

The Habitus Made Me Do It: Bourdieu's Key Concept as a Substruction of the Monad

Carlos Belvedere
University of Buenos Aires

My claim is that Bourdieu's concept of habitus is not consistent and its ambiguities conceal an imprecision concerning the subject of social action. Indeed, Bourdieu defines habitus in three different ways: as a capacity, as a set of dispositions, and as a scheme for practice. That is why he cannot solve the problem of the duality of agent and habitus and produces a problem of fundamentation, as we can see in his troubles to determine which is the substratum of social actions. Though Bourdieu claims he borrows the concept of habitus from Husserl and other phenomenologists, many divergences can be stated in the way they conceive it. Unlike Bourdieu, phenomenology can establish precise relations of fundamentation between agent, habitus, and the ego because it avoids the fallacy of the wrong level involved in the attribution of systemic properties to personal egoic structures. Accordingly, it provides a consistent and precise concept of the habitus.

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1. Habitus as the Key Concept in the Sociology of Bourdieu

The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu is one of the most influential in our time. Not only his empirical studies, but also the concepts he gave birth to have fostered countless investigations around the world. Bourdieu's promise to overcome the sterile divisions of dualism in the social sciences is among its most seductive promises. In this framework, phenomenology is considered as subjectivism unable to account for the processes of production and reproduction of social structures beyond the intended goals consciously sought by actors. This subjectivism should be overcome although incorporated into a larger framework, related to the antagonistic pole of objectivism. For this, it is necessary to abandon the sterile confrontations of dualism and address both dimensions of social life, subjective, and objective.

In the context of this sociological project, it is particularly important that the notion of habitus as it would allow to account for the subjective pole, and at the same time, for the objective pole of social life. It is true, as claimed by subjectivism, that actors are guided by a subjective meaning which they project and pursue, which give their world a meaning. But it is also true that subjects are structured in a certain manner, so that they are predisposed to act in a certain way, and therefore their actions respond to previous processes that have structured the structuring subject. The Bourdieusian theory of habitus seeks to account for these processes in a complex way which subjectivism and objectivism would have seen only partially.

Carlos Belvedere, Ph.D., Professor, National Scientific and Technical Research Council, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina; main research fields: Post Husserlian Phenomenology, Social Philosophy, Social Theory, and Ethnomethodology. Email: cbelvedere@sociales.uba.ar.

Consequently, one might say that habitus is the “key concept” (Sapiro 2007, 37) and the “core concept” (Bonnewitz 2003, 63) in the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. Therefore, its critique would have global consequences for his entire sociology, because if it is not well founded, then it would remain dogmatic. In this paper, I will argue that this is the case. In other words, I will show that Bourdieu’s notion of habitus remains groundless and consequently he cannot account for the monad, which is the only and concrete substratum of the habitus. Instead, he substitutes the monad for an abstract concept of habitus performing a theoretical substruction. In order to illustrate this, I will start by discussing Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. Then I will compare it with different phenomenological descriptions of habitus (Husserl 2009; Schutz 1964; Merleau-Ponty 1999). I will end by drawing some conclusions from a phenomenological standpoint.

2. What is Habitus?

It is not possible to find a consistent definition in Bourdieu’s work and its ambiguities conceal a deeper imprecision concerning the subject of social action. Actually, we can find at least three different characterizations of habitus in Bourdieu’s work: as a capacity, as a set of dispositions, and as a scheme for practice.

Firstly, Bourdieu (1980) claims that the habitus is an infinite capacity of engendering products of perceptions, expressions, actions, and thoughts: “*l’habitus est une capacité infinie d’engendrer en toute liberté (contrôlée) des produits—pensées, perceptions, expressions, actions—qui ont toujours pour limites les conditions historiquement et socialement situées de sa production*” (the habitus is an infinite capacity to engender, in full (controlled) freedom, products—thoughts, perceptions, expressions, actions—which always have as a limit the historically and socially situated conditions of its production) (92). So, the habitus is a capacity. Secondly, Bourdieu (1980) states that:

The habitus is a set of enduring transferable dispositions, which work as principles that generate and organize perceptions, practices and representations, and as motivational and cognitive structures that constitute the practical world as a world of goals already reached and objects provided with a permanent teleological character. [...] As a system of dispositions, the habitus is a set of virtualities, potentialities and eventualities. (88-89)

Briefly speaking, habitus is a set of dispositions. Thirdly, Bourdieu alleges that the habitus is an enduring transferable system of schemes of perception, appreciation, and action. These schemes, which are of a practical kind, are the result of the incarnation of social structures. Hence, habitus is a system of incarnated practical schemes. Finally, what is habitus?—A capacity? A set of dispositions? A system of schemes? Or all of the above?

The most likely answer is that, for Bourdieu, the habitus is all three: a capacity, a disposition, and a scheme for practice. But is that possible? On the one hand, a capacity is an ability to act, “*une capacité ... d’engendrer ... actions*” (a capacity ... to engender ... actions) (Bourdieu 1980, 92), which involves activity; on the other hand, a disposition is an “inclination” which, contrary to a capacity, implies passivity since it “makes a person want to do something” (Cambridge Dictionary Online). Anyway both, capacities and dispositions, are attributes of one subject, not as schemes, which to a certain degree are formal abstract structures that do not strictly belong to the subject but can be transposed and passed from one subject to the other. So, it is not possible to say in any precise sense that something (the habitus, for instance) is at the same time an ability (a capacity), an inclination (a disposition), and an impersonal structure (a scheme). To admit all three

characterizations of habitus (as a capacity, a disposition and a scheme) would mean admitting a nonspecific definition of habitus, which is then left in relative inaccuracy. See for instance when Bourdieu (1992) describes habitus as “a socialized subjectivity” (126), and at the same time, as the social incarnated, that is to say, the biological individual socialized (Bourdieu 1992, 18, 133) through the incarnation of the collective or transindividual (Bourdieu 2000).

Two things must be noted here. First of all, there is an oscillation between the individual and the social. Which is first? Although many theories of society are based on this tension, which is quite frequent in the history of sociology, it is problematic because, once again, Bourdieu brings together diverse elements without accurately articulate them or clearly distinguish levels. Indeed, Bourdieu speaks of the socialized individual and of the individuation of the social (i.e., its incarnation in a body) as if they were the same. So, what is grounded on what, the social on the individual, or the other way around? Even if some might think that a primacy of either the individual or the social is not needed, or that the history of sociology shows that this opposition is not only dangerous but also counter-productive, we should at least admit that this indeterminacy is (not in the history of sociology but, yes, in Bourdieu's work) a serious deficiency because, as I will show latter, it produces a problem of fundamentation in Husserl's sense: because Bourdieu cannot establish clear relations of subordination among the different features of the habitus, the whole set of them remains groundless. This leads him to a kind of circularity so typical of Bourdieu (when he refers to the objectivity of subjectivity, to structured structuring structures, and the like). Second, is it really the same, the individuation of the social and the socialization of the individual? Bourdieu uses both expressions as synonymous. Even more, he uses several different words as if they were interchangeable, such as individual, personal, and subjective; social, collective, and interindividual; biological and bodily. However, “personal identity is not exactly the same as social identity or *habitus*. [...] Goffman's notion of ‘distance from the role,’ for instance, can be interpreted as one sociological attempt to describe this part of selfhood which resists sameness. [...] And *who* someone is, for Ricoeur, can never be totally predicted from *what* one is, that is, from one's character or *habitus*” (Truc 2011, 154). That is why “two people—even twins—who possess the same *habitus* will never be entirely identical to one another” (Truc 2011, 162). So, a more careful conceptual distinction in the use of terms such as “individual,” “personal,” “personality,” and the like would make Bourdieu's theory more specific and help avoiding some semantic problems of his notion of habitus.

3. Some Semantic Problems of the Notion of Habitus

This kind of inaccuracy is typical in Bourdieu's terminology,¹ used to depict habitus with sweeping statements. There is a semantic field to which this words family refers, but it is such a broad field that, if not clearly circumscribed, it cannot provide specific references for each of these terms. For example, take the three sets of terms we have just mentioned. The subjective is just one dimension of the personal, which in turn implies a monadic unit not necessarily involved in the notion of the individual. So is it reasonable to ask: What *exactly* is Bourdieu talking about? Not everything that can be said of the individual can be said of the person. For example, a statistical sociologist could “count heads” without going into the complexities of the personal lives of its units of analysis. The same applies *mutatis mutandis* to the relationship between the social, the collective and the inter individual. These terms cannot be treated as synonyms, if rigor is to be kept. In addition, sociological theory gives us countless examples of how these terms can and must be differentiated. For instance, Luhmann (1995, 255, 265) conceives of the individual as an environment of the social system. Finally,

“biological” and “bodily” are not at all interchangeable terms although, at times, Bourdieu employs “biological” in a sense close to biology (with a critical nuance, as opposed to eugenics, for example, and alternatively with an admissible sense, when he argues that the habitus is the biological socialized). Now, the body is not all biological, let alone if we adopt a phenomenological approach where what matters is the phenomenal body, not any uncertain biological entity. So, although for the purpose of field work and social critique, perhaps the most valued aspects of the work of Bourdieu, these terminological inaccuracies do not have major consequences, on the contrary, in the field of sociological theory they do have since precision is there a cardinal virtue. Therefore it is sound to demand greater rigor in the definition of basic sociological concepts. By this we do not mean that Bourdieu's sayings are just wrong but that his language, although meaningful, sometimes is merely denotative since it refers clumsily to something that is there presumably whatever we call it (individual, person or subject; society, community or interaction; biology or body). That is also why his stance is involuntarily “realistic,” because it assumes that those things exist beyond the way we name them.

A similar uncertainty, in some respects, subsidiary of this, can be found in the way of relating the notion of habitus to that of “agent”. On one hand, if the substrate of habitus is the socialized biological individual, one could think that it is s/he who acts, endowed with a habitus. I agree that would be a reasonable result. However, on the other hand, Bourdieu insists that it is habitus who acts, which leads to an unintended and not assumed anthropocentric notion since he describes habitus as acting in many ways (it can produce or reject practices, it foresees possible futures, etc.) even though only concrete and personal human beings can act. Bourdieu would expressly deny this but only nominally because he cannot specify which is the *subjectum or hypokeimenon*² (i.e., the substratum) of social actions. For this reason, and symptomatically, Bourdieu avoids speaking of the “subject” and substitutes this word by for word “agent.” Indeed, “the term ‘agent’ suits Bourdieu better than ‘actor,’ because the agent is being acted upon as much as, if not more than, he acts: in a way, what acts within him is *habitus*, an entire socially incorporated structure [...]” (Truc 2011, 156).

This substitution of the “subject” by the “agent” raises a number of questions:

If the agent does not correspond to the true subject of the action as long as he has not become aware of social determinations of which he is the support—these determinations accomplishing the action through him—can we therefore state that, since the agent is being acted upon by them rather than acting, it is precisely social determinations that constitute the subject? And yet, not even *habitus* can be said to correspond to a subject: in being but a notion without a real existence of its own, Bourdieu's *habitus* is an abstract entity identified within the interval between a bodily and a spiritual dimension, one that refuses to become a substance. Henceforth, Bourdieu rejects any attempt to assign an action to an autonomous individuality, be that a person or a subject, thus running the risk to maintain the inconvenience of a badly guaranteed interval: “I have tried to say that the ‘subject’ of social actions—I use this term with inverted commas, is not a subject.” (Truc 2011, 158)

As a matter of fact, Bourdieu uses inverted commas ironically on a number of occasions, which illustrates the ambiguity I am trying to disclose here. He does not really think there is a “subject” in the social realm “precisely where *habitus* is, the subject cannot occur” (Truc 2011, 159), but he cannot help using this word because he cannot come up with a better one. “At the very most Bourdieu admits that sociology ‘offers perhaps the only means of contributing, if only through awareness of determinations, to the construction, otherwise abandoned to the forces of the world, of *something like a subject*’” (Truc 2011, 158). “Unfortunately though, ‘something like’ a subject is not quite enough” (Swanson 2005, 5). Because, let me add, it means to elide the subject of who is acting. Here, as Levinas (2002) says, the subject is out of subject.

4. Which is the Substratum of the Habitus?

Bourdieu's oscillations and lack of priorities produce a problem of fundamentation in Husserl's sense (1996), because since he cannot determine which is the substratum of social actions, he cannot decide which strata of social reality is based on which and, in the end, which is the ultimate stratum that grounds all the others.

In particular, Bourdieu cannot clearly tell if the agent grounds the habitus or if the habitus grounds the agent. Sometimes he gives priority to the agent claiming that it is the agent who determines what is accessible and inaccessible for him, personally and collectively (Bourdieu 1980, 107). He also says that social agents actively determine their situation. This means that agents endow the situation of most of the power it has upon them and that structures can only be produced by "true agents" (Bourdieu 1992, 140). Thus, it would seem that the agent comes first. But sometimes Bourdieu says instead that it is the habitus which produces the principles of perceptions as well as the anticipations of the possible futures (Bourdieu 1980, 89) and its perpetuation (Bourdieu 2000, 152), suggesting that the habitus comes first. So, finally, he cannot tell which of them precedes the other. He claims that, on the one hand, the agent does what he/she has to do, and on the other hand, the habitus explains why, internalizing the objective structure of opportunities, he/she acts with rationality and learns to read the future that suits him/her (1992). So, once again, we cannot tell what comes first: the agent who acts or the habitus which explains the principles and rationality of his/her action.

Why is this so? Because Bourdieu has a distorted idea of what a subject is. On the one hand, all he can say about the ultimate subject of social life is that it is an individual biological body. Thus what makes us individuals is our biological body. On the other hand, he thinks that an agent becomes "something like a subject" (Bourdieu 2009, 21) as s/he consciously control his/her dispositions. Thus, Bourdieu switches from a conception of the subject as a socialized biological individual, to a conception of the subject as someone who can *consciously* control her/his dispositions. Bourdieu's concept of subject is, then, doubly distorted given that it means either a biological entity or a conscious rational one. Far from being a virtuous circle, this double reference of the biological to the consciousness and vice versa is an impasse in Bourdieu's theory. That is why I share Crosseley's (2001) idea that "a deeper exploration of the concept of habitus is to be conducted" (96), because among other reasons, Bourdieu "argues that the habitus shapes and indeed constitutes human subjectivity without selling out how we might examine this" (117).

5. The Interplay Between Dispositions and Conditions

Bourdieu's distorted conception of the subject is related with his distortions regarding to its interchange with the environment. He describes it as a relationship between the conditioned (the habitus' dispositions) and its conditions (fields, social space, history, etc.). He claims that habitus is produced by "the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence" (Bourdieu 1980, 88). Furthermore, the homogeneity of different habitus comes from the homogeneity of its "conditions of existence" (Bourdieu 1980, 98). From this view, "objective conditions" generate dispositions "objectively compatible with those conditions," adjusted to their "conditions of productions" (Bourdieu 1980, 90). Consequently, dispositions find their limits in the historical and social conditions of its production. That is why they are pre-adjusted to possible future "conditions of operation" (Bourdieu 1980, 105). When both the conditions of production and the conditions of operation are stable and remain the same, the habitus works just fine because it is adapted in advance to its conditions but

when they differ, conflict, and change arise, and different outcomes are possible, from adaptation to maladjustment, from resignation to revolution (Bourdieu 1980, 105).

Some have criticized Bourdieu's stance saying that it is "reproductionist" (as argued by Grignon and Passeron (1989)), "determinist" or even "fatalist" (such are the names that Bouveresse (2010, 36) calls them in order to argue that they only have a less than "secondary importance" (Bouveresse 2010, 37)). It is not so difficult to find in Bourdieu's sayings a reply to these kinds of objections, since he makes it clear that the interaction of habitus and its conditions is complex and open to a wide range of different possible outcomes. Thus, since most of the time people are exposed to conditions that suit those conditions that generated their habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), dispositions and conditions might relate in various ways. At one end, when the conditions of production and the conditions of functioning are identical or comparable (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), they are pre-adjusted and consequently the habitus is left alone to its spontaneous inertia which tends to perpetuate its structures already adjusted to its conditions of production. At the other end, when this correspondence is disrupted, then the habitus might confront its conditions of production whether perpetuating obsolete dispositions whether originating new dispositions adjusted to new conditions (Bourdieu 2000, 161).

However, that Bourdieu is not a determinist does not mean that the way in which he depicts the relation of the habitus and its conditions is not a problem. Rather, it means that there are deeper difficulties than those noticed by the critics just mentioned, as they only refer to how the condition is articulated with the conditioned (e.g., deterministically), but not to how this very distinction is established. Determinism is only possible once a distinction between the condition and the conditioned has already been established.

What is problematic here is that the distinction between dispositions and conditions makes an ontological distinction out of an analytical one because it assumes unreflectively—i.e., in a dogmatic way—an unexamined axiom such as the idea that one element of the pair is "conditioned" by the other. Both determinism and freedom are understood in the context of such a distinction. Bourdieu himself addresses this problem as a whole by referring to a "full conditional freedom" (Bourdieu 1980, 92) conceived in pre phenomenological terms, as one of his philosophical partners involuntarily testifies by saying that he thinks he has convinced Bourdieu that his conception of freedom was close to that of Leibniz because even a possible "proof that determinism is true" would not change his idea of what a free action is (Bouveresse 201, 39). This shows that, for Bourdieu, freedom and determinism are given on the same horizon within which both can be opposed as well as complemented.

I will show later (in Section 11) that phenomenology conceives this in a different manner which will show Bourdieu's stance as fictitious not because we are absolutely free but because the bond between dispositions and their environment is not a relationship of the condition and the conditioned but of "belonging together." As will be seen, phenomenology shows that we are not constrained by the surrounding world but open to it by the "operating intentionality" of our own body, which is not yet a habitus but the bearer of a habitus, that relates responsively to its circumstances, neither in a mechanistic determinism nor in a wild, disembodied liberty.

Bourdieu has addressed this *theoretical* problem scarcely because he does not believe in the intrinsic qualities of theory since he only accepts an empirical validation of sociological ideas through "fieldwork" (Bourdieu 1987, 13-46). Maybe his empirical descriptions do in practice solve in some of these problems, nonetheless they have not even have a theoretical formulation. As a consequence, they remain unnoticed as theoretical problems, even if Bourdieu's empirical accounts of how a habitus have been generated, acquired, and put to work in Algeria or elsewhere are far more solid and enlightening than the concepts outlined by him.

6. The Habitus in Phenomenological Perspective

Bourdieu claims that he borrows the concept of habitus from Husserl among others such as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Merleau-Ponty, and Heidegger (Bourdieu 1987, 20) and that he heavily relies on the phenomenological tradition. Nonetheless, at least one main difference can be stated: that in the phenomenological perspective, it is not the habitus but the concrete personal ego which acts.

Indeed, for Husserl, any act occurs in the temporal flow of consciousness and, if it has a "new objective meaning" the "I" acquires a new property that will be maintained permanently, not only as something remembered but also as something that "has been." The "I" can always return to that property numerous times and always finds it there for him as his own, as an acquisition of his habitus (Martinez 2007, 148). For Husserl, the habitus is the mediator between the passive "already there" and the activity of knowledge and it also constitutes the sedimentations of the life-world's doxic soil (Martinez 2007, 150). Consequently, it is the passive synthesis which is presented to the ego in the form of a *habitus* and thus which encompasses the work of the active synthesis (Martinez 2007, 149).

In this light, the habitus is seen as an acquisition of the concrete persistent personal ego, constituted in its temporalization (Husserl 1994, 280). In other words, the habitus is an egoic persistent substratum of egoic qualities (Husserl 1994, 280). Therefore, it always pertains to an ego which persists, as a person, through the changes of her/his habitus (Husserl 1994, 283-284), and who grows habitual properties (Husserl 2006, § 12, 41). We may say then that the "substratum of habitualities" is the ego (Husserl 2006, § 34, 92).

The genesis of the ego's persistent properties is to be found in the constitution, in the flowing intentional life, of a surrounding world of objects endowed with their horizons and permanent ways of being and being-so (Husserl 2006, § 33, 91). The ego is always surrounded by objects which affect it and incite it to action. Habitus is what makes the world already available always there for the I (Martinez 2007, 149). Thus, habituality is the correlate of the positing of these objects constituted in the I pole which performs them (Husserl 2006, § 33, 91). This is how a habituality is constituted, and once constituted it pertains also to the constitution of objects existing there for the I, so that it is always possible to go back to it again and again (Husserl 2006, § 38, 103-104).

These objects exist for me in my surrounding world in which I find both objects that are already familiar to me with a permanent organization and objects whose knowledge is only anticipated by me. The first ones are there for me by an original acquisition (i.e., due to an originary act of positing and specification in particular intuitions of things I have never seen). This kind of object is constituted, throughout my synthetic activity, in the explicit meaning form of what is identical to itself, determined by its many properties. My activity of positing and specifying the being establishes a habituality of my own by which this object becomes permanently of my property as an object with its own determinations. Such permanent acquisitions constitute my own known surrounding world with its horizon of unknown objects, that is, still to be acquired, but already anticipated in its formal object-like structure (Husserl 2006, § 33, 91-92).

As we can see, Husserl focuses not just on the habitus but on "the ego's habitus" and consequently he never loses sight of the fact that it is always the ego endowed with the habitus and not the habitus by itself who acts. As a consequence, he takes as the basis of social phenomenology the concrete personal ego in a concrete situation, related to concrete others. In this light, the habitus is seen as an acquisition of men in a concrete situation (Husserl 2001, 327) and in social relationships, which are habitual associations of a habitual "we" whose habitualities belong to them in a particular way (2011, 373). That is why Husserl refers to the habitus in

the context of specific existing relationships such as a marriage, a friendship, a group, etc., taken as associations of persons (Husserl 2011, 373). He also illustrates what habitus is by saying that the historians' habitus introduces them in the common horizon of the historians' vocation, methods and labor (2000, 227). So, the habitus is undertaken by real living people who acquire it and act by means of it.

7. Egology and Sociology

The idea that it is the concrete ego which acts is also supported by Schutz³ when he finds “the relevant index to the social person” in the *ego agens* as “a pragmatic unification” (Schutz 2013a, 209) and as “the *origo* of pure pragma” (Schutz 2013a, 210). In this context, Schutz claims that “the actor qua actor [...] is subject, substance, monad” (Schutz 2013a, 219). As can be seen, this perspective is in opposition to Bourdieu's since the actor *is* subject and not “something like a subject” in just some particular occasions. In addition, the habitus is always personal; what is social is the “social personality”, which is orientated “around the *ego agens*” (Schutz 2013a, 224) and is partial, fragmentary and even “schizophrenic” (Schutz 2013b, 249). Let us take a closer look to Schutz's ideas on the subject as monad and its relation to the social personalities.

The monad is a “subjective experiencing of temporality”—that is, a “constituted immanence” (Schutz 2013b, 265). This constituted immanence is in turn “a constituting moment for the stratification of the self” through a series of modification of the “pure pragma of the self at work” (Schutz 2013b, 265). The *ego agens* is the self “working on its pragma, [which] is always the *ego ipse* in its totality and fullness” (Schutz 2013b, 270). However, it is not just my self who operates but, in particular, “my self now” (neither “my self before” nor “my self later on”) (Schutz 2013b, 270). Even though “my self before” has operated in the pass, it does not operate now. That is why I think about its *actiones* “only as its *acta*” (Schutz 2013b, 270).

As *actiones*, the pragmata constituted in my actual self are also co-constituting of public time:

As *actiones* these pragmata are co-constituting of public time which was the complete Now for the previously operating self, but to me, as reflecting self, appear as “then” emergent within the frame of public time. For detached from the *actiones* constituting it, public time is split up into a piece of world-time in which the *acta* have taken place in a sequential order of succession and in flowing duration and which my *acta* have constituted. [...] What public time is today is created by my pragma in the process of execution, and tomorrow will fall again into world-time and its duration running its course. (Schutz 2013b, 270-271)

The split of social time between personal duration and world time is a necessary condition for the constitution of the social persons since “the subjective experiencing of the temporality as constituting immanence” is the constituting moment for their stratification (Schutz 2013a, 220). This is why social persons don not have an immanence nor a historicity of their own “in the genuine sense” (Schutz 2013a, 220): because they are only constituted, not constituting.

Indeed, social persons are constituted in the constituting immanence through a series of modifications, starting with the *ego ipse* which is a pragmatic modification of the basic attitude of *attention à la vie*. About this, Schutz (2013b, 276) says that, in the constitution of the *ego ipse*, the “pure pragma of the working self” has a dominant role.

Here is where the body comes into play, although not conceived as a mere “biological” entity (as in Bourdieu) but as an “animate organism [*Leiblichkeit*]” around which the world of the self is centered, where it finds its “middle point” as a “core of reality” of kinaesthesias, perceptions, and apperceptions, including “what

lies within the range of my sigh, of my hearing and reach" (Schutz 2013b, 280).

8. My Own Organism as a Somatic Living Being

As just said, my self is constituted around my own organism "as a somatic living being" which is "my tool for intervening in world time and world space" (Schutz 2013b, 250). It also happens to be "the mediator in the first place between my experiences in the *durée* and my ideas of a spatial-temporal world. [...] it is only with respect to this completely constituted organism (as our body) that we can speak of an outer and inner, of space and also of space-time..." (Schutz 2013b, 257). In other words, it is our own organism which operates the split of social time on which the differentiation of the self and the social person is based.

Concerning the self, Schutz distinguishes five "moments that lead from the basic positing of the fully constituted organism to the constituting of the basic positing" of its unity (Schutz 2013b, 257-258). First, we must consider my organism as my immediate organ of perception, which "always reveals itself with the unmistakable index 'my localizations' to which, taken in the full sense, 'my kinaesthesias' and 'my localizations' belong" (Schutz 2013b, 258). As such, my organism is "the bearer of the primal instituting of active and passive kinds of experiencings," including "a diversity of kinaesthetic and localizing phenomena that make perception possible" (Schutz 2013b, 258). Second, we shall note that "my organism is the only constant conscious process given me in primally instituting experience. Specifically, constant is the consciousness of the *limits of my organism* which never leaves me" (Schutz 2013b, 258). Third, my organism is a "closed field of the experience" of its own limits "distinguished from all other phenomena of the world by that fact that it alone is truly governable by me. I am able to bring about changes in place of this, my organism, and together with it intervene in world-time and world-space" (Schutz 2013b, 259). That is why Schutz thinks of the organism as "the medium by which the duration-bound experience of movement in traversable space can be transformed" (Schutz 2013b, 259). Accordingly, "my organism is the tool of my working, understanding by 'working' that deed which intervenes in space. On this basis alone working is already revealed as *my working* and always again only as *my working*" (Schutz 2013b, 259). Fourth, "my organism is the origin of my orientation in the world." Thus, it "constitutes my '*hic*' with respect to which everything else is '*illic*'" (Schutz 2013b, 259). In consequence, my organism:

is what allows me to change place and to transform what previously was "*illic*" into "*hic*" as a consequence of which the earlier "*hic*" now appears as "*illic*." The primordial experiences of right and left, up and down, behind and in front, the entire three-dimensionality of my world-space and of my orientation in it are constituted by my organism that, metaphorically speaking, exhibits the "*origo*" of the system of coordinates that I apply to the world. And on the basis of the "*hic*" in question my surrounding world (the inanimate, the animate and the social) is constituted as the world within reach, within hearing and sight, and beyond that as the word of contemporaries, i.e., as a reachable world, as a phenomenon of probability. (Schutz 2013b, 259)

Fifth, we need to see that "my organism is the object of my growing older," which is included in the "basic anthropological phenomenon" that defines human existence as "being toward death" (Schutz 2013b, 259). Though, "what distinguishes *my organism* is that it shares *my growing older*. [...] in so far as it is the regulator of the intensity of my life as well as the regulator of my tensions, defining, too, the domain of variation of my *attention à la vie*" (Schutz 2013b, 258-259).

Schutz summarizes these five steps in the following words:

My organism as field of my perceptions as well as bearer of my primally instituting experiences of activity and passivity; my organism as a field of experience that/is constant, numerically identical and fashioning a quasi-continuum that is present to me at every moment; my organism as a tool of my working, as the gateway to world-time and world-space; my organism as the origin of my orientation in the world; my organism as the object of my growing older as well as the limit of the domain of variation of my *attentions à la vie*: all of these are elements of the constitution of that one and unitary person that I call my own. (Schutz 2013b, 259-260)

9. The *Ego Ipse* as *Ego Agens*, the Split of Time and the Levels of Personality

According to Schutz, the unitary person is the ego ipse, which is actually realized by “the working self” (Schutz 2013b, 281). It is, then, an “*ego agens*”: a “self working on its pragma” (Schutz 2013b, 270). It is, also, a present self, actually working. Schutz calls it: “my self now” because the *ego agens* as “the *ego ipse* in its totality and fullness” is the self now that operates and “creates its public time while operating (Schutz 2013b, 270).

The *ego agens* (while “*ego ipse* in its totality and fullness”) operate as my self now by constituting its *actiones* as *pragmata* and simultaneously co-constituting public time as “split up into a piece of world-time in which the *acta* have taken place in a sequential order of succession and in flowing duration and which my *acta* have constituted” (Schutz 2013b, 270). Briefly said, public time “is created by my pragma in the process of execution” (Schutz 2013b, 270). This occurs in the present. So, it can be said that “the Now provides the opportunity for the *ego ipse* to come into view in its fullness and totality as an operative [*wirkendes*] self in its *action*” (Schutz 2013b, 271). On the contrary:

my self before now is already split up into its partial aspects and can never be visible in its fullness and totality but always only in its partial aspect. For only the *action* creates the relationship of unity [*Einheitsbezug*] of the *ego ipse* (at the same time with the constitution of public time). Only the self now operates so as to be able to achieve this production [*Leistung*] of the relationship of unity. My self before now does not operate, it *has* operated and its *acta* do not become allotted to the unitary *ego ipse*. Rather they are already revealed as *acta* of a partial self. (Schutz 2013b, 271)

In this framework, Schutz describes the partial selves of my self before as “dead partial selves” (Schutz 2013b, 272) which are nothing but “my *acta* that have run their course and been completed” (Schutz 2013b, 271). So, it is the sedimentation of my *acta* what constitutes my different partial selves allotted with “specific attitudes of my self” (Schutz 2013b, 271). These attitudes are partial personalities orientated “around the *ego agens*” (Schutz 2013a, 224) constituted by “habituallities and their automatisms” (Schutz 2013a, 224) by virtue of the transferability of the own pragma (Schutz 2013b, 285).

In this process, the starting point, “the situation in its original fullness,” is “the basic attitude of *attention à la vie* in the solitary self” (Schutz 2013a, 238). Then, through habituality (as well as through will, sociality, education and culture), an interdependence and hierarchy of *attentions à la vie* is formed (Schutz 2013a, 239). In accordance, the new levels of personality become “eccentric from the levels of personality that until now were central” and also, in the reverse process, potentialities that have become eccentric “can become central again or devolve into ‘partial death’” (Schutz 2013a, 239).

Therefore, based on the *ego ipse*, we are able to constitute a variety of social persons that enable us to act and interact in different social “circles.”

10. The Social Personality as an Interplay of Partial-Personalities

Schutz borrows the idea from Simmel that we do not enter social circles with all our personal self but with only parts of our social person. According to Simmel, a group is formed by a process in which many

individuals join parts of their personalities while what each personality really is stays out of this common area. Groups are characteristically different because the personalities of its members and those parts of their personalities with which they participate in the groups are different (Schutz, 1955, 253). This means that we are living simultaneously at different levels of our personality (Schutz, 1947, 100). Thus, our social personality is “a series of partial-personalities” (Schutz, 2013a, 216), a “play and counterplay” of them (Schutz, 2013b, 253).

Schutz lists a number of examples of how different social roles are based in different levels of our personality: “As a citizen of my community, as someone who belongs to my political party, as member of my church, over against these contemporary, more or less anonymous institutions, I take up attitudes that have their origin in quite distinctly anchored levels of my self” (Schutz 2013b, 247).

The “diversity, change and succession” of the “deeply founded experiences” of the self living naively straightforwardly, such as the acting self (*ego agens*), the reflection self (*ego cogitans*), and the like-fashion the “the cosmos of my social attitudes” which is centered around the person as “a core of my being [...] of ultimate intimacy, unreachable by my reflection” (Schutz 2013b, 250).

Occasionally (especially in cases of conflict), “it would seem that all of the sides of my self so characterized are independent persons with their own wishes and wills, themselves standing in quasi-social relations to each other even though they are still parts of my self” (Schutz 2013b, 249). Schutz designates the conception dealing with the partial personalities of the self as “the schizophrenic hypothesis of the self” (Schutz 2013b, 249), considering that the study of schizophrenic patients teaches us that “it belongs to the possibilities of the human spirit to develop such personality splits” (Schutz 2013b, 249).

Even if Schutz rejects the schizophrenic hypothesis of the self, he admits that a certain paradox is shown since we can experience a cut in the bond of the unitary self (Schutz 2013b, 249). At times, “in a relatively peripheral attitude, I can feel the emergence of a phenomenon as an ‘interruption’ belonging to the intimate sphere” (Schutz 2013b, 249). So, even if Schutz does not accept this hypothesis and refuses to treat social attitudes as hypostases and partial personalities of ourselves, he admits that we make a “more or less forcible effort in the change of social attitudes” and that:

It is consistent with the unity and unification of self-consciousness that always other sides of ourselves, other moments of our personality, are put into play in our daily social life while other and perhaps more essential sides, where not entirely excluded, are thus still in / such measure crowded in the background. Those in the background then remain visible more as a horizon of that field of vision at the center of which our social attitudes in question stand. (Schutz 2013b, 249-250)

The attitudes and stances of the self living naively straightforwardly compose a system “defined by our attitudes toward the different phenomena of the social world” (Schutz 2013b, 247). Schutz describes it as “a system of interconnections of motivations” which are simply accepted “as habitual, traditional or affective givennesses” (Schutz 2013b, 247). This system of attitudes is given in diverse ways, starting from standardized normative attitudes in the cultural world of daily life, on to “the ultimate goals of our bearing on the great systems of the state, of the law, of the economy in short, all of those phenomena of social being that form the specific object of the social sciences” (Schutz 2013b, 248). Thus, it would seem that the systemic properties belong to the ensemble of our social attitudes and not to the habitus, which is always personal.

Consequently, the habitus is not “a system,” as Bourdieu (1980, 87-88) implies. Here, he seems to commit a fallacy of the wrong level by attributing to social structures features and operations proper of the personal ego such as dispositions, principles of organization, estimation of chances, cognition, motivation, choices, anticipations,

experiences, perceptions and appreciations, thinking, freedom, creativity, etcetera (Bourdieu, 1980, 88-92). For Schutz instead social structures are fragmentary, overlapped personal egoic structures of a higher level that evolve from shared personal habitus held in common as embodied schemes for practice. That is why he could not conceive of habitus as a system in Bourdieu's terms, no matter how open or how relative the systemic closure might seem (as cited in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 115f) since only social (not personal) structures can be seen as fragmentary, overlapped and partial sets endowed with wholistic characters such as closure, consistency and the like. Summarizing, social systemic structures rely on habitus which, in turn, rely on the personal ego which is always enacting embodied self.

Here is where the body comes into play, although not conceived as a "biological" entity but as an "animate organism [*Leiblichkeit*]" around which the world is centered "as the middle point" and as "a core of reality of perceptions and apperceptions belonging to my surrounding world..." (Schutz 2013b, 280).

11. The Living Body and Embodied Action

It is our living body which is able to "acquire a habit," i.e., which is able to "grasp and incorporate" tacit and practical principles (Crossley 2001, 106). Thus, properly understood, Bourdieu's "biological individual" and the "conscious subject" compose a one and only entity: a living body who can acquire habits.

The preceding does not mean that there is no habitus at all but that it only exists incarnated in a living body, as Merleau-Ponty has shown. And, for being bodily, every habitus⁴ is primarily motor and perceptual because it resides between explicit perception and the actual movements, defining both our field of vision and our field of action (Merleau-Ponty 1999, 177). Accordingly, the power of the habitual is not different from the power of our body (Merleau-Ponty 1999, 169). In particular, it has to do with the "body schema," which is a system open to the world, correlative to the world (Merleau-Ponty 1999, 168, n1). It can be said then that habit makes understandable the general synthesis of one's own body (Merleau-Ponty 1999, 177). That is why Merleau-Ponty speaks of our "habitual body": because habitual behaviors organize and unify our motor schema as a repertoire of possible movements which endow with meaning the perceived world as a set of practical possibilities (García, 2012, 106).

Our "habitual body"—or our "body schema," as Merleau-Ponty also calls it (García 2012, 116) is a form (*Gestalt*) whose prime meaning—as we just saw—is related to motor skills (García 2012, 117). Thus, the habit lies neither in thought nor in the objective body but in our body as a system of motor and perceptual powers (Merleau-Ponty 1999, 179). Because of that, the habit is neither knowledge nor automatism but "a kind of knowledge" that is in the hands, only delivered through bodily effort and impossible to translate into an objective designation (Merleau-Ponty 1999, 168). Our movements get enchainned in a semi-automatic way, in half-consciousness, according to motor habits learned in the past, when we have learned to move in such and such a way. Habit is then a peculiar "present past" which does not need to be explicitly brought back to consciousness by memory because it is constantly, latently operating in the present and determining our field of action and perception (García 2012, 112).

Hence, the acquisition of a habit is a reorganization and renewal of the bodily schema that gathers the elemental movements, reactions and stimuli (Merleau-Ponty 1999, 166), which proves that the living body and the perceived world are to a certain extent labile and plastic, always open to restructuring (García 2012, 107). Therefore, habits express our power to expand our being in the world and change our own existence (Merleau-Ponty 1999, 168). That is why acquiring a habit means to acquire a certain style, a new use of one's own body. Briefly,

it is enriching and reorganizing the body schema (García 2012, 116).

As the substratum of habit is the living body, not the objective body, and because our body is a set of lived meanings (Merleau-Ponty 1999, 179), to acquire a habit is also to grasp new meanings (Merleau-Ponty 1999, 167). Indeed, it is said that the body has reached an understanding and habit has been acquired when it is able to let new meanings in, when it has assimilated new kernels of meaning (Merleau-Ponty 1999, 171).

For this reason, it is not in the “biological individual” but in the lived body where habit lies. This leads to observe more complex relations between the organic body and the lived body than that which Bourdieu has shown. The organic body (here, Bourdieu’s “biological individual”) is just a condition for the acquisition of motor habits, perceptions and behaviors of the lived body (García 2012, 112) but is not the substratum of the habit, which lies in the concrete personal ego incarnated in a living body. Indeed, it is the living body which incorporates the “broad forms of competence and a practical, pre-discursive grasp or understanding of principles” (Crossley 2001, 106) which constitute the habitus.

The reason why the body has a habitus is because every experienced form tends towards a certain generality (Merleau-Ponty 1999, 160) that allows the schemas to be transferred (García 2012, 108).

A habitus then is a set of generalized habits that can be transferred in three different ways: (1) from one region of the body to another (Crossley 2001, 106); (2) “by way of a practical analogy” from familiar to unfamiliar situations which we treat “as if they were of a familiar type” (Crossley 2001, 106); and (3) from one monad to another, especially when they share those situations mentioned in “a” and “b”, since habits are learnt while growing up in a community, in touch with other bodies that display such and such behaviors, in a common cultural environment (García 2012, 106-107). Then, it is the *habitus* which opens for the body the human and cultural environment (Merleau-Ponty 1999, 377), given that the body schema is constituted intersubjectively in a coperceived world experienced in intercorporality (García 2012, 107).

12. Final Remarks

We can finally establish a hierarchy between the three overlapping elements in Bourdieu’s work: social agents (or “social persons,” as Schutz puts it) 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. We now know that it is not the habitus itself which acts but the concrete embodied ego, endowed with a habitus which allows her/him to become in part a social person.

Hence, Phenomenology retrieves the underlying unity of the concept of habitus. At the same time, it retains the different levels of analysis considered by Bourdieu and relates them in a precise way. So we may now attempt to find a concealed unity in the set of dispersed elements in Bourdieu’s theory by acknowledging that a habitus may be thought of as a capacity in the sense of an egoic persistent substratum of egoic qualities. It can also be considered as related to a set of dispositions produced by habitual practical actions of the “working self.” Finally, we can consider that a disposition is the product of familiar schemes for practice on the acting self. Thus, from a phenomenological point of view, it is possible to compose a consistent framework of the different dimensions of habitus.

If this is so—i.e., if phenomenology embraces a conception of habitus that, in a more complete and consistent way than in Bourdieu, accounts for what the habitus does in an articulated manner, then, it is not a mere subjectivism but a deeper and more complex consideration about the acts of the concrete ego in the social

world. So, far from being condemned to oblivion, being surpassed by a novel idea of habitus, phenomenology is not only a valuable precedent but—as I argue here—a rich, valuable, and enduring reflection on the constitution and action of the agent in the social life. In brief, phenomenology is not an extreme subjectivism for it has not overlooked the importance of habitus. That is why it still has a great potential for sociology in our time.

Notes

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1. For instance, when Bourdieu criticizes subjectivism, he uses “slogan-like” labels (Endress 2005, 57).
 2. I will get back on this issue, quoting Schutz on *hypokeimenon*.
 3. On Schutz and egology, see Embree (2009).
 4. Only twice in *The Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty uses the word habitus (1999, 160, 377). He prefers the French word “*habitude*” probably because he intended to avoid the moral and metaphysical connotations that the word habitus had in the context of scientific psychology, which Merleau-Ponty discussed there (Martínez 2007, 154). Although, what he said about “*habitude*” can be interpreted as a contribution to Husserl’s concept of habitus (see Martínez 2007, 151-158).

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