

Title: The Two Stories of the Habitus/Structure Relation and the Riddle of Reflexivity: A Meta-theoretical Reappraisal

Running title: Habitus, Structure and Reflexivity

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Abstract

This article argues that two key puzzles arising from the theories of Bourdieu are inter-related. One is the question of how Bourdieu analyses the relationship between structure and habitus, and the other is the place of reflexivity in Bourdieu's work. We contend that it is only by carefully analysing Bourdieu's theoretical structure to grasp the relationship between these elements that one can understand whether or not his work offers useful resources for analysing

the relation between routine action and self-reflection. This paper argues that there are two narrations of the structure/habitus relation in Bourdieu's work, and that the concept of self-reflective subjectivity is a residual element of the first narration and does not appear in the second. We then contend that this residual and under-developed concept of self-reflective subjectivity should not be confused with Bourdieu's analysis of epistemic reflexivity. These moves allow us to contribute to ongoing debates about the relation between routine action and self-reflection by arguing that the concept of the "reflexive habitus" – which some have argued is characteristic of social agents in high/late modernity – is both conceptually confused and is not a logical extension of Bourdieu's theories. In this way we try to clear the ground for more productive ways of thinking about routine action and self-reflection.

Keywords

Pierre Bourdieu, Habitus, Reflexivity, Self-reflection, Dialogical Self

Pierre Bourdieu is one of the most significant sociological thinkers of the past 50 years. He introduced a powerful set of concepts that addressed key concerns of sociologists, extending the analytical repertoire and focus of the discipline. However, Bourdieu's legacy has been highly contested, and disputes about the interpretation of his work in relation to central concepts such as habitus, reflexivity and field, as well as issues such as the role of conscious thought in social change, continue to exercise sociologists.

One thoroughly discussed question is whether Bourdieu's theory is highly deterministic or not. Some authors comment on this debate by that because of its determinism and reductionism, Bourdieu's thought does not allow for the possibility of agency and self-reflection, and also fails to explain social change (See, for example, Alexander 1995; Archer,

2007, 2010, 2012; King, 2000; Mouzelis, 2003). Others adopt the idea that there is an element of determinism in Bourdieu's thought, but see this as the quasi-determinism of a critical realist social theory (see, for example, Decoteau, 2016; Nash, 2003; Potter, 2000) which can allow for both structural impulses and agency in the social domain. Others deny the characterization of determinism, and defend a narration of Bourdieu's thought that points to his late admissions and analyses of social change (see, for example, Faber, 2017; Hilgers, 2009) and/or social mobility (Friedman, 2016). And some take a further step on this "positive" path, claiming that Bourdieu's analysis not only allows for the explanation of social change and social mobility, but is also consistent with continuous reflection on socio-cultural developments by intuitive agents (see, for example, Adams, 2006; Sweetman, 2003) – or even that it describes a pliable world subject to negotiation via the constructing of world-visions, such that Bourdieu's analysis "borders on a kind of idealism" (Mead, 2016, p. 67), while it allows for non-occasional possibilities of conscious deliberation (Mead, 2016).

We are arguing that instead of taking sides on the debate of "the right interpretation" of Bourdieu's work, we should rather focus on its inherent antinomies and inconsistencies. We are aware that this might seem a radical argument, as many authors, in their efforts to present a single story to be told about Bourdieu, either in positive or negative terms, actually imply that Bourdieu's writing is characterized by precision and consistency. Indeed, there are few analyses (like King, 2000) of how the various reactions and stances towards Bourdieu's core theoretical work are not a matter of "the right interpretation" of a coherent theoretical system, but the unavoidable outcome of theorizing that is characterized by internal antinomies.

Following these lines, this article does not provide another overall critical presentation of Pierre Bourdieu's work. It rather aims to show that there are two prevalent tendencies in Bourdieu's core socio-theoretical system, and more specifically, in his theory about the relation between two elements. The first element is objective conditions (structures) that constrain

agents, and within which agents find the material and immaterial objects that are also the *objects* of their struggles which take place in structured fields. The second element is the internalized cognitive structure, that is *habitus*, which provides the categories of comprehension and appreciation of the practices and of the rules, according to which these struggles over the acquisition of the valued objects are taking place in the various structured “battle fields” of social life (see, Bourdieu, 1989). Bourdieu’s theory of practice is premised on these two elements and their relation, in that they are assumed to be simultaneously the conditions of the production of and the constructed outcome of practices. In this article, we recognize the importance of the theory of practice to Bourdieu’s work, and we are focusing on different readings of analyses of the crucial pre-conditions of practice, which are also consequential for its outcomes. As such, we will be arguing that there are different readings of Bourdieu’s work because of Bourdieu’s dual account of the structure-habitus relation. In other words, it is Bourdieu’s tendency to discuss two different modes of relationship between the *habitus* and the field, sometimes even in the same section of a book, that has triggered further dichotomies and interpretations within debates amongst his commentators, including questions about the import of his work for understanding the role and scope of transformation and reproduction in social life.

As we shall show, both readings refer to the same two basic concepts, namely, *habitus* and social structure, as well as their relational mode of mutual dependence. Therefore, the lack of *internal* coherence of the theoretical system does not entail the existence of two totally incompatible or incommensurable theoretical systems that intend to explain the same phenomenon or object, but the existence of two different narrations that lie conflated, and in a latent form, in Bourdieu’s theoretical system.

Having made this argument we contend that it is necessary to grasp a further element of the topography of Bourdieu’s thought in order to understand subsequent debates and indeed the

possibilities inherent in his mode of analysis. We will argue that it is crucial to distinguish the incoherent core of his socio-theoretical system, that we have been discussing, from a further element: epistemological and theoretical remarks about reflexivity which Bourdieu makes that (are frequently assumed to) have indirect implications regarding the possibility of agential self-reflection. To properly locate Bourdieu's remarks we argue for the importance of distinguishing epistemic reflexivity, on the one hand, from self-reflection/agential reflexivity¹, on the other. By epistemic reflexivity we mean the application of socio-theoretical systems to their own academic microcosm, such that the general characterizations of social relations put forward within a theoretical system have an (explicit or implicit) import for the analysis of the conditions of theory-production themselves (see, Bouzanis, 2017). In other words it is the self-application of a theory. Self-reflection/agential reflexivity refers to the capacities of agents to reflect on their social situation and formulate a course of action on the basis of these reflections.

Armed with this distinction we argue that some authors have seized on Bourdieu's remarks about epistemic reflexivity as a basis to argue that his system can consistently incorporate a meaningful concept of agential reflexivity. However, we contend that this is a problematic move because, for both narrations, the habitus is the social unconscious, which defines the pre-reflective cognitive liabilities of agents' apprehension and appreciation – theoretically expressed in terms of embodied dispositions to certain (and not other) thoughts and actions. On either narration, the habitus offers the only means of agents' understanding of what is happening “out there” in the social world and how they should evaluate it and react upon it. Bourdieu leaves no space for any other kind of sociological conceptualization of agential reflexivity, except for what he conceived of as only a marginal mode of rational and strategic thinking which he meticulously opposed when discussing other philosophical traditions.

Accordingly, we contend that some commentators on Bourdieu are trying to reconcile the irreconcilable. More specifically, utilizing a metatheoretical mapping of Bourdieu's core and peripheral theoretical elements, we argue that, in view of the residual character of self-reflection in his work, contemporary references to the possibility of the emergence of the "reflexive habitus" in late/high modernization invoke one of the most confused concepts in contemporary social theory. This is because the "reflexive habitus" is the product of the fusion of both narrations in Bourdieu's core statements, as well as of the problematic residue of self-reflection. Yet, our analysis does not entail that habitual and routine action are not reconcilable with the assumption of self-reflective subjectivity. Our argument is rather that the Bourdieusian notion of the habitus is irreconcilable with the possibility of self-reflection. We also suggest that there are useful analyses in the literature that offer a good start in the important effort to combine habitual action, routine action and self-reflection, which, however, frequently remain entrapped in Bourdieu's terms.

Relating Habitus and Structure: Bourdieu's Two Stories

For Bourdieu, subjectivism/objectivism and structure/agency are false dualities. In order to transcend them, we first need to theoretically (re-)construct the objective structure and the distribution of resources within it, and then take into account the *categories of perception and appreciation* which *structure* the actions of the agents, which is the internalized, homologous cognitive version of the objective social structure. Internalization here implies ontological complicity between the habitus and material structure. Yet, as Wacquant explicates, "epistemological priority is granted to objectivist rupture over subjectivist understanding." (1992, p. 11) since "cumulative exposure to certain social conditions instills in individuals an ensemble of durable and transposable dispositions that internalize the necessities of the extant social environment, inscribing inside the organism the patterned inertia and constraints of

external reality.” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 13) Hence, the habitus is the embodied, internalized version of the corresponding structure of the field in which agents exist. The habitus is thus the orientating principle of perception, of appreciation, and, consequently, of action, produced by objective conditions (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78). This means that, for Bourdieu, “each agent, wittingly or unwittingly, willy nilly, is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning.” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 79)

It is this idea of the reproduction of objective meaning that has led many commentators of Bourdieu to accuse his work of an over-determined world-view, in which the reproduction of social space is the rule. And it is at this point that the first account of the habitus-structure relation has led many authors to argue that this world-view does not allow for any kind of dialectical relation between structure and habitus, since it is objective structures that are granted the prior and predominant power. We refer to this account as HS/P1 to indicate that it is the first version of a theorization of how habitus and structure are related such that they provide the preconditions of practice and also exercise a great influence over its outcomes. Within HS/P1, the concepts of economic and cultural capital contribute to the understanding of the mechanisms of structural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 19). This is because the structure of the distribution of the different forms of capital contributes, for each different class position and through the internalization of its homologous cognitive structure, to its perpetuation. The agents’ conceptions and apprehension of these forms of capital – what these forms of capital signify and what to do with them – are provided only through the categories given by the social unconscious, the habitus.

According to HS/P1, not only is socio-cultural reproduction the rule, but social mobility, where and when it takes place, is a contingent output that occurs due to some occasional lack of prescriptions of the habitus, the contingencies of practice, or when the fuzziness of the social unconscious cannot allow for complete assimilation and mental incorporation of the complex

details of structural dynamics: structures perpetuate their *rationale* and agents cannot even “reflect” on the possibility of a different position-taking. The dispositional basis of their knowledge and action is based on their location within the structure.

According to HS/P1, the mediation of the objective meaning of the social conditions by the habitus entails the mediation of fixed possibilities of praxis to agential interaction. Therefore, one could argue that Bourdieu cannot justify the claim – which we will analyze in a moment and refer to as HS/P2 – that practices can only be accounted for through a *dialectical* relation between the structures and the habitus; for their existential relation can better be explained “by relating the objective *structure* defining the social conditions of the production of the habitus which engendered them to the conditions in which this habitus is operating, that is, to the *conjuncture* which, short of a radical transformation, represents a particular state of this structure.” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78)² This is an admission of the impossibility of any kind of dialectic because there is no meaningful independence between the interacting elements. Past structure replicates itself in present structure, and habitus has no independent input into the orientation of practices that construct the structure.

In HS/P1 Bourdieu has replaced an old-fashioned mechanistic version of structuralism – which explains social action exclusively in terms of the identification of the social position of each group of agents – with a mild version of social structuralism accompanied by the fuzzy logic of practice. In order to account for practice in this way, a conjuncture between past and present structures is required, and the habitus becomes the mediator of this conjuncture. Hence, while always attacking social mechanics (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990b), Bourdieu claims that “the social mechanisms that ensure the production of compliant *habitus* are, here as elsewhere, an integral part of the conditions of reproduction of the social order and of the productive apparatus itself” (Bourdieu, 1990b, pp. 129-130).

Therefore, according to HS/P1, agents behave like sleepwalkers who have a minimal *sense* of the objects around them with no possibility of an action that can radically rearrange the spatial setting and order of these objects. They can, at best, wake up for a while in the rare situation that an external disturbance somehow occurs. Can this version of ontological complicity, this immanent necessity of material conditioning expressed through embodiment (see, Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72), be interrupted so as to leave some space for reflection and contemplation? There are points at which Bourdieu even completely eradicates self-reflection as a possibility:

... the structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72)

This exclusion of conscious agential conduct from the conduct of the *habitus*³ will form the basis of our effort to argue that, for Bourdieu, reflective activity is a residual category in relation to the main body of his theory of *habitus* and structures. It is “residual” because, at some points, Bourdieu seems to concede some theoretical space to his main “opponent”, namely rational/strategic action, in the rare cases where we have a mismatch between *habitus* and the structure, or an external shock. In his *In Other Words* (1990a), for example, Bourdieu states:

The relation which obtains between *habitus* and the field to which it is objectively adjusted ... is a sort of ontological complicity, a subconscious and pre-reflexive fit. This complicity manifests itself in what we call the sense of the game or ‘feel’ for the game ... an intentionality without intention which functions as the principle of strategies devoid of strategic design, without rational computation and without the conscious positing of ends. (by way of

aside, habitus is one principle of production of practices among others and although it undoubtedly more frequently in play than any other ... one cannot rule out that it may be superseded under certain circumstances – certainly situations of crisis which disrupt the immediate adjustment of habitus to field – by other principles, such as rational and conscious computation. (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 108)

We can now be clear about HS/P1: social reproduction is the rule due to the specific relation between the habitus and the social structure; and structural transformation and/or social mobility are feasible when rational and/or conscious activity is necessitated by exceptional circumstances which allow the sleepwalkers to awaken temporarily.

However, there are remarks of Bourdieu's which point to a somewhat different relation between habitus and structure: one that we refer to as HS/P2. Whereas in HS/P1 the habitus is presented as a “spiritual automaton” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 57), in HS/P2 it is presented as an “effective demand” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 65). In this latter sense, the habitus is a multi-layered prism, allowing a kaleidoscopic view of past and unexpected experience, as well as “creative responses”, as Wacquant (2016, p. 65; 2014, p. 122) claims, and is not a mere conductor reassuring the continuous reproduction of pre-existing material conditions.

While, according to HS/P1, social reproduction is the rule and requires the habitus to be a “practical operator” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 95), defined and embodied (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 54) – and social transformation and structural differentiations are contingent outputs of human interaction, mainly having an exogenous cause – according to HS/P2, social transformation is always inherent in the system as a possibility resulting from the dialectical relationship (see, for example, Akram, 2013; Potter, 2000) between the embodied, incorporated cognitive structure and the objective structures. According to HS/P2, the habitus can offer agents a set of bodily movements and cognitive means to cope with the battles in the different fields, but does not lead to definite sets of possible reactions to unexpected or unprecedented situations. In his

In Other Words (1990a) Bourdieu explains that “the same habitus can lead to very different practices and stances depending on the state of the field” (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 116).

Note that in both HS/P1 and HS/P2 practice is fuzzy, which means that in both stories, there is no behaviourist, one-to-one, or linear correspondence between contextual incentives and re-actions. As such, in both stories there is no perfect predictability of limitedly spontaneous practice. However, spontaneity takes two paths in Bourdieu’s work: while in HS/P1 we encounter a limited set of potential actions and reactions that can be identified in certain fields (the structural organization of which imprints objective meaning in the cognitive structures that limit agents’ reproductive stances and practices), in HS/P2 the flexible habitus can transcend the limits of the “taken for granted” and combines or synthesizes heterogeneous toolkits of (past) and for (potential) action. Therefore, quasi-determinism of objectively regulated sets of (still unpredictable) practice (HS/P1) here, in HS/P2, takes the form of limited (though still non-reflective⁴) creativity of mental frames of the doable and intelligible with *floating boundaries*. Different actions and reactions can lead to a different socio-cultural space, and consequently a new habitus – which is here endlessly transformed (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 116). The imposition of one’s world-view through manipulation of another’s habitus is always in the stakes of these battles (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 134). To take another example, again from *In Other Words* (1990a), offered a few pages later than the previous quotation we have used,

... I do not see where my readers could have found the model of circular reproduction which they attribute to me (Structure → habitus → structure). Indeed, I could show how the opposition between statics and dynamics, structure and history, reproduction and transformation, etc., is totally fictitious, in so far as it is the structure (the tensions, the oppositions, the relations of power which constitute the structure of a specific field or of the social field as a totality at a given point of time) which constitutes the principle of the strategies aimed at preserving or transforming the structure. (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 118)

Therefore, in HS/P2, socio-cultural transformation is a potential outcome of the dynamics of the production of the social space – though reproduction of practices and of the social structures should be expected to be the more frequent result. While for HS/P1 transformation is generated by an exogenous event, for HS/P2 transformation is mainly an endogenous possibility. If agents have internalised a relatively limited, but also adequate, pool of liabilities to action and reaction, throughout the various struggles they participate in for the acquisition of the different forms of capital that are related to each field of battle, then there is a dialectical relationship between structures and the related habituses, which takes the form of what Bourdieu calls “the dialectic of objectification and embodiment” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 87). Though the external material conditions leave their mental blueprint on how actors cognitively organise their visions and divisions of the world, this *pre-reflectively* formulated cognitive structure can lead them to divergent apprehensions, evaluations and, consequently re-actions – with a further result that their limited world-constructing principles of action can result in unpredictable practices (See, Hilgers, 2009). In more “extreme” formulations of HS/P2 (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 729; 1989, p. 23), world-views do not *necessarily* express extant external necessities and divisions; for classification is part of the processes of the structuring of the battlefields.

Note that here objectification does not entail or presuppose a reflective subjectivity (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 91), but an endless, and also conditioned, production of thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions (1977, p. 95) in the agents’ confrontation of the material and immaterial objects, where the relation between these objects is imprinted in the mental polymorphic possibilities of action that are internalised through socialization. The occurrence of “Mismatch”, “hysteresis”⁵ or broken isomorphism between the habitus and the objective structures is not necessarily generating the need for self-reflection, as in HS/P1. Rather, in HS/P2, the habitus activates institutions, revives the sense deposited in them, while imposing “the revisions and transformations that reactivation entails” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 57); it

becomes a malleable, pervasive, multi-layered and ever-expanding veil that can meaningfully “cover”, adapt to, respond to and, eventually, *effect* (through action) structural fragmentation: a dialectic between structural fragmentation and its mental unification through a relational cognitive structure that enables agential engagement with the former.

We can see this approach in readings of Bourdieu that fit closely with HS/P2. For example, Decoteau (2016, p. 306) admits that for Bourdieu, “over time, the *habitus* was meant to overcome the disjunction of hysteresis”, rather than self-reflection being promoted. Likewise, Hilgers (2009), mainly following HS/P2, downplays the assumed emergence of self-reflection in cases of hysteresis, since *habitus* as an analogical schema allows that,

... the *creative perception* of a sense whose newness depends on the situation is put to work. This sense is produced by the immanent law of *habitus* that makes the agent adjust, un-adjust, and readjust his or her practices to be compatible with objective reality as it appears subjectively. (2009, p. 734)

Though for Mead (2016), clearly following HS/P2, we can combine this version of flexible-transposable *habitus*, as unifying principle of practice, with the possibility of agential reflection, the idea of self-reflection in this story becomes redundant: “the *habitus* is a spontaneity without consciousness or will, opposed as much to the mechanical necessity of things without history in mechanistic theories as it is to the reflexive freedom of subjects ‘without inertia’ in rationalist theories.” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 56) We underline this to indicate that while a version of the rationalist approach to agential reflexivity remains a residual element in HS/P1, that is a theoretically unrelated and occasional possibility, this is absent in HS/P2.

Therefore, our account of the core socio-theoretical system of Pierre Bourdieu shows that there are two incompatible narrations that lie infused with each other in his texts. By claiming that they are “infused”, we neither take them to be the two extreme poles of a continuum of theoretical variations of a generic worldview, as if one can identify many

instantiations of it throughout Bourdieu's texts; nor do we present them as clear-cut elements that follow one another in subsequent sub-sections or paragraphs, as if Bourdieu suddenly "switches" mode of thought at transition points at which we move from the one moment to the other. We cannot theoretically reconstruct Bourdieu's various core arguments into one single story of the habitus-structure relation. Rather, two incompatible narrations emerge in a theoretical reconstruction that uncovers the latent division between them, which remains unclear in and through textual continuity and semantical instability. This is especially apparent in cases of condensed arguments, the ambivalence of which is generated by the compression of two incompatible worldviews.

Let us now make brief reference to two commentators who got close to the distinction between the two narrations we have described. First, Richard Jenkins, in relation to the definitions of the habitus and its relation to objective conditions, mentions that there are three views in Bourdieu's work: "objective conditions produce habitus, the habitus is *adjusted* to objective conditions, and there is a reciprocal or dialectical relationship between them." (Jenkins, 1992, p. 79) Jenkins' insightful remark is not further developed, in relation to how the first view (HS/P1, in our terms) can be distinguished from the second and third views (HS/P2, in our terms). In fact, Jenkins (1992) does not adequately analyse the "third view", with the result that a few pages later, he claims that there is an "inability to account or allow for endogenous or internally generated change" (1992, p. 90) in Bourdieu's work – thus setting aside Bourdieu's implications for the flexible habitus of HS/P2.

Secondly, Anthony King (2000) offers one of the few analyses that highlights an inner core tension in Bourdieu's work. He identifies an inner tension between Bourdieu's theory of practice, which allows for virtuosos who draw on shared understandings so as to modify current practices and structures and Bourdieu's theory of the habitus which signifies Bourdieu's retreat to objectivism. This is because, according to the latter theory, "not only does Bourdieu

emphasize the existence of objective economic and conceptual structures (the habitus), but the interactional, intersubjective element of social life which was central to his ‘practical theory’ is effaced by a solipsistic theory where the lone individual is now attached to an objective social structure.” (King, 2000, p. 423) Yet, what King (2000) misrecognizes is that Bourdieu’s theory of practice cannot be conceived of separately from the notion of the habitus, and therefore, the “flexibility” that King identifies in Bourdieu’s descriptions of the struggles in the field, in which agents are supposed to strategically manipulate (their own and others’) habituses, does not constitute an independent theory of practice. Rather, drawing on our analysis of Bourdieu’s work, King’s account of Bourdieu’s “theory of practice” falls under the HS/P2 narration, while King’s understanding of the habitus under HS/P1.

As Lizardo says, in response to King, “Bourdieu’s idea of practical action cannot be understood without rethinking the way that Bourdieu conceived of the notion of an *embodied schema* and the way that he deployed the concept of *operations*.” (Lizardo, 2004, p. 380) Yet, Omar Lizardo, a prominent figure in American sociology, is shown to be another victim of this inner division that exists in Bourdieu’s analysis. In Lizardo (2004), he argues – clearly following HS/P2 – for a notion of the habitus that denotes a generative, transposable/transferable, flexible, dynamic cognitive/bodily structure which integrates experience (2004, p. 391) and adapts to the fluidity of structured fields, and which also can be automatically modified and revised in view of new environmental configurations (2004, p. 387). Here the habitus is participating in a dialectical story (2004, p. 385) of mutual constitution with the structured settings (Lizardo, 2004, p. 381). Yet, while for Lizardo (2004, pp. 391–392) “mismatch” cases are resolved by the same flexible and creative habitus, Strand and Lizardo (2017) – clearly following HS/P1 – thoroughly discuss the consequences of hysteresis as a case of inability of past embodied dispositions for action to correspond to new/different structural settings; one of these consequences is the emergence of “reflexiveness”, as a rare and

exceptional case of representational formulation of belief, which “can provide the basis for schematic transfers into new practical belief.” (Strand & Lizardo, 2017, p. 188)

All in all, contra King (2000), we argue that the notion of the habitus is central to Bourdieu’s theory of practice and that there are two stories to be told about how the habitus relates to the structure(s) of the various field(s).

What is the Problem with Epistemic Reflexivity in Bourdieu’s Thought?

In Bourdieu’s work, self-reflection becomes not only a residual, but also an antinomic element that appears in HS/P1. It is a residue because it appears sporadically in Bourdieu’s work as an unrelated implication or an unsupported reference. And it is “antinomic” because claims involving this concept do not fit with the main body of the theoretical system, but rather exist in a relation of contradiction with core claims (see Bouzanis & Kemp, 2019). However, there are several authors, as we explain below, who think that Bourdieu was open to the possibility of giving a meaningful role to self-reflection. We argue that this paradoxical claim, made by these authors, is *partially* due to (i) Bourdieu’s own dual conceptualization of the habitus-structure relation that we have already discussed; *partially* due to (ii) the surprising appearance of the residual category of self-reflection; and *partially* due to (iii) generalized confusion about the differences between epistemic reflexivity and agential reflexivity/self-reflection. Having discussed (i) and (ii) in the previous section we now turn to discuss (iii).

To explore this we would like to consider an aspect of Bourdieu’s work that might seem promising for those hoping to find a substantial development of the concept of self-reflection in his work: his ideas about epistemic reflexivity. These are mainly developed in Bourdieu’s later works, in his analyses of the field of sociology and the scientific field in general. Bourdieu’s key argument in these works is that social scientists should engage in a process of reflexivity through which they can identify their own position within the scientific field.

Responding to the “reflexive turn” in the sociology of scientific knowledge (see, Ashmore, 1989; Gruenberg, 1978; Woolgar 1988), Bourdieu argued that sociologists collectively need to use their own methods and concepts to make the field of sociology an object in order to eliminate circularities and social determinisms which affect its capacity for progress. But their use should be continuous and intensive. Epistemic reflexivity, as a collective project, *invites* the sociological community to become *conscious* of (and thus *reflect* on) the shared social conditions of the presuppositions with which we engage in constructing the sociological object. Hence, for Bourdieu, epistemic reflexivity (2003, 2004) is a request, an invitation as well as an expectation of future sociological research, necessitated by the logic of sociological practice and thus internalized in and through the struggles among the sociologists, to objectify the conditions of the production of the social space of scholastic vision which is prevalent in academia (for further discussion, see Hilgers, 2009; Maton, 2003; Peters, 2014). It is a request to “objectify the knowing subject” (Heilbron, 1999, p. 301), that is, the subject of objectification in its objectively structured academic microcosm, in which certain determinations should be identified and *partially* eradicated.

It might seem as if Bourdieu’s account of epistemic reflexivity can provide a basis for analyzing self-reflection more generally in society, undermining our claim that the latter is an antinomic category for Bourdieu. However, we would argue that the situation is quite the reverse: because self-reflection is never substantially developed by Bourdieu, this vitiates his account of epistemic reflexivity rather than the latter vindicating the former. In order to show this, we decompose Bourdieu’s quite complex requirement for a reflexive sociology into three analytically distinct moments, evaluating each of these:

- A) *Auto-reference*: To start this analysis, we need to distinguish between, on the one hand, self-reflection, or agential reflexivity, as an agential capacity to critically reflect on beliefs,

values, world-views and assumptions, as well as the wider or local, cultural or structural context; and, on the other hand, epistemic reflexivity as pointing to the paradoxes of self-reference in the sociology of knowledge (Bohman, 1997, pp. 173, 177), or to the auto-referential properties of *grande* theoretical frameworks (Bouzanis, 2017). It is this latter interest in self-reference and its consequences which Bourdieu is promoting in the discussion of epistemic reflexivity. Bouzanis (2017) states that Bourdieu was a pioneer in that he reflexively (that is, auto-referentially) bent his proposed core concepts to “apply” them to (the explanation of the position of) the social scientist and the field of symbolic struggles, within which s/he is positioned. This means that Bourdieu analyzes the space of position-taking for the social scientist as the possible and permitted sets of strategies and visions of the world, which are defined (in terms of probabilities) by the social scientific field through the prism of the dispositions of the habitus (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 58); and this clearly shows that he recognizes the applicability of his core concepts to the academic field as well (see, Bourdieu, 1988). As Bohman says, in view of Bourdieu’s theory of practice, “the search for a general theory of social agency and constraint usually begins by referring to a set of phenomena that constitute its successful core, from which it gradually generalizes other instances.” (1997, p. 173) To our mind this is a very useful move of Bourdieu’s, as the ability of a social theory to be consistently applied to itself is a valuable “test” of that theory.

B) *The toolkit for self-objectification: in addition to the previous step, Bourdieu’s call for a reflexive sociology constitutes an emancipatory call to reflect on position/position-taking relation in the field(s) of social sciences. In this sense, it constitutes a call for a semi-conscious following of the path of the auto-referential application of the core conceptual framework he proposes onto sociologists’ positioning and the material and symbolic conditions of sociological research itself, by objectifying the structural positionality, the habitus and their co-production of the position-takings and practices of the social scientists themselves, in both*

abstract and personified levels (for a characteristic analysis of this moment, see Bourdieu, 2003).

However, Bourdieu's theory lacks a concept of a self-reflective subjectivity (see, for example, Archer, 2010, 2012; Bohman, 1997; Jenkins 1994; King, 2000; Peters, 2014) who could meaningfully respond to and successfully perpetuate his request for such an *active* self-analysis. To be epistemically reflexive, Bourdieu says, we sociologists need to objectify our position through the empirical use of his own theoretical/conceptual toolkit; but the subject that can *enact* objectification is absent in this theoretical toolkit. On this, several critiques point to the paradoxes of Bourdieu's notion of epistemic reflexivity by highlighting the determinate relation between scientists' positions and their world-views (Maton, 2003; Pels, 2000, pp. 13-15), which implies that any objectification is condemned to field-determination or partiality. Consistent with this critique, but besides what positionality meant in either HS/P1 or HS/P2 in different fields, we are highlighting the broader idea that in the world(s) which the relation(s) between the habitus and the social structures allow to exist, there is no reflective subject to "apply" these concepts to the social scientific field.

C) *Collective/sociological habitualization of field/positions/dispositions-objectification:*

Bourdieu asks sociologists to take a further step in the promotion of epistemic reflexivity by requiring and expecting the genesis of a collective/sociological dispositional embedding of sociological self-analysis. His expectation is that the scientific community of sociologists will come to internalize the application of certain concepts in a process of objectification of the knowing subject's structural position and the related habitus (Bourdieu, 2003):

... sociologists have to convert reflexivity into a disposition constitutive of their scientific habitus, a reflexivity reflex, capable of acting not *ex post*, on the *opus operatum*, but *a priori*, on the *modus operandi* (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 89).

In other words, the *project of epistemic reflexivity* should “permeate” sociology to such an extent that it will (or should) become a group reflex.

Even if we move swiftly over the apparently paradoxical requirement to internalize self-objectification in the pre-reflective system of sociologists’ dispositions, it is unintelligible how, in the sociological battlefield, differently positioned sociologists could attain a consensus over the set of categories that would be used to identify the determinations that pertain to this field. It is these categories that would be drawn on to empirically utilize this reflex in the examination of more specific cases of the positioning of certain specialties or certain research groups. Note, finally, that this third step in Bourdieu’s account of reflexivity is the one that is mostly responsible for the confusion of the idea of the “reflexive habitus” which will be examined in the next section.

It is reasonable for Bourdieu *himself* to identify the auto-referential properties of his core theoretical framework (A), as they arise from the generality of the conditions of knowledgeability and belief-formation it describes, as well as from the transferability of its core conceptual apparatus to sociological self-descriptions. It is also legitimate for Bourdieu to wish for future sociologists, who adopt his proposed theoretical toolkit, to trace the path of this transferability of this toolkit to the sociological field (B), and thus *enact* their application to the battles which take place within it. But, having rendered self-reflection a residual element in HS/P1, this legitimate wish of (B) remains an empty promise from a theorist who clearly downplays the possibility of self-reflection. In view of this, collective sociological objectification (C) seems, in both HS/P1 and HS/P2, an additional and even more untenable requirement.

In this section we have been arguing that whilst Bourdieu does have a theory of epistemic reflexivity, this is not the same as a theory of the self-reflective capacities of

sociologists. Indeed, Bourdieu does not even get as far as providing an analysis of the self-reflection of sociologists, let alone developing an account of self-reflection that covers lay actors as well. In the next section we explore the further implications of this argument.

The impossibility of the reflexive habitus

So far, the argument is that Bourdieu's demand for epistemic reflexivity is problematic due to the fact that Bourdieu offers a "deficient account of the lay actor's reflexivity." (Peters 2014: 141) which carries over to the capacity of reflection of the social scientist⁶. Yet, looking at contemporary literature on habitual action and self-reflection, we see some authors arguing that Bourdieu's ideas on epistemic reflexivity could be transferred to the public domain to account for the possibility of self-reflection in the era of reflexive modernization (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994). Such a move can be made by either (i) arguing that Bourdieu has not totally denied self-reflection as an agential and/or collective capacity, or (ii) trying to modify, at an ontological level, the definition of the habitus in order to render it compatible and mutually supportive with self-reflective conduct. We argue that the former theoretical strategy is not feasible, because Bourdieu's project of reflexive sociology is not supported by (and should not be conflated with) a theory of the reflective subject; rather, the possibility of self-reflection appears here and there as an unrelated and unsupported residual of an antinomic character. Likewise, the latter ontological approaches to reconciliation between the habitus and self-reflection are misleading since any effort to reconcile habitual action, routine action and self-reflection should not analyzed in terms of Bourdieu's notion of the habitus.

We will argue that authors who set sail for (i), erroneously conflate Bourdieu's (legitimate but unattainable within his framework) epistemic demand for a reflexive sociology with the possibility of the reflective subjectivity which is absent in Bourdieu. And we additionally argue that authors who try to remedy this lack of a social theory of the subject in

Bourdieu, as with some prominent critical realists who propose (ii) an ontology that combines both habitual action and self-reflection, need to avoid references to Bourdieu's habitus, or radically modify this concept in order to do so. Ultimately, we argue, the notion of the "reflexive habitus" is a product of the fusion of both narrations (HS/P1 & HS/P2) as well as of the residue of self-reflection.

(i) *Theoretical reconciliation*

Authors arguing for (i), follow an opposite path than we are following in this article: they *extend* Bourdieu's idea of the scientific habitus incorporating "a reflexivity reflex" (2004, p. 89) to everyday lay decision making, in an attempt to *reconcile* the habitus and the presupposition of self-reflection. In contrast, we start from the idea that self-reflection is an antinomic residual category in Bourdieu's work and move to the conclusion that his epistemic request cannot *be supported for this very reason*. Our argument is that these authors fail to distinguish between epistemic reflexivity as theoretical auto-reference and the idea of self-reflection (Bouzanis, 2017), and therefore, in terms of Bourdieu's work, they conflate an epistemic request with a residual category of HS/P1. Ultimately this means that they try to extend an *unattainable* possibility that pertains, according to Bourdieu, only to sociologists (see, Bohman, 1997, p. 182; Karakayali, 2004, p. 160), to other social groups. This does not resolve the genuine problems of incorporating a demand "to reflect" into the categorical state of individuals who are not attributed, by Bourdieu, any other means for thought than this unconscious substratum of internalized categories. In this sense, these authors try to reconcile the irreconcilable.

Paul Sweetman (2003), for example, while acknowledging some difficulties of an effort of reconciliation, has attempted to combine the theoretical import of the habitus with the idea of self-reflective conduct, by invoking the idea of the "reflexive habitus". This entails the hybridizing idea of a flexible habitus which, Sweetman argues, has been formed due to the

constant lack of correspondence between the habitus and the material conditions of the field where agents are placed. Various accounts are given of this constant lack of correspondence, including: the multiplicity of external shocks or crises (see also Toner, 2017) changing the structure of the field in a radical and continuous way; the requirement for some agents to move through different fields; or the lack of well-defined social fields in our post-traditional society such that their boundaries are overlapping, fused and malleable. This reflexive habitus, according to Sweetman (2003), while acquired through the passive embodiment of the discontinuous and turbulent experience of unstable past conditions, results in a liberating habitual *readiness* to change⁷. Here, “reflexivity ceases to reflect a temporary lack of fit between habitus and field but itself becomes habitual, and is thus incorporated into the habitus in the form of the flexible or *reflexive* habitus.” (Sweetman, 2003, p. 541)

Following a similar logic, Nick Crossley (2003) argued for the possibility of the “radical habitus”, by taking the example of protest and political movements. Here, involvement in social critique and protest generates and is further enforced and sustained by the acquiring and embodying “reflexive schemas” which work as “reflexive dispositions” (2003, p. 55) to self-interrogation.

Figure 1 here

It is at this point at which, drawing on *figure 1*, we can offer a metatheoretical imaginary mapping of the ideas we are discussing. HS/P1 is in tension with HS/P2, and both as core

“stories” of the habitus/structure relation are, due to the definition of the habitus, inconsistent with residual references to and implications (that one can identify in Bourdieu’s thought) about agents’ capacity of self-reflection. One might expect that the idea of the reflexive habitus is premised only on HS/P2, in the sense that it is easier to travel from the “elastic habitus” of HS/P2 to the ideas of “radical habitus” and “reflexive habitus”. Yet a key point is that the idea of the reflexive habitus is a confusing product of the fusion of all three elements in *figure 1*, and here is the whole story: self-reflection that arises occasionally, as a residue in HS/P1, as a product of a mismatch between the embodied habitus and the external structure (in the form of rational strategic action), is now necessitated more often, and thus it has become embodied in the flexible habitus of HS/P2 as a readiness towards the lack of morphological homology.

This fusion of HS/P1, HS/P2 and the residue of self-reflection is also evident in recent efforts to argue for the theoretical reconstruction of the reflexive habitus. In Decoteau (2016), for example, one can see how Wacquant’s idea of the multilayered, flexible habitus of HS/P2 (see, Hilgers, 2009) is fused with the idea of continuous “breaks” in HS/P1, with the help of the idea that “people’s identities are constituted precisely through their participation in more than one field ... our interstitial positionality offers us unique positions from which to reflexively evaluate and navigate our structural and cultural conditioning through embodied practices.” (Decoteau, 2016, p. 316) Also note that Decoteau, as with several other commentators, confuses epistemic reflexivity with self-reflection (Decoteau, 2016, p. 313; see also, Hilgers, 2009, p. 738).

On this, Silva (2016) distinguishes between early notions of a unitary, monolithic habitus and later notions of flexible and fragmented habitus. From our perspective, Silva (2016) is close enough to identification of the “two stories of the habitus/structure” we are discussing in this paper, but she only focuses on different definitions of the habitus, and thus she does not place theoretical dualism in the analysis of the relationship between the habitus and structures.

Furthermore, the “fragmented habitus” that Silva (2016) proposes is more related to HS/P1: as Bourdieu, throughout his career, was more and more emphasizing structural fragmentation in late capitalism, as well as the emergence of semi-independent fields, the unified habitus in HS/P1 has become fractured in high/late modernity due to the “situational breaks” that occurred in contemporary agential experience. This development does not challenge our analysis: instead of the “monolithic versus elastic” habituses, corresponding to the HS/P1 and HS/P2 antithesis, in later writings, this tension is expressed in terms of “fragmented versus Elastic” habituses (or, accordingly, habitus clivé versus chameleon habitus; see, Friedman, 2016). In HS/P1 the basic relation between the habitus and structure remains the same, there is still no dialectic in this story. The fragmented habitus is just the cognitive blueprint of structural fragmentation – and thus perpetuates continuity and “code-switching” in the various fields in which the individual participates. Still, the elastic habitus of HS/P2 “fills the gaps”, is adapted and thus guarantees cognitive unification and the necessary fluidity to “respond” to transitions from one field to another.

Therefore, in this paper, we are arguing that certain versions of the reflexive habitus conflate the idea of fragmented habitus of HS/P1, the idea of flexible/elastic habitus of HS/P2 and the residual element of self-reflection⁸. In other words, the theoretically unsupported, residual suggestion in the case of the lack of ontological complicity in HS/P1, is internalized – as a now incompatible, antinomic premise which is denied by the very principle of internalization – and transformed into a paradoxical hybrid that takes the form of a “pre-reflecting disposition to reflect”. What defenders of the “reflexive habitus” fail to notice is that, as indicated in figure 1, self-reflection is a residue of the story of HS/P1 which is ultimately inconsistent with the overall definition of the habitus.

Also frequently forgotten in this discussion is that for Bourdieu the internalized cognitive structure deeply pervades agents’ knowledgeability, as the pre-reflective prerequisite

for each practical engagement with external objects (or with others), with the result that the unconscious dominates the spaces of intelligible (inter-)action – and this holds for both monolithic or fragmented habituses of HS/P1 and the flexible ever-adaptive habitus of HS/P2. What could it mean, then, for human beings to incorporate an intensive “need to reflect” into the pre-reflective repertoire of practical engagement? The story that defenders of this view have provided is that too many breaks and fractures in ontological complicity of HS/P1 are stretching out the flexible habitus of HS/P2 even further, and transforming it into a fluid layer of an unconscious readiness to ever change “position-taking”. But still this fluid layer is the only principle of the construction of the self, and to invoke self-reflection as an internalized disposition within this layer is to negate this very principle.

Now, one could claim that self-reflection is a vague term meaning different things to different authors. For example, self-reflection can be conceived as a self-monitoring, in Giddens’ terms (1984) that can account for strategic action. Indeed, the above-mentioned authors draw on the idea of reflexive modernization (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994) so as to reconcile the continuous need to reflect on one’s life trajectory with Bourdieu’s habitus. But self-monitoring constitutes a minimalistic approach to agential powers of reflecting on the social world as well as on mental states, and so here we need to consider whether more concrete formulations of self-reflection are compatible, at an ontological level (ii), with the habitus.

(ii) Ontological reconciliation

This effort of reconciling the irreconcilable is also present in recent critical realist approaches to agency, with reference to Margaret Archer’s theory of self-reflection, which is a Peircean version of an internal conversation between the “I” and the “Me” – where the “I” is the critical self and the “me” is the objectified echo of the “I”s’ past utterances (Archer 2003).

On this, Alistair Mutch (2004) has utilized Bourdieu's work in order to set limits on Archer's notion of the internal conversation, and Caetano (2015) recently claimed that what is missing from Archer's account of reflexivity is the processes of internalization of exteriority. Taking a different approach, Elder-Vass (2007, 2010) realizes the difficulties of his own effort of reconciling Bourdieu's account and Archer's notion of agential reflexivity (that is, self-reflection), and proposes a different notion of habitual dispositions. In effect he is trying to complement the Archerian version of the internal conversation by introducing habitual dispositions into it, rather than succeeding to reconcile Bourdieu's idea(s) of the habitus and Archer's formulation of self-reflection as an internal conversation.

A detailed discussion of the arguments of Archer and Elder-Vass exceeds the scope of this paper. It suffices to say that Archer herself has rightly explained that the late Bourdieu's account of epistemic reflexivity "still left his theorising far short of recognising the *necessity of reflexivity* for social life and life in society" (Archer, 2007, p. 46), and that Sweetman's (2003) effort to combine Bourdieu's habitus and self-reflection in the hybridizing form of reflexive habitus is a contradiction in terms (Archer, 2010, p. 126; 2012, p. 71)

Finally, Sayer (2010) claims that Bourdieu indirectly acknowledges self-reflection in his co-authored book *The Weight of the World* (Bourdieu et al, 1999) which "is a collection of interviews with people relating their internal conversations." (Sayer, 2010, p. 111) Indeed, in this book, Bourdieu draws on interviews where participants frequently express their thoughts through inner and outer dialogues involving self-analysis (Bourdieu et al, 1999, p. 615). Elsewhere, Bourdieu clearly states that respondents are able to construct their own point of view through a process of clarification of their experiences and thoughts, "with an extraordinary *expressive intensity*" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 24) – self-analysis through which respondents can even consciously attempt to impose their own definition of the situation and the image they strategically wish to promote (1996, p. 25). But instead of this being an *indication*, or even a

proof, that Bourdieu can adequately place self-reflection in his theoretical framework of the habitus and the field, it rather constitutes one of those instances that the residual category of self-reflection appears in this framework. Hence Sayer (2010) tries to “normalize” a kind of theoretical “anomaly” in the periphery of a theoretical system by making reference to its mere appearance here and there.

Now, one could argue that identifying Archer’s notion of self-reflection (in the form of internal conversation) as inconsistent with Bourdieu’s thought is neither fruitful nor original. For, first, this argument obliterates the possibility of developing attempts at reconciling non-Archerian notions of self-dialogue that are (or could be) compatible with the habitus; and, second, Archer already argues for the incompatibility of habitus and self-dialogue, implying that in defending this view we are simply buying into her analysis of dialogue and self-reflection. We want to respond to these points in turn.

Firstly, we want to argue that *even if* one of Bourdieu’s narrations of the habitus-structure relationship was compatible with a theory of self/inner dialogue, this would not in itself show that this narration was compatible with the idea of self-reflection. This is because there are formulations of the dialogical self that implicitly or explicitly deny self-reflection. The potential overlap between ideas of dialogue and self-reflection partially depends on the theoretical approach that is held in each case to the “I”/“others” relation (See, Marková, 2003). Our argument here is that dialogical relations between the “I” and “others” that do not guarantee a minimum possibility of dissociation between them, lead to the oversocialized path of mutual constitution – undermining the idea of a minimum core “self” with continuous and integrating “I”-conduct. This means that even if one erroneously argued, like Sayer (2010), that Bourdieu’s notion of the habitus is consistent with a kind of a dialogic aspect of the formation of the self, this would not *necessarily* entail that we need to abandon our argument that self-reflection constitutes a residual element in Bourdieu. Unless one can show how the habitus coincides with

a form of self-reflection, and not simply that Bourdieu refers to potential self-dialogues of interviewees, our conclusion that self-reflection is an antinomic residual element in Bourdieu's work should be the default position. To put it more directly, even if agents in Bourdieu's world-view can *phenomenally* proceed to externalized monologues, revealed to an investigator, his theory demands that their utterances can only be the practical verbalization of common-sensical visions enabled by the collective unconscious, the habitus.

Secondly, to avoid the charge that we are simply embracing Archer's approach, we want to point out that there are other productive ways of thinking about dialogue, self-reflection and habitual action which avoid the problems with Bourdieu's theorising. One influential approach to the dialogical self is offered by Norbert Wiley (1994, 2006a, 2006b, 2010) who intends to combine Mead's "I-me" formulation of the "inner speech" with Peirce's "I-you" formulation, by proposing an "I-you-me" triadic notion of reflexivity in contrast to – and thus enhancing and complementing – the two dyads proposed by Mead and Peirce. Wiley attributes to the "me" component five partially heterogeneous contents; these are the "generalized other", "habits", "memory", "interface with body" and the "self-concept". Yet, the discussion here is all-encompassing and, "there is no reason why all three cannot take turns speaking, and for the dialogue to be between the 'me' and 'you', as well as between the 'me' and 'I' (or the 'you' and 'I')" (Wiley, 2010, p. 20). For this triadic relationship to occur, the self should stand simultaneously both in the past ("me"), present ("I") and future ("you"). Wiley's active and imaginative "I" is missing from Bourdieu's thought, but the former's anti-reductionist analysis of the self (see, Wiley, 1994) shows that it is feasible and reasonable for authors to incorporate habitual action into the analysis of the discursive (re-)production of the self, without forcibly invoking a social unconscious.

We have argued that the idea of self-reflection in Bourdieu's work has an antinomic character in his theoretical work, which means that further efforts of reconciling this element

with his key concepts of the habitus and the field are condemned to antinomy. Yet, we have also argued that other efforts at combining theories of self-reflection and habitual action are more promising. Note that these efforts do not in principle confine self-reflection to social scientists and their conduct, but rather examine the theoretical possibility of the diffusion among the population of the capacity of critical examination of ideas and worldviews. This acknowledgement can be combined with an analysis of the capacity to reflect on situational logics in relation to the critical choice among different principles and values that can be applied to judgements and decisions that are made in and through interaction within various microcosms (for further discussion on this, see Bohman, 1997; Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999, 2006; Bouzanis, 2017; Telling, 2016)

Conclusion

In this article, we have argued that a careful mapping of the topography of Bourdieu's theoretical arguments is needed to understand whether or not there is a potential for the concept of self-reflection to be systematically incorporated into them. Our argument has been that there are different narrations of the habitus-structure relationship – HS/P1 and HS/P2 – neither of which gives, nor has a place for, a substantial conception of self-reflection. Following on from this we have criticized those authors who attempt to fuse aspects of these narrations with Bourdieu's residual references to self-reflection and/or epistemic reflexivity in order to engage in the discussion of reflexive modernization. Our contention is that those authors arguing for the contemporary emergence of a reflexive habitus have crucially misunderstood Bourdieu's notion of a (epistemically) reflexive sociology. The latter is an (untenable) collective epistemic demand for sociologists – and not others – to realize and incorporate the ideas of the habitus and the field such that they will be able to transcend determinations and externalities that premise heteronomy quickly and more efficiently. Bourdieu makes no further demand for a

socio-cultural extension of this epistemic demand to the whole of society; nor does he offer any account of self-reflective subjectivity to support either demand. We have also argued that some attempts to reconcile routine/habitual action and self-reflection go wrong because they believe Bourdieu's notion of the habitus can play a role in such a synthesis. Whether this kind of reconciliation can be achieved is another question, but we are confident that Bourdieu's conception of the habitus is a hindrance to such a project not a helping hand. Our claim has been that understanding the structure of Bourdieu's theorizing can facilitate further debates in this area by showing where there is potential for development and where attempts at elaboration will result in contradiction and, ultimately, frustration.

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Endnotes

¹ We use the terms “agential reflexivity” and “self-reflection” as synonyms in this article.

² In this quotation, the word “them” refers to practices and not to the conditions of production of the habitus.

³ See also Bourdieu (1977, p. 79) and King’s critique (2000).

⁴ See, Strand and Lizardo (2017, p. 170)

⁵ In this context the term “hysteresis” refers to the mismatch of interacting parts whereby the historically-formed habitus does not “fit” with the present day conditions (the contemporary structure of the field).

⁶ On this, see Jenkins (1994, pp. 101-2).

⁷ See also Farrugia (2013)

⁸ See, for example, how Mouzelis (2007) admits in the first place that Bourdieu’s effort to transcend the subject/object distinction through the notion of the habitus has excluded strategic action from social life, while Mouzelis still utilizes the notion of the reflexive habitus so as to combine it with the former.