. 14, emphasis in the original, our translation) also considers that Weber “opposes the class and the status group as two types of real units that would be confused more or less frequently”, depending on the degree of autonomization of the economic order in a society. On the other hand, Bourdieu proposes that class and status are nominal units, depending on the accentuation of the economic (classes) or symbolic (status) aspect in human relationships. The social order is only relatively autonomous, since it expresses economic differences from its own logic, transmuting goods into signs and economic actions into communicative acts (BOURDIEU, 2007b). This causes observable differences to be converted into significant distinctions, a phenomenon that the author calls “expressive duplication”.

Bourdieu (2007b) included these expressive procedures in class analysis. The main reason for this inclusion is the fact that the autonomization of the economic order, based on the production and acquisition of goods, never occurs completely, even in developed capitalist countries. But not all individuals are able to participate in expressive procedures, as “the game of symbolic distinctions takes place [...] within the narrow limits defined by economic constraints”, which makes the distinction unfold as a “privileged game” (BOURDIEU, 2007b, p. 25, our translation).

The concepts of class and status subsidized much of the debate on the interfaces between Weber and Bourdieu in class analysis (JOPPKE, 1986; HENRY, 2005; WEININGER, 2005). Archer and Orr (2011, p. 109) are assertive in stating that Bourdieu promoted a “reconceptualization” of the Weberian model, “collapsing” the border between class and status. Consequently, the material dimension (effects of the economic order on life chances) and the symbolic dimension of life in society (perception, valuation and agency over social positions) started to compose a single theoretical model.

Although the Bourdieusian proposition has been successful and widely referenced, the diagnosis of Weber has an important flaw. In the first topic, I argued that class and status do not constitute real units, as pointed out by Bourdieu, but rather ideal types, which are never fully realized in empirical reality. Like any ideal type, its objective is essentially analytical, maximizing the aspects understood as significant for the understanding of a phenomenon (in



this case, the principles of stratification in certain historical individualities). While Bourdieu devoted himself to the “accentuation” of material and symbolic aspects through acts of language, Weber proposed a “mental accentuation” by the researcher, by elaborating homogeneous and simplified types that have high explanatory power. Instead of having promoted a “reconceptualization” of Weber (ARCHER; ORR, 2011), Bourdieu made a methodological shift, moving away from a pure model of stratification to, from the inductive analysis, discuss the division of classes in French society.

### **Classes, dispositions and socialization of the *habitus***

In several passages, Bourdieu criticizes theoretical schools that would be incapable of accurately understanding social phenomena. Criticisms of it point to a new theory of socialization, based on dispositional learning and pre-reflective behavior.

Objectivism considers “structure” as something already given, dissociated from the history of individuals and groups (BOURDIEU, 2013). This obscures the practices that reproduce and update the properties of a field, leaving the agent with only a supporting role (BOURDIEU, 1989). As for subjectivism, consciousness does not depend on the incorporation of structural properties. The result is a “totally ahistorical” approach (BOURDIEU, 2001, p.179), which takes into account the presence in the world as something evident, familiar, without historicizing the conditions that allow such appreciation. Finally, the theory of rational action understands action interested in maximum benefit as a universal practice of *homo economicus*, an assumption considered by the author as “unreal”. According to Bourdieu (2013), this modality of action portrays a specific phenomenon, conditioned to the attributes that allow long-term utilitarian thinking.

The Bourdieusian analysis relies on these criticisms to introduce the concept of *habitus*, derived from the Aristotelian term *hexis*. Other thinkers had already undertaken this initiative, such as Friedrich Hegel (*hexis*), Edmund Husserl (*Habitualität*) and Marcel Mauss (body dimension of *hexis*) (BOURDIEU, 1989). As Bourdieu (1989, p. 62, our translation) follows, despite important disagreements, the cited authors aimed to “leave the philosophy of consciousness without annulling the agent in its truth as a practical operator of object constructions”. By defining *habitus* as a system of dispositions (ways of doing, thinking and feeling) transmitted through continued socialization, Bourdieusian sociology reinforced this perspective.



We have seen that individuals in “close” social positions are subjected to similar experiences. This goes for continued socialization, which ensures the learning of the *habitus* from affective transactions between the individual and the social environment (BOURDIEU, 2001). Through socialization, the individual acquires a coherent system of “generating and organizing principles of practices and representations” and begins to be guided by a pre-reflective conscience that anticipates the results of actions based on past experiences, in the same way that it endows the world of senses, making it understandable (BOURDIEU, 2013, p. 97, our translation). For this reason, authors such as Bidet (1979) associate the internalization of *habitus* with the learning of cultural schemes that underlie behavior and worldviews.

The *habitus* tends towards stability, for two main reasons. First, dispositions come from the conditions of existence, as a particular translation of “external” economic and social needs (BOURDIEU, 2013). In developed capitalist countries, even though socioeconomic mobility experiences have been widely documented by Sociology since the post-World War II period, the boundaries between classes are not so porous. The permanence of the *habitus* in a trajectory is due to the stability of the conditions of existence, and it is not by chance that Bourdieu emphasized the association between socialization and class position, as a mechanism for the reproduction of social structures (SILVA, 2016).

Second, the *habitus* functions as an information filter, sedimenting a worldview that is more or less coherent. This led Bourdieu (2011) to emphasize the importance of family socialization, since the dispositions taught early by families tend to be maintained and applied in other environments, verifying a line of complementarity between the family, school, work and the consumption spaces. However, the relationship between the conditions of existence and the *habitus* does not occur without contextual mediations. Daily life unfolds through the unpredictable confrontation between the *habitus* and the “event”, leaving sociological research to examine the possible mismatches between the social conditions of *habitus* generation and the social conditions in which it manifests itself.

I think that Bourdieu's theory of socialization can complement the introjection of *gesinnung* (or dispositions, as the term is usually translated) by ascetic Protestantism. Weber (2004, p. 165, our translation) states that intramundane morality was dominated by rationalism, exerting an “overwhelming pressure [on] the lifestyle of all individuals who are born within this gear”. In a well-known passage, this determination was characterized as a “stiff crust of steel”, *ein stahlhartes Gehäuse* in the original, or *iron cage* in Parsons's translation. The result was the consolidation of a new “political-social ethics” that underpinned “the mode of



organization and functioning of social communities” in market economies (WEBER, 2004, p. 166, our translation).

For Laval (2006), this ethics represents the sedimented capitalist *habitus*. If this *habitus* needed a moral justification to gain validity, which it borrowed from the legitimacy of religious enterprises, it soon after became a naturalized system of pre-reflexive dispositions. This interpretation was suggested by Bourdieu himself (2007b), who highlighted the role of religious power in transforming practices and worldviews. In other words, Weber analyzed the formation of a new “religious *habitus*”, transposable and inculcated by religious education.

It can be said that the starting point for learning this *habitus* was the creation of a religious community, verifying, moreover, an affinity between the promises of salvation and class positions (legitimation of the order for the privileged classes, and promise of compensation for personal misfortunes for disadvantaged classes) (WEBER, 1982). But *The Ethic* only thematized the mechanisms that ensured the introjection of the *habitus*, noting a more or less direct link between the “total” views of the world and the patterns of behavior (SPENCER, 1979). This does not detract from the fact that Weber set a point of no return in the sociological field, and thus some issues have become hotly debated, such as the importance of belief systems for the functioning of competitive capitalism. According to Héran (1987, p. 390, our translation), it is even possible to identify in *The Ethic* the “motor element of the sociological invention of the *habitus*”.

I do not intend to present a genealogy of the concept, a task already performed by Nash (1999). It is known that Bourdieu read *The Ethic* with a particular objective, pondering how descriptions of traditional economic action would help him understand the *M’Zab*<sup>6</sup> (BOURDIEU; SCHULTEIS; PFEUFFER, 2011). However, more than discussing the inspiration for the concept of *habitus*, it is worth recognizing some bridges between the two contributions, especially regarding the incorporation of ways of seeing and acting in the world and its importance for the analysis of classes. Both authors found that individual dispositions, deep down, are collective phenomena. But it is precisely in this argument that a crucial difference between the two approaches resides.

In Weber, capitalist *gesinnung* is based on instrumental rationality and intraworld asceticism, as a historical experience that is shared by individuals. The author used a retrospective look, which is so dear to German historicism, to discuss the roots and significant aspects of this collective *ethos*. Therefore, *The Ethic* underlines the passage from status

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<sup>6</sup> A territory in the Arabian desert inhabited by the *Kharijites*, Muslims with an ascetic lifestyle who closely resembled the Puritans studied by Weber.



stratification to class stratification, something that demanded the incorporation of a specific *gesinnung* through religious education. Although Weber recognizes the stratified character of this incorporation (it is worth remembering the apology for profit and disciplined work, respectively between owners and non-owners), his work points to a historical convergence. Through it, individuals began to be guided by a capitalist *habitus* that is more or less generalized, in the sense given by Laval (2006).

Bourdieu, on the other hand, examined the disputes carried out by social groups regarding access to material and symbolic goods. His writings deal with the influence of living conditions on individual dispositions, with an emphasis on learning practices that transmit ways of seeing and acting in the world. Class positions cross these dispositions, at the same time as constraints (which practices are possible, since they depend on the investment of resources) and as structuring dimensions (which experiences result from class positions). The second point is what made the most progress in the sociological field from Weber to Bourdieu, and for this reason it is useful to read Weberian writings in the light of more recent contributions.

If, for the German author, *gesinnung* represents a minimally shared collective *ethos*, in Bourdieu, *habitus* is consistent with a practical and pre-reflective sense that is relational (acquires meaning through the performance of individuals in a class space) and widely variable. What allowed this “turn” was the adoption of a synchronic approach, which instead of directing a retrospective look at the capitalist spirit, empirically verified how the practices of socialization and transmission of resources build individual dispositions. While Weber analyzed the formation of a capitalist *habitus*, Bourdieu discussed the differential formation of certain *habitus* within capitalist societies, where individuals live in particular “worlds” depending on their origin and social trajectory.

This perspective leveraged empirical studies on social stratification, in particular, by presenting a theory of socialization that went beyond the evocative aspect found in Weber. To advance this investigative agenda, future research may come to articulate the two approaches, recovering the emergence of certain collective *ethos*, responsible for modifying human relations and the production and circulation of resources; and its manifestation in the class strata, not only in a general and coherent sense, but observing its contours and mismatches in different “places” of the social space.



## Final considerations

Studies on social stratification tend to examine the distribution of resources and opportunities, as well as the differential adoption of values and patterns of behavior. This article systematizes the contributions of Max Weber (in a historical approach based on ideal types) and Pierre Bourdieu (in a relational analysis directed to the logic of distinction) on the subject, highlighting the interfaces between the two approaches.

In Weber, class appears as the type of stratification that characterizes modern societies, translating the position in the market and the resulting chances of life. Bourdieu, on the other hand, attributes a broad meaning to the concept, including both material aspects and expressive procedures, reported by Weber to a system of symbolic hierarchies (status).

Although this change is important, it is possible to verify a line of continuity between the authors. Firstly, this is manifested in the difference between the theoretical elaboration of classes, carried out by sociological knowledge, and its practical realization, insofar as social positions exert a significant influence on representations and patterns of behavior. Second, individuals occupying the same positions tend to have similar experiences, which makes it possible for class interests to emerge. And thirdly, classes have a diachronic character, between generations and within the same generation, which brings the Weberian “social class” closer to Bourdieu's probable trajectories.

To complement this overview, the article discussed socialization practices in different groups. I stated that the class analysis present in *The Ethic* occupies a secondary place in the field of studies on stratification, which configures a mistake, since the work discusses the incorporation of the capitalist *ethos* in different class positions, based on the pursuit of profit and disciplined work between owners and non-owners, respectively. Weber also analyzed the formation of a class interest among members of the rising industrial middle class, who were the first representatives of this new type of stratification. But from a retrospective look, Weber only suggested the mechanisms that guaranteed the learning of a utilitarian *gesinnung*, in a kind of ethical socialization (BARBALET, 2008). Again, Bourdieu's texts (2007b, p. 15, our translation) can help “restore to Weberian analyzes all their strength and scope”.

Laval (2006) understands that ascetic Protestantism caused the rooting of a capitalist *habitus*. But thinking beyond *The Ethic*, the biggest doubts fall on I) the stratification of this phenomenon; and II) the learning practices that transmitted the capitalist *habitus* in the family environment, in educational institutions, in the work routine and through religious education.





Regarding point I, it is worth remembering that Weber discussed the specificities, in different strata, of a *gesinnung* tuned to the competitive market. However, these new dispositions were treated from their most significant elements, emphasizing the behaviors and representations that started to be shared and that promoted the transition from status stratification to class stratification. The particularities of *gesinnung* in each class situation vanish in front of an ideal-typical framework, which means that the stratification of dispositions to see and act, the focus of Bourdieusian analysis, is treated only tangentially.

On point II, more than verifying the power of the religious argument, guaranteed by the legitimacy of the new doctrines and by the adjustment between the promises of salvation and the conditions of existence, the Bourdieusian framework allows us to elucidate the available repertoires (objectively offered to individuals) in the dispute for material benefits (resources and properties) and symbolic benefits (esteem and prestige). Bourdieu (2007b) evoked this gap in Weber's work to justify the use of the concept of “religious field”, which, extrapolating individual perceptions and direct interactions, has structural properties. This applies to other fields and to the social space as a whole, composed of the class positions that originate from the unequal distribution of kinds of capital.

Bourdieu devoted himself to learning forms of action and thought through continued socialization, a phenomenon strongly differentiated from class positions. These positions are associated with the objectives of socialization, through subsistence projects and socioeconomic mobility, and at the same time condition their results, considering the availability of types of capital and their capacity for reconversion. I stated that, while *gesinnung* manifests itself as a collective *ethos* that marks a specific way of organizing human relations, *habitus* represents a specific system of practices and representations, strongly linked to a position in the social space. The theory of *habitus* is also inseparable from a theory of socialization, which provided important empirical advances in the field of studies on social stratification.

In the end, the text suggests that the Bourdieusian approach can be articulated with Weber's historical analysis. One of the possible paths, following the previous arguments, combines the diachronic analysis of the formation of certain collective *ethos* and the synchronic study of its particular manifestation in different class strata. I think this constitutes an interesting topic for future research and debate.



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