Carnal concepts in action: The diagonal sociology of Loïc Wacquant

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Abstract

Written in the form of a dialogue with Brussels sociologist Dieter Vandebroeck, this article retraces the social and intellectual trajectory of Loïc Wacquant as stepping stone to reviewing and discussing the major concepts coined and theoretical propositions elaborated in the course of his research on comparative urban marginality, racial domination, the ghetto, the penal state, neoliberalism, and carnality. This provides an opportunity to specify the relationships between ethnography, history and theory; the dialectic of domination and resistance; the role of public (dis)honor in social life; the uses of Bourdieu's bureaucratic field; and the social and academic conditions of incubation, diffusion, and death of scholarly myths such as the "underclass." The article closes on a call to clearly distinguish the rhetorical, metaphorical, and analytical usages of concepts and reaffirms the need for epistemic reflexivity as sine qua non for the articulation of robust scientific problematics.

Keywords

Bourdieu, theory, reflexivity, penal state, racial domination, carnal sociology

Whether or not the boxer plans his maneuvers before executing them, his cleverness at boxing is decided in the light of how he fights. If he is a Hamlet of the ring, he will be condemned as an inferior fighter, though perhaps a brilliant theorist or critic. Cleverness at

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fighting is exhibited in the giving and parrying of blows, not in the acceptance or rejection of propositions about blows, just as ability at reasoning is exhibited in the construction of valid arguments and the detection of fallacies, not in the avowal of logicians' formulae.

Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*

Introduction by Dieter Vandebroeck

Theory implies distance. To 'theorize' is, as the etymology of the term suggests, to 'look at' or to 'contemplate' (*theorein*) and hence to adopt the point-of-view of the 'spectator' (*theorós*) who stands outside and away from the phenomenon she tries to unravel. In fact, to engage in any form of systematic reflection *on* the social world means, first and foremost, to free oneself from the host of obligations, tasks and urgencies that come with being practically entangled and affectively invested *in* that world. By taking up a position on the sideline of social action, the sociologist hopes to gain a perspective that is more than 'a mere paraphrase of traditional prejudices' (Durkheim, 1982 [1895]: 31) and transcends the points of view of those who do not have the luxury of turning their world into an object of pure 'contemplation' (*theoría*).

However, while distance is in many ways a *precondition* for a better understanding of the social world, it can also function as a powerful *obstacle* to such understanding. Indeed, as Pierre Bourdieu (1997) famously argued, ignorance of the social conditions that enable the theoretical or 'scholastic' perspective can quite easily lead the professional thinker to treat it as the universal template on which to model the relation between Agents and World more generally. It is perhaps no surprise that the former so often appear in the guise of contemplating, deliberating and inquisitive subjects, be in the form of a *homo economicus* rationally calculating their way to maximal utility or a *homo culturalis* desperately searching for existential meaning or 'shared definitions'. The latter, in turn, often gets reduced to the status of an inert 'spectacle' to be pondered, if not to a 'discourse' or a 'text' in need of deciphering.

Furthermore, in the case of *sociological* theory, the intellectualist distortions produced by *scholastic* distance to one's object of study are further compounded by the effects of *social* distance. Indeed, a good deal of what passes for professional sociology aims to produce authoritative statements on experiences – like 'poverty', 'marginalization', 'violence' and 'stigmatization' – that not only tend to be far removed from the everyday realities of academia, but which the sociologist often only knows through the highly sanitized medium of the statistical spreadsheet or the interview-transcript. No wonder then, that when it comes to our understanding of the most precarious regions of social space, our concepts so often paint a monochrome and highly abstract picture of life at the bottom of the class structure.

Few contemporary authors have been more vocal (and eloquent) critics of the detached, distanced and disembodied gaze that continues to inform much social theory than French sociologist Loïc Wacquant. A native of Montpellier in Southern France, Wacquant originally set out to pursue a career in economics, when a chance encounter brought him into the intellectual orbit of Pierre Bourdieu. Promptly converting to sociology, Wacquant would get his first taste of the sociological *métier* in Paris

(formally, at the University of Nanterre, informally through the lengthy walks accompanying Bourdieu back home after his lectures at the *Collège de France*). However, he would soon move across the Atlantic to further pursue the craft in the United States, first at Chapel Hill and then at Chicago. It was there, whilst working under the tutelage of William Julius Wilson, that Wacquant would take his first steps in tackling the problem that would come to define a considerable part of his intellectual career, namely to unravel the sociohistorical dynamics that propel urban poverty and social insecurity in the postindustrial metropolis.

Dissatisfied with the distant and de-realizing accounts of 'the ghetto' that typified much of mainstream urban sociology, he instead decided to follow Goffman's (1967) famous dictum and instead go 'where the action is', which in this case proved to be a small boxing gym in the middle of Chicago's desolate and destitute South Side. While originally planning to use the gym as an 'observation post' from which to stage his fieldwork, Wacquant quickly became enamored by the frenetic energy of life inside the small pugilistic temple. Temporarily suspending his initial research plans, he decided to instead invest his theoretical capital in an ethnographic exploration of how one becomes a proficient boxer, itself constructed as an inquiry into the more general theoretical conundrum of how one becomes a skilled, competent agent in *any* type of field. By subjecting himself to the physical rigors and rhythms of life in the boxing gym, Wacquant took what authors like Merleau-Ponty (1945) and Bourdieu (1997) had treated as a key *theoretical* principle – i.e. the fundamentally *embodied* nature of human action, perception and cognition – and effectively turned it into a *tool* of sociological inquiry. Indeed, if so much of what it means to become a 'competent' actor effectively eludes explicit instruction and conscious deliberation, but instead consists of the gradual (and often painful) acquisition of new sensorimotor skills, perceptual schemata and 'body techniques' (Mauss, 1973 [1934]), then one way in which sociologists can hope to further pry open the black box of 'socialization' is by fully immersing themselves into the physical rough-and-tumble of situated social action.

The journey that led to the transformation of Loïc into 'Busy Louie' – the moniker bestowed upon him by his sparring partners – would form the basis of *Body & Soul. Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*' (recently re-released and expanded by 130 pages, Wacquant, 2022). Crucially, for Wacquant this form of 'carnal sociology' or 'enactive ethnography' (2015) is by no means synonymous with a radical empiricism or a more incarnate rendition of 'Grounded Theory'. Thoroughly shaped by the rationalist epistemology of Gaston Bachelard (1938) and its sociological adaptation by Bourdieu (see Bourdieu et al. 1973), his work starts from the fundamental principle that the generation and validation of empirical data – of *any* type – ultimately hinges on the careful *theoretical* construction of one's object of study. Indeed, in his seminal 'Scrutinizing the Street' (Wacquant, 2002), he famously criticized American urban ethnographers for their failure to properly theorize their 'case studies', their facile reliance on the 'folk concepts' borrowed from policy makers, journalists or their own informants and their tendency to interpret the experiences of these informants through a decisively *moral* lens.

His own desire to make better sense of these experiences pushed Wacquant beyond the cramped confines of the Woodlawn boxing gym and towards a more *macro*-sociological inquiry into the origins of advanced marginality in the postindustrial metropolis.

The first result of this inquiry, *Urban Outcasts* (Wacquant, 2008), retraces the historical transformations that led to the creation, on both sides of the Atlantic, of an increasingly dualized and indeed *polarized* urban landscape. Unlike other seminal accounts of this process, which point to economic changes or the logic of racial segregation (see Wilson, 1987 and Massey & Denton, 1993), Wacquant singled out the role of the *state* as a key agent in the formation and reproduction of urban marginality.

Among the panoply of instruments that the state has at its disposal to shape urban spaces – from economic and housing policies to welfare provisions – there proved to be one particular institution that figured prominently in the biographical accounts of his sparring partners, namely the *prison system*. In *Punishing the Poor* (2009) Wacquant sets out to dissect the lattice of public policies that defines the neoliberal management of urban marginality, most notably through the disciplinary duet of 'workfare' – the 'activation'-policies designed to force the urban proletariat into precarious, deregulated employment – and 'prisonfare', the increasing reliance on penalization as a means of containing 'problem' areas and populations. That such 'punitive containment' goes beyond mere physical confinement, but also has a profoundly *symbolic* dimension is the central thesis of a spate of papers (Wacquant, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2012). Here, Wacquant moves beyond an historical and institutional analysis of the modern penal state and tackles its reality as a key agent of 'symbolic violence', most notably through the mutually supportive relation between penalization and racialization. On the one hand, he shows how the rapid expansion of penal policy was facilitated by the fact that it disproportionately targeted already stigmatized (i.e. minority) populations. On the other, he shows how the penal state itself is one of the key drivers behind the inculcation of 'race' as a universally salient principle of vision and division (if not of vilification and deviance) and this on *both* sides of the Atlantic.

Both through its capacity for theoretical synthesis, as well as its attention to empirical detail, Wacquant's work adheres to one of the prime imperatives of 'serious research', as famously defined by Marcel Mauss and Paul Fauconnet (1901: 20), namely 'to bring together what common sense separates', like the study of penal policy *and* social policy or the combined historical analysis of the state *and* the prison system, 'and to distinguish what the vulgar confounds', especially through his meticulous dissection of the semi-learned *prénotions* – like 'ghetto', 'structural racism' or 'mass incarceration' – that continue to muddle the problems and fog the analytical lenses of contemporary scholarship on class, race and urban marginality. This is perhaps nowhere as evident as in his most recent book '*The Invention of the 'Underclass'*' (Wacquant, 2022) in which he retraces the peculiar history of the concept of the urban 'underclass' and develops it into a more general cautionary tale of epistemic vigilance and the misuse (or abuse) to which even the most well-intentioned social scientific concepts can be put.

Apart from his own sizeable contributions to the field of contemporary sociology, Wacquant is also known for his pivotal role in the international diffusion of the work of his lifelong friend and mentor, Pierre Bourdieu. Alarmed by the often mangled and distorted shape in which his writings reached the shores of Anglophone social science (see Bourdieu, 1997), Bourdieu enlisted Wacquant's help in providing a more contextualized introduction to his work for a sociological audience that proved quite unfamiliar with the various intellectual traditions from which it was drawn (see

Wacquant, 1993). Even today, their co-authored *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) remains one of the prime introductions that many scholars get to the work of the French master. The lasting impact that Bourdieu's work continues to exert on the field of social theory is in no small part due to Wacquant's diligent efforts at providing non-French readers with the necessary intellectual context to grasp the conceptual intricacies and analytical potential of the Bourdieusian framework.

Dieter Vandebroeck: You are best known, aside from your elucidation and extension of Pierre Bourdieu's theories, for your 'carnal ethnography' of boxing and your forays into the 'deadly triangle' of class, race and the penal state in the dual metropolis. But readers are not familiar with the biographical and academic journey that took you to Chicago's South Side, the main site of your studies. Could you sketch your pathway into the social sciences: your initial training as an industrial economist, your encounter with Bourdieu in the early 1980s, your first field excursions in New Caledonia? I am particularly interested in the intellectual sources and currents that molded you as a budding sociologist.

  Loïc Wacquant: Every sociologist is shaped by their social origins and experiences. I was born in southern France and raised in a small village near the sunny city of Montpellier –where, at age four, I lived for a year in the birthhouse of Auguste Comte! I was sensitized to social inequality by the upward trajectory of my parents (my father was a researcher in botany, my mother a schoolteacher and homemaker; both were first-generation high school and postsecondary graduates), and also by the wide differences in social status and outlook inside my extended family: my paternal grandfather was a low-level supply clerk in the army with staunch leftist beliefs while my beloved godfather rose to be a colonel in the *gendarmerie* with steadfast right-wing views; one uncle was a railway worker while his wife was a social worker; one rich great-uncle owned a yogurt factory while his poor brother was a carpenter. The large family reunions every summer were an occasion to observe how all these differences meshed or not. As a teenager, prodded by my father, I worked at manual jobs during the summertime (this was very unusual in France): I had stints as an industrial painter, a car mechanic, a farm hand picking peaches, and a construction worker. Rubbing shoulders with people who made their living in manual trades was another occasion to experience raw social disparities in manners and fates.

  As a youth I was a good student but not intellectual at all. I played soccer, rugby, and basketball for my village teams; my last three years of high school, I was in a special program combining sports and academics to become an elite tennis player. If you had told me at my graduation that I would become a sociologist, I would have sneered with disdain! I became more interested in academia when my family migrated to Pullman, Washington, where my father had been invited for a year-long research sabbatical. At 'Wazzu', I enjoyed the life of the freshman on an American campus (my mates of Kruegel Hall, second floor, gave me the nickname 'Superfrog') and I discovered with glee that there were such fascinating disciplines as anthropology, political science and logics; I also studied math and economics; it was my first taste of the social sciences. The three authors who stayed with me from that year at WSU are Bronislaw Malinowski, J.K. Galbraith, and research the counter-culture and ecopsychology prophet Theodore Roszak.

Upon returning to France, at 18, I had a vague notion that I wanted to study 'political economy' so I prepared for and took the competitive examinations leading to schools of economics. I made it into the top French business school, but I quickly realized that the Écoles des hautes études commerciales (HEC) was the wrong place for that. It was a professional school, preparing its students to become top executives in finance, marketing, accounting, and what not. I was bored by the classes and I just could not imagine myself making a living in suit and tie. By sheer contraposition to the world of money, my taste for intellectual pursuits grew. So I continued my studies at HEC and picked up sociology at the University of Paris in Nanterre, known then as 'Nanterre the Red' because of its tradition of protest dating back to May '68 (all the tags and graffiti from the battle of the Sixties were still on the walls and windows; the seminar rooms filled with cigarette smoke felt like leftist caves).

But the courses there were tedious and the professors uninspiring. I was mulling over dropping out when, by chance, I met Bourdieu at a public conference he was giving at the École Polytechnique in February of 1981. That conference on 'Questions of Politics' and the subsequent discussion with a small group in the student cafeteria was a total illumination. I was so entranced by that night that I decided I would become a sociologist. Leading a double life as a student of business and sociology, on two campuses 30 kilometers apart that were polar opposites in every possible dimension, economic, cultural, and political, was not easy but it deepened my sensitivity to social dualisms and subtle forms of domination. It was like commuting daily between two planets as different as Venus and Mars.

DV: That conference was the inauspicious start of a long-term intellectual and personal relationship with Bourdieu.

LW: Indeed, a year later, I met Bourdieu again on the occasion of his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France (I managed to sneak into the closed conference room where he was receiving the congratulations of the luminaries assembled to hear him). He remembered me and invited me to follow his course at the Collège. So I skipped my HEC classes to attend his lectures and soon we became 'walking buddies': we trekked and talked every week from the Collège across the Seine to his place near Bastille. These were the best tutorials in sociology one could ask for! And they were fun as well as nourishing on a personal level.

Bourdieu struck me as intense, generous, and anxious, but somehow I developed a knack for making him relax and laugh (years later, he would call me on the phone across the continents at ungodly hours of the night just for that purpose). Of course, I started to read his work seriously: *La Reproduction*, which I would cite by way of objection to every argument put forth by my teachers at HEC; *La Distinction*, which I found at once dazzling and inscrutable; then *The Love of Art* and *Algeria 60*, which I loved – it is short, pellucid and snappy, the opposite of *Distinction*! That was the start of a mentorship and friendship that grew steadily closer over the ensuing two decades. I also subscribed to Bourdieu's journal *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*; it made for arduous reading but, in retrospect, it was the best way to understand his distinctive approach to the 'construction of the object'.

The three books that had a profound influence on me during my Nanterre period were Bourdieu et al.'s *Le Métier de sociologue* (1968/1973, trans. *The Craft of Sociology*), Mauss's *Sociologie et anthropologie* (1950, especially the essay with Beuchat on Eskimo morphology; I confess I was mystified by the essay on the gift), and the the *USA* trilogy (1937) by John Dos Passos, who seemed to me to be a sociologist disguised as a novelist. I took a yearlong course on Habermas, centered on *Technik und Wissenschaft als Ideologie*, but I did not develop a taste for him: his concepts seemed to fly millions of miles above society; but a side-benefit was an excellent introduction to the *Methoden-streit* and its offshoots. In Bourdieu's treatise in sociological epistemology, I found echoes of two tomes that my philosophy class in the last year of high school had studied in depth: Gaston Bachelard's *La Formation de l'esprit scientifique* (1938, trans. *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*) and Marc Bloch's *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier d'historien* (1949, trans. *The Historian's Craft*). Little did I know then that Bachelard was Bourdieu's teacher, along with his successor Georges Canguilhem, and that Bloch was, along with Lucien Febvre, the co-inventor of the Annales school which was born by importing the principles of Durkheimian sociology into history.

For a while, I thought I might become a social historian. I read many monographs by members of the second and third Annales school (Fernand Braudel, Pierre Goubert, Georges Duby, Michel Vovelle, Robert Mandrou, Jacques Le Goff, Arlette Farge). I also took a class on the ethnology of Africa and immersed myself in the debates about the 'articulation of modes of production' and the question of what epistemic categories apply or not to precapitalist societies involving the Marxist anthropologists Godelier, Meillassoux, and Terray. A little book by the Rwanda specialist Jacques Maquet on *Les Civilisations noires* (1962/1981, trans. *Civilizations of Black Africa*), linking techniques of livelihood to social structure and artistic expression across six types of societies, was my pick read.

But sociology was beckoning. I got my BA in sociology in 1982, the same year as I graduated with my MBA from HEC after a three-month traineeship as an industrial economist at CNRS. That summer I read Marx intensively (*The Manuscripts of 1844* was and still is my favorite piece by him) and I wrote my MA for the University of Paris on 'Academic Production and Social Reproduction: A Counter-History of the École des HEC', which, to put it crudely, applied Bourdieu to my experiences as a dissenting student of that school. A luminous book by Bourdieu's student Luc Boltanski, *Les Cadres. La formation d'un groupe social* (1982, trans. *The Making of a Class: Cadres in French Society*), released just as I was graduating, put analytic flesh onto my emotional bones and validated sociologically my break with the world of managers.

DV: This is where your French trajectory, from Montpellier to Paris, veers far afield overseas, taking you to Chapel Hill in North Carolina and then to the South Pacific island of New Caledonia. How did these new experiences, academic and practical, come about and shape your intellectual development?

LW: I took off for Chapel Hill, where I had obtained a one-year graduate fellowship at large at the University of North Carolina – which HEC students typically used to get an American MBA, but not me! That sojourn in the Tar Heel state was pivotal on many fronts: I definitively forsook economics for sociology; I learned how to read properly (by

taking a reading class); and I learned the lay of the land of American academia and earned a doctoral fellowship offer from the UNC sociology department. I developed personal relations with Gerhard Lenski (who goaded me to revise a term paper into my first article on 'Heuristic Models in Marxian Theory') and Craig Calhoun (whose book on *The Question of Class Struggle* [1982] created great excitement).

I was short on funds and so I skipped meals to buy used books at the end of each week. In my little Carrboro apartment with the green fluffy carpet, furniture I had salvaged from the remnants of a burnt-out office building, and a mattress on the floor, I got up at the crack of dawn daily to read the classic works of American sociology: Parsons's *The Social System*, Merton's *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Berger and Luckman's *The Social Construction of Reality*, and a lot of sociology of sociology, which I took to be a matter of self-exploration and mental prophylaxis (Gouldner's *The Coming Crisis of Sociology*, Friedrich's *A Sociology of Sociology*, and Bloor's *Knowledge and Social Imagery*). I discovered the civil rights movement and devoured its social history (C. Van Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* holds a special place in my heart). Two works of urban sociology grabbed my attention, Elliott Liebow's *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men* (1967, 2003) and Ira Katznelson's *City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class* (1981). *The Rebellious Century: 1830–1930* (1975) by Charles, Louise and Richard Tilly made a big impression on me, as did Piven and Cloward's *Poor People's Movement* (1997). They were were assigned readings in Anthony Oberschall's class on social movements, in which I grasped the shortcomings of the rational theory of action he propounded: how can you omit the role of emotions and symbols in social protest?

For a full semester, I enjoyed the privilege of a weekly one-on-one brown-bag discussion with Gerhard Lenski, whose encyclopaedic knowledge of human societies across three millennia, consigned in his landmark *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Stratification* (1966), was enthralling. Under his press, I digested more anthropology of the 'cultural ecology' variety, Leslie White, Roy Rappoport, and Marvin Harris, who was clashing with the advocates of symbolic anthropology à la Geertz. First and foremost, I was curious and I ranged all over the theoretical map, taking classes on Marx, Parsons, evolutionary theory, and a seminar on symbolic interactionism with Sherryl Kleinman in which I was shocked to learn that Goffman had recently died.

I was dazzled and perplexed by Erving Goffman. I had devoured *Stigma* (1963) in its French translation (Bourdieu had all of Goffman's books translated in his series with Editions de Minuit, so you knew he was mandatory reading) and *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1957) (which is an incredibly astute and difficult piece of formal theory) and *Asylums* (1961) in the original. I was puzzled that Goffman was included among the symbolic interactionists; he seemed to me to practice a kind of micro-structuralism that makes the self a collective illusion, *contra* George Herbert Mead; years later I felt vindicated when I came across Randall Collins's *Three Sociological Traditions* in which Goffman is put squarely in the Durkheimian lineage, where he truly belongs. I also read a lot of Anthony Giddens, who is always useful to students because his texts are highly pedagogical and learned if repetitive. Lastly, I ingested the complete works of Baudrillard, because he was one of my examiners for the MA at Nanterre, and

concluded that he was a flimflam artist. That cured me once and for all from what emerged later as the American-made malady of 'postmodernism'.

At the close of my year at Chapel Hill, I returned to France to do my mandatory military service. But instead of being sent to the barracks, thanks to my 'dual' degrees, I was dispatched to the Pacific island of New Caledonia to work for the former French Office of Colonial Research (ORSTOM). I was one of three sociologists in a small 'lab' investigating social change, urbanization, education, and youth culture among the native Kanaks, right in the midst of an independentist uprising that paralyzed the island and forced the French government to impose a state of emergency. You could not have dreamt of a better place and time to learn the ropes of social research and to do so in a reflexive mode: the very fact of conducting inquiries into Kanak communities and culture was an insult to the rabid advocates of continued French rule. Any sociological act or proposition in that context was potentially explosive, so you had at all times to exert special vigilance, epistemological and political.

The nexus of race, class and space on the island took extreme forms that made it a fabulous historical laboratory – and prepared me well for the same in Chicago. New Caledonia was an incredibly backward colonial society ruled by a small cluster of wealthy white dynasties controlling trade, public employment and politics from their stronghold of Nouméa, the island's only city. The European settlers had seized most of the valuable land and pushed the Melanesians into the central mountain range or parked them off into remote reservations, while the French state controlled the gigantic open-air nickel mines that dotted the territory. The Kanaks were granted citizenship only in 1946 and voting rights in 1958; their first university graduate was Nidoïsh Naisseline, who got a MA in sociology from Nanterre in 1972, and then founded one of the main independentist parties. But, by the time nationalist consciousness bloomed in the 1980s, the Kanaks had been made a numerical minority in their own land by a policy of organized migration from France's mainland and other overseas dominions. They had no option but to take up arms to cause a violent crisis of reproduction to forge a path toward independence (after many tragedies and negotiations over the ensuing three decades, a referendum over independence took place on the island in late 2018).

Being a *zoreille* (the derogatory name given by New Caledonian settlers to people from metropolitan France, suspected of favoring Kanak rule), a white man, an employee of the colonizing state, yet working to spotlight the marginalization of Melanesians in their own land, had its existential as well as epistemological complexities. I had made close friendships with Kanak militants while teaching a sociology course on rural development aimed at Melanesian schoolteachers. As a result, I was able to follow their struggle from inside, to circulate across the chunks of territory they controlled, and even to conduct fieldwork in the outer island of Lifou during 'the events'. It is in this tense atmosphere, marked by military raids, street demonstrations, bombings, barricades, assassinations, and a curfew, that I ran a survey of the primary school system of Nouméa covering 1,139 pupils and wrote my first publications on the role of the educational system in the perpetuation of the colonial order and on the impossible social position of Melanesian youths, caught between the dying tribal society of the reservation and the modern lure of a city that marginalized them.

I also struck up a correspondence with Bourdieu, which kept me motivated when the social atmosphere on the island got suffocating. I read widely in the sociology of education and development and sampled the classic and contemporary anthropology of the South Pacific which stocked the shelves of the library of the South Pacific Commission across the street from ORSTOM. I worked my way through Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory to put New Caledonia in a global frame. And I studied Durkheim, Mauss, Halbwachs, and Bourdieu's books up close, among which I must single out *Le Sens pratique* (1980, trans. *The Logic of Practice*) for its sheer theoretical power and subtlety.

DV: You have sketched the long and winding road that took you from Montpellier to Nouméa. Now, how did you travel from the South Pacific to the South Side of Chicago and who influenced you in the Mecca of American sociology?

LW: At the end of my two-year sojourn in New Caledonia, I had to make a dicey intellectual decision: where to go do my doctorate. I had a job offer from ORSTOM but Chapel Hill, Ann Arbor, Madison and Chicago had all admitted me with lavish fellowships (Berkeley was the most attractive place intellectually but they did not provide financial support for foreign students so I did not apply there). I opted for Chicago for the lure of the city and the interdisciplinary tradition of the university. What a shock when I landed there!

The first shock was *existential*: Chicago sported levels of economic inequality, racial segregation, housing degradation, and street violence downright unthinkable in Western Europe. And I could feel those daily because my student apartment sat right on the borderline between the rich, white, secure stronghold of Hyde Park, home of the university, and the poor, black and dangerous neighborhood of Woodlawn. In fact, Hyde Park was surrounded on three sides by a sea of African-American destitution that university people viewed with fear and scorn. Residing right on the faultline of class, race, and space on the South Side; absorbing the surreal spectacle of ghostlike districts littered with abandoned buildings, barricaded stores, and residents seemingly reduced to social zombies; negotiating the apartheid-like organization of the city day-to-day: those were the existential factors that goaded me to wish to study race and class in the American metropolis. I needed to make sociological sense of what was a daily emotional stressor and abiding civic puzzlement.

The second shock was *intellectual*: the department was ultra-conservative on the mental front. It defined 'mainstream sociology' (through its journal, the *American Journal of Sociology*) as a triadic mix of rational choice, demography, and stratification-organizations, but it was closed to the emerging currents of the decade: the rebirth of social theory, the blossoming of cultural and historical sociology, the rising importance of gender and the emotions, and the proliferation of microsociologies. Thus the most recent and adventurous book featured on the 'prelim list' for the doctoral exam in stratification was Blau and Duncan's *The American Occupational Structure*, published in 1967! Apparently no one on the faculty had heard of class, Braverman, Gramsci, Foucault, or recent European social theory, let alone feminism (that changed fast when George Steinmetz joined the department). It did not take me long to size up the chasm between my expectations and the profile of the place.

After one quarter of classes, I was ready to leave Chicago for Berkeley or Madison (I was attracted by their Class Analysis and Historical Change program, run by Iván Sezlényi and Erik Wright, who had just published his much-awaited tome on *Classes* [1985]). But then two heavyweights of the department interceded to change my plans. James Coleman summoned me to the fabled 'tearoom' to argue that I would become a better social scientist if I had to fight every step of the way for my ideas, instead of 'swimming with the tide' among fellow radical sociologists. (Coleman was gruff and daunting in the classroom, but outside of it he was always kind to me and supportive of my work, even when he disagreed fiercely with it: he once scribbled in the margins of a course paper I had written explaining Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence, '*This is the devil's sociology*'!) And Bill Wilson invited me to join the research team working on his big project on the social transformation of the inner city, which would allow me to resolve my existential quandary as a Frenchman on the city's South Side.

So I stayed in Chicago. I returned to my Caledonia materials and quickly wrote my MA on school inequality in Nouméa with Coleman. I started a three-year stint on Wilson's team and soon became his closest collaborator. I had read his 1978 blockbuster on *The Declining Significance of Race* upon landing in Chicago and we 'hit it off' both intellectually and personally from the moment we met. Working with Bill was exciting and rewarding, not just because he was a steadfast and generous mentor and a model of intellectual courage (as well as a warm and caring human being, a side of him he did not much show on the professional scene), but because it placed me in the eye of a scholarly and policy vortex on race, class and the state and it allowed me to observe from within the fabrication of the moral panic over the 'underclass', as I recount in *The Invention of the 'Underclass': A Study in the Politics of Knowledge* (2022).

I survived Chicago sociology by doing most of my coursework in the anthropology department: I took classes with Marshall Sahlins, Bernard Cohn, John and Jean Comaroff, Terrence Turner and Raymond Smith, all of whom were historically and theoretically oriented. Among anthropologists, there was great intellectual effervescence: it was the heyday of the meshing of structuralism and historicism (Sahlins had just published *Islands of History* [1985]), Gramsci and Bourdieu (in Jean Comaroff's *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* [1985]), Marxism and colonialism (one of my course buddies from anthropology was a certain David Graeber). I passed specialty exams in class analysis with George Steinmetz (who showed that you could mesh theory and history by doing it) and Adam Przeworski (whose humor and boundless knowledge of politics I relished) and on culture and power with John Comaroff and Wendy Griswold, and I managed to publish both of my exam papers on the puzzle of the middle class and on symbolic power in Marx and Bourdieu. One last item: Norbert Elias's beautiful *Introduction to Sociology* ([1968] 1981) impressed and delighted me. His call to shift our focus from *homo clausus* (the singular, closed individual) to *homines aperti* (a multiplicity of interconnected agents) resonated with the early Marx and with Mauss's notion of 'total man'. I found his historical works, *The Civilizing Process* ([1939] 1978) and *The Court Society* ([1968] 1983), germane to the concerns of the Annales Schools. He seemed like a relational close cousin of Max Weber (when Weber himself is doggedly analytical).

DV: A body of work seems strikingly absent from your Chicago education: the Chicago school!

LW: Of course, I studied the key works spawned by the long and illustrious lineage of Chicago sociologists. I even purchased as many volumes in 'The Heritage of Sociology' series with the University of Chicago Press as I could afford and explored the writings of Park and Burgess, W.I. Thomas, Wirth, and E. Franklin Frazier, as well as Charles Horton Cooley, Georg Simmel (in the superb selection by Don Levine, *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*), Alfred Schutz and Kenneth Burke, and a first-rate volume on *Black Sociologists: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (1974) edited by James Blackwell and Morris Janowitz. But I was put off by the naïve naturalism and ecological reductionism of the First Chicago school – which came nowhere close to the Durkheimians in their theoretical grasp of social morphology (as in the work of Maurice Halbwachs in particular).

I thought the notions of 'natural areas', 'moral regions', and the 'race relations cycle' profoundly anti-sociological: thin scholarly rationalizations of the peculiar ways in which class and caste power relations had played out in space during a short segment of Chicago history. How could sociologists characterize the coming of blacks into white areas as 'invasion'? How could they describe lower-class district as 'disorganized' by definition? *Pace* Park, it is emphatically not 'with humans as with plants'! A soft version of this naturalism survives today in the cottage industry of 'neighborhood effects', which treats as primary cause what is nothing more than a mediating variable, and a weak one at that: the degree to which place matters is a function of the way the state builds and regulates appropriated physical space and thereby fosters, prevents, or tolerates multiple inequalities to accumulate spatially. In other words, neighborhood effects are disguised state effects. (I try to show this in the second chapter of *Bourdieu in the City: Challenging Urban Theory* [2023].)

I enjoyed the lively studies of Second Chicago school, Howard Becker, Joseph Gusfield, Anselm Strauss, and Fred Davis, but wondered again where macro-structures of power had gone in their accounts. It seemed as if society was composed of a motley collection of exotic and self-contained microcosms of deviant categories governed by local interactional rules. (This exotic bias and predilection for 'studying down and out' persist to this day: a recent *Urban Ethnography Reader* in the Chicago mold contains no fewer than 27 out of 52 chapters on poor black men in the American 'inner city'!) Now, I put Herbert Blumer and Everett Hughes in a separate category. Blumer's critique of variable-oriented sociology and his dissection of 'a science without concepts' remain just as topical today as when he published them in the 1960s. As for Hughes, he had a knack for detecting signal quandaries of social life, as demonstrated by his subtle essays, gathered in *The Sociological Eye* [1970]), on 'dirty work' and 'master status' traits, 'racial frontiers' and 'bastard institutions', the 'publics of sociology' and 'methodological ethnocentrism'; or his characterization of institutions as 'going concerns', which is surprisingly close to Durkheim's critique of pragmatism (the current international resurgence of interest in Hughes's work is welcome if overdue).

But society is not *just* 'symbolic interaction'; it is *also* a material distribution of efficient resources or capitals that exists independently of the consciousness and will of agents; and sociology must always start with constructing this structure of invisible

relations that governs and indeed skews observable interactions (while forbidding others altogether). The same flaw mars ethnomethodology, whose idea that social structure is an emergent product of the deployment of the sense-making procedures of agents overlooks the fact that these agents are situated in a preexisting structure that moreover lives inside of them through the bodily sedimentation of their individual and collective history. But by an extraordinary paradox, even the works of the co-founders of ethnomethodology, Garfinkel and Cicourel, are distinctively disembodied. (A signal exception is David Sudnow's study of jazz piano improvisation, *Ways of the Hand* [1978], a gorgeous exemplar of carnal sociology, but he did not spawn followers.)

Now St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton's *Black Metropolis* (1945, 1993) held and holds a special place in my library: I was so frustrated to own only a tattered used copy – shockingly, the book had been out of print for nearly two decades – that I tricked the University of Chicago Press into republishing it. (I told its sociology editor, Doug Mitchell, that Bill Wilson had *agreed* to preface it while I told Bill that the press had *decided* to reprint the tome and wanted him to write a preface for it.) It is one of the top-ten social science books of all time but, analytically and methodologically, it is not a Chicago-school study, *non obstante* its dedication to 'Robert E. Park, friend of the Negro people', and Cayton's doctoral studies at Chicago. It is a product of the anthropological shop run by W. Lloyd Warner, as made clear in the long appendix written by Warner himself that few have bothered to read. (I know that, at the time, Warner was a member of both the sociology and anthropology departments at Chicago, but his own inspiration came from Durkheim, A.-R. Radcliffe-Brown and Elton Mayo, not Park and his colleagues). Its proper lineage is the research on racial rule in the Jim Crow South by John Dollard, Hortense Powdermaker, Burleigh and Mary Gardner, and Allison Davis (Drake had been on the research team of Davis that produced the classic *Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class* [1941]). *Black Metropolis* diverges from the Chicago canon, first, by linking the structure of Bronzeville firmly to its history; second, by violating the ecological model to spotlight the organized suasion of white power; and, third, by sketching a sociological *protoconcept* of the ghetto that breaks with the ordinary notion of it as a space of exclusion by capturing the inner dynamics of black dignity and solidarity it fosters.

Bourdieu writes somewhere that 'one makes sociology against one's training as much as with it' and this is certainly true in my case. Overall, coming from Europe with a resolutely rationalist disposition antithetical to moral empiricism, I was negatively influenced by the Chicago school of sociology, positively influenced by the power-and-symbolism-in-history mold of Chicago anthropology, and intent on starting from the ground up in my approach to the vestiges of the ghetto after I decided to make them the subject of my doctoral dissertation.

DV: What prodded you to enter into the ghetto to study it from within? After all, the wave of field studies of the 1960s, triggered by the civil rights movement and the ensuing race riots, had ebbed by the 1970s. And growing up in the South of France was not exactly preparation for exploring the South Side of Chicago . . .

LW: The existing literature on poverty and race in the 'inner city' – a pseudo-geographic euphemism for the ghetto and its remnants – was the product of a *distant*

gaze, laced with notions drawn from American moral and racial common sense posturing as concepts. As a Frenchman, that common sense did not make sense to me. Existing research also offered a picture drawn *from above*, and therefore blind to the everyday realities of living, laboring, loving and loathing within the *terra damnata* that the historic Bronzeville had become after imploding in the 1960s. For me it was both an episte-mological and an ethical imperative to start from within and from below, as a corrective; surely the anthropological disposition to make the foreign familiar by observing it up close also played a role, as did my earlier first-hand experience of colonial domination in New Caledonia. (I felt fully justified when I met Philippe Bourgois, who was engaged in a similar enterprise in Spanish Harlem during those years, doing the research that led to *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* [1995]; we became accomplices and consider each other intellectual brothers).

With few exceptions, the study of racialized poverty in the US was and still is aggressively atheoretical, if not anti-theoretical; in lieu of theory, you found technical discussions about the measurement of variables and their statistical connections of the kind excoriated by Herbert Blumer or by Stanley Lieberson in his must-read book, *Making It Count* (1984). The resulting void was filled by the academic myth of the urban 'underclass' in full bloom from 1977 to 1997. I show in *The Invention of the 'Under-class'* (2022) that this inchoate notion, initially promoted by philanthropic foundations, validated by journalism, and adopted by scholars of race and poverty as a matter of course, was what Kenneth Burke calls a 'terministic screen': not a 'reflection or a selection' from reality, but 'a *deflection from reality*.' It conveyed a deprecating and behaviorist view of the black subproletariat as a motley mass of dangerous social misfits and of the 'the ghetto as an epidemic of social problems' (to quote the title of a mor-alizing screed that, incredibly, was published by the *American Journal of Sociology*!).

Here we come upon the first task of social theory, which consists in the *critique of categories* through their historicization and scrutiny of their social uses, cognitive costs and epistemic profits. (This is a banner raised high by my friend Rogers Brubaker, another personal encounter from my Chicago days that has shaped my vision of the mission and promise of sociological theory early and late). Its corollary is to avoid the logic of the trial: sociologists are neither moralists, in the business of incriminating or exculpating institutions, nor social parrots who merely echo the views of the people they study. They must imperatively *pose their own questions and fabricate their own con-cepts*, that is, analytic constructs obeying criteria of semantic coherence, type specificity, logical consistency, and empirical productivity, instead of borrowing their queries from politics and policy and adopting the folk notions current in their subject of study.

I started exploring life on Chicago's South Side as a research assistant on William Julius Wilson's team project (launched upon the publication of *The Truly Disadvantaged* [1987]) and then I branched out on my own after I stumbled upon the Woodlawn boxing gym. That little club located on a devastated thoroughfare only two blocks from my home, but seemingly a galaxy away, proved to be an extraordinary meeting ground and observation post to follow young black men in their everyday routines and to grasp their life strategies – how they dealt with the street, the school, the labor market, landlords, welfare agencies and functionaries of the penal state. Together with an institutional comparison with a defamed district of France's urban periphery, this helped me build

from the ground up the theory of the ghetto, its structure, functions, and historical transformation summed up in *Urban Outcasts* (2008).

DV: This leads us to the trio of concepts you reworked to tackle what you call 'socio-spatial seclusion' in the city on the two sides of the Atlantic: ghetto, hyperghetto, anti-ghetto. Can you recount how you forged them?

LW: I started with a paradox: the social sciences have used the term ghetto profusely without bothering to forge a robust concept of it, so that its meaning changes accordion-like, shrinking and expanding in turn with changes in the peregrinations, and elite perception of, dispossessed and dishonored categories in the metropolis. This is what I tried to do in a series of papers I am rewriting into the book *The Two Faces of the Ghetto*: to craft a Weberian ideal-type of the ghetto that enables us to capture its distinctiveness as an urban constellation and then compare it to other sociospatial formations at the intersection of ethnicity and marginality.

To do that, I take the three canonical cases of 'ghettos', the ones which all scholars agree qualify *qua* ghettos, namely, the Jewish ghetto of the principalities of early modern Europe, the black American ghetto of the Fordist United States, and the Burakumin districts in post-Tokugawa Japan, and I extract, through analytic induction, their shared structure and functions in the city. (Here I was inspired by the approach of Orlando Patterson in his majestic study of *Slavery and Social Death* [1982].) It emerges then that a ghetto is composed of four structural components, stigma, constraint, spatial confinement, and institutional parallelism: it arises when a dishonored population is forced to reside in a special district reserved for it, in which it deploys communal organizations of succor, persistence, and resistance. And it fulfills two functions: economic extraction and social ostracization. On the one hand, the dominant category (Christians in 16th-century Venice and whites in 20th-century Chicago) wishes to attract the subordinate category (Jews and blacks, respectively) because of the economic benefits they furnish (access to financial services, to long distance trade, and medical expertise in the case of Jews, unskilled industrial labor in the case of blacks). But, on the other, it does not want to consort with it as it holds that the subaltern are dishonored, contaminated and con-taminating, agents of physical and moral degeneration. How do you bring into the city, as an indispensable cog in the division of labor, a population you do not want to mix with? Answer: force it to reside in its reserved district so as to minimize contact – and especially sexual intimacy – with its members. The ghetto is this special sociospatial device that effects the *structural integration* of the stigmatized category while denying its *social integration*.

Forging a solid analytic concept of the ghetto enables us to break decisively with the prevalent representation, sustained by common sense and much social science, of the ghetto as a space of social disintegration, or a neighborhood characterized by intense poverty, decrepit housing, violence, crime, and vice, an urban hellhole from which residents want to flee and outsiders scurry to avoid (the infamous 'no-go area'). It turns out that the ghetto, in its bloom, is not a foil but a magnet; it is a vehicle for collective economic enrichment and social uplifting, not impoverishment; it is characterized by institutional flowering, not dissipation; it is an engine of cultural production spawning a positive collective identity, not a cultural void. Constructing a sociological concept

reveals, then, that the ghetto is a *Janus-faced institution*: in the vertical dimension of inequality, it is a sword wielded by the dominant (Christian, white, Yamato Japanese) to exploit, seclude and subordinate the target population (Jews, blacks, Burakumin); in the horizontal dimension of equality, it is a shield that allows that population to experience reciprocity and dignity in its reserved territory, and also to begin to accumulate the economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital needed to challenge and eventually overturn subjugation. This is what I call the *paradoxical benefits of ghettoization* for the subordinate category.

As we recover this horizontal dimension, we must be careful to stress that the solidarity of the subordinate in the miniature 'city within the city' is itself the result of exclusion by the dominant. This is why the attachment of Jews to the *Judenstadt* and of blacks to the Black Belt is shot through with ambivalence: it is a place of their own, an object of pride, but it is a dependent and incomplete cosmos, spawned by suffusive material and symbolic violence, that concretizes their inferiority. In dissecting the ghetto, as with every institution, we must imperatively hold together the horizontal and the vertical dimensions – conduct what I call a *diagonal sociology*. In sum, the ghetto is not a *rate* (of poverty, segregation, violence, etc.) but a *relation of power inscribed in space* imbued with dynamism by the tensionful coupling of extraction and ostracization,

Elaborating this construct enables us to detect and avoid two key mistakes in the history of urban sociology: the conflation of the ghetto, born of ethnic hostility and constraint, with the ethnic cluster, spawned by ethnic affinity and choice, is what I call 'Wirth's error', after Louis Wirth, author of *The Ghetto* (1928); the equation of the ghetto with an area of intense poverty is what I call, with affection, 'Wilson's error', after William Julius Wilson, author of *When Work Disappears* (1996). What Wilson skillfully dissects in that book is not the ghetto but the *hyperghetto*, that is, the sociospatial formation that emerged out of the ruins of the ghetto *after its implosion* in the 1960s. Unlike the ghetto, which contains all members of the stigmatized category, rich and poor, the hyperghetto is doubly segregated by race and class. It is devoid of economic function and, as a consequence, it has lost its institutional shield: the communal institutions have been replaced by the social control institutions of the state tasked with containing a population deemed destitute, dissipated and dangerous.

The theoretical elaboration of the concept, the specification of its components (structure, function, experience), the control of its logical makeup, all this enables us to reformulate our research question, refine our empirical observation, and reach clear and consistent conclusions couched in a univocal vocabulary, instead of wading in a puddle of *hybrid constructs,* mixing common sense and half-scholarly notions that create a false sense of agreement when the same term actually evokes different meanings. This is well illustrated by the dissemination of the terminology and imagery of the 'ghetto' across Europe at a moment when the ghetto has vanished in the US and European districts of relegation are moving away from it structurally and functionally: they are *anti-ghettos*, ethnically mixed areas devoid of an autonomous organizational mesh and incapable of spawning a shared identity for their residents. Nowadays the ghetto pertains to the political imaginary, not to urban reality: its figure has become central to debates on inequality, marginality, and justice in the city not because ghettos are proliferating across

societies, but because the ghetto is the fictive antithesis to the ideals of equality, solidarity, and meritocracy proclaimed by liberal democracies but savaged by neoliberalism.

More generally, we must distinguish sharply between three manners of deploying a concept: a rhetorical usage, which seeks to catch attention (as when scholars speak of 'apartheid' to point to segregation); a metaphorical usage, based on good or bad analogies (the 'gilded ghetto' of the upper class); and an analytic usage, which aims at producing descriptions, interpretations, and explanations of social forms. Sociologists should shun the first, be careful about the second, and make sure they stick with the third.

DV: *Urban Outcasts* lays out a set of methodological principles for a comparative sociology of inequality and marginality in the metropolis, among them the need to break with folk notions; to place a given urban formation into the series of historical transformations of which it is a product; and to pay close attention to the multisided role of the state. It also makes the case for mating fieldwork to institutional comparison. What do you see as the relationship between theory and ethnography?

LW: Provided it is animated by a rationalist epistemology, *ethnography can be a powerful tool for theoretical development*. To start with, it helps effect the indispensable rupture with common sense, be it ordinary, policy or scholarly. Next, it constantly throws conundrums, puzzles and dares at the researcher. This forces you to turn back onto your analytic categories and query their virtues and their vices, and to re-elaborate them as you go – rather than abandon them in favor of folk notions, as too many ethnographers do for lack of epistemological self-awareness. Most practitioners of ethnography are not theoretically fluent and most theorists are not versed in ethnographic practice, so each camp discounts the other (the existing division of labor of the profession gives them full warrant for that) and covers up its ignorance with pseudo-epistemological arguments, when they need to work hand-in-hand.

In point of fact, *the reasoned alliance of theory and ethnography reinforces both*. (I argue this point at length in a book of ethnographic epistemology I just finished entitled *Misère de l'ethnographie de la misère*, due out in Spring 2023). Theory grows in complexity, nuance and pertinence as it confronts what Harold Garfinkel calls 'the demonics of social action'. Ethnography increases its descriptive acuity, interpretative potency, and explanatory valence when it is guided by a clear-eyed model of the phenomenon at hand. Most of the concepts I forged to articulate and then answer the questions I was pursuing find their roots in fieldwork. As a general rule, I think it fruitful to always make a dogged effort to see, hear, touch and feel the phenomenon you wish to theorize, to incorporate its *aesthesis* in the model you are building of it. Conversely, to produce good ethnography, you need strong theory. We need *theory* because without it we are drowning in a bottomless ocean of stimuli, caught in a blizzard of factoids, swept by a continuous flow of impressions without rhyme or reason. Theory enables us to cut up objects in the infinite empirical manifold; it gives us a reasoned principle of selection and organization – it allows us to escape the predicament of Jorge Luis Borges's 'Funes the Memorious' (as pointed out by Javier Auyero), who, because he can perceive and remember absolutely everything in the slightest detail, can focus on nothing. We also need *strong* theory, which does not mean rigid, know-it-all, conspicuous or arrogant theory, but, rather, a reflexive theory with a clear conception of the agent, social

structure, and knowledge, a flexible theory aware of its strengths and limitations, its perimeter of pertinence and its blind spots. But let this be clear: theory is not the haughty master of social inquiry but its humble servant.

A second powerful instrument of epistemological rupture and theoretical construction is to *historicize the phenomenon studied*. In my case, this meant turning to the historiography of race and space in the American metropolis over the full span of the 20th century. I read everything I could find on the making and unmaking of the ghetto in Detroit, Cleveland, Washington, Pittsburgh, New York, and Milwaukee. Luckily, the full trajectory of Chicago's Bronzeville is described in excellent monographs covering its rise from below (Allen Spear, *Black Chicago*, 1968), its apogee at the mid-century point (Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 1945), its postwar remaking from above by the Keynesian state (Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 1983), and its implosion after the 1960s (William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, 1987). This helped me detect and overcome another major flaw of the tale of the 'underclass': its ahistorical and presentist character. Anyone who has read Louis Chevalier's *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses* (1958) or Gareth Stedman Jones's *Outcast London* (1971) cannot seriously entertain the notion that a despised and desperate subproletariat first emerged in the deindustrializing American metropolis of the 1970s!

DV: In *Urban Outcasts* (2008), you also elaborate two new concepts, 'advanced marginality' and 'territorial stigma'. What are their roots and roles?

LW: Insofar as I can judge from the symposia devoted to it and live reactions, *Urban Outcasts* is a book that is rarely read in full. Americans focus on the first part, which maps out the historical transition from the *communal ghetto* of the Fordist period (1915–68) to the *hyperghetto* that comes to replace it after the acme of the civil rights movement and the race riots of the 1960s. Europeans concentrate on the second part, which refutes the thesis of the *transatlantic convergence* of territories of marginality on the pattern of the black American ghetto – indeed continental districts of social dereliction are moving away from that pattern, they are literally turning into anti-ghettos. Both overlook the third part of the book, in which I discuss the *emergence* of a new regime of urban poverty I christen *advanced marginality* – advanced because it is neither residual nor cyclical or conjunctural but inscribed in the very architecture of the most advanced economies. This marginality in the city differs fundamentally from its predecessor in that it is fed by the fragmentation of wage labor and the retraction of the welfare state, leading to the historical emergence of a *precariat* plagued by economic dereliction and social insecurity, as well as by the diffusion of spatial taint.

I forged the concept of *territorial stigmatization* by wedding Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power with Goffman's analysis of the management of 'spoiled identities' to tease out the logic and effects of place-based denigration. The concept originates in fieldwork conducted on Chicago's South Side and in the Parisian periphery, where residents on both sides of the Atlantic disparaged and disowned their neighborhoods and distanced themselves from their neighbors, but it applies far beyond these two sites, as shown by the large body of literature the notion has generated across four continents. Spatial stigma is a novel and distinctive phenomenon that coalesced at century's end along with the dissolution of the districts of relegation emblematic of the Fordist-

Keynesian phase of capitalism. It differs from the traditional topography of disrepute in the industrial city in that it has become autonomized from the stigmata of ethnicity and poverty; it has become a national and even international phenomenon (in many big cities of Europe, Latin America and Australia, the worst neighborhoods are called 'The Bronx'!); and it carries connotations of social disintegration and elicits reactions of revulsion leading to punitive policies (whereas the *bas-fonds* of the early industrial city were seen as forming an organized counter-society that elicited fascination and fostered the development of industrial amelioration and social work, as shown by Dominique Kalifa in his rich book, *Les Bas-fonds. Histoire d'un imaginaire*, 2013; trans. *Vice, Crime, and Poverty: How the Western Imagination Invented the Underworld*).

As I elaborate in *Bourdieu in the City* (2023), one of the core theoretical teachings of Bourdieu, derived from his reappropriation of the philosophical anthropology of Ernst Cassirer, is to heed the *constitutive efficacy of symbolic forms*. To take territorial stigma seriously, to chart its origins, centres of production (in the journalistic, political and academic fields), and modes of diffusion; to track its impacts on the subjectivity and social strategies of residents of disparaged districts, the surrounding citizenry, commercial operators and state actors: all of this allows us to produce a richer account of the contemporary social structure and experience of urban marginality and inequality. Conversely, delving deep into the socio-symbolic strategies, ranging from submission to detachment to defiance, fashioned by the residents of defamed quarters to cope with spatial denigration can help us illumine the broader logics of symbolic domination as it unfolds in the metropolis.

DV: To stay on the topic of urban marginality, in the introduction to their edited volume *Class, Ethnicity and State in the Polarized Metropolis: Putting Wacquant to Work*, John Flint and Ryan Powell (2019) take you to task for 'a relative ignorance of the agency and resistance of the urban precariat' and 'an over-reliance on the experiences of the US in theory-building to the neglect of other national contexts'. What is your response to them?

LW: I gladly plead guilty on both counts – and I do respond to my critics in the book's closing chapter as well as in *Bourdieu in the City* – and for a reason: I believe extreme cases are very good to think with and especially fruitful for theorizing, provided you keep in mind their outlier status. They often allow you to see the phenomenon in sharper contours and brighter colors. They are, as it were, realized ideal types (I know that, in his essays on *Wissenschaftslehre*, Weber writes that ideal types are not historical instantiations but, then, he violates this tenet in his own sociological practice). As the epicenter of the neoliberal revolution, the United States offers us a hyperbolic actualization of the nexus of advanced marginality in the city and penalization as statecraft. No wonder it is also the society where the precariat is most developed, divided, and devoid of the capacity for self-representation and self-protection. By the design of American institutions, starting with the hyper-fragmentation of the bureaucratic field, their only hope is individual escape, not collective amelioration.

There is a second reason for focusing on the United States when it comes to the penal state: as I show in *Prisons of Poverty* (2009), it has exported its penal categories and policies around the world and fed a global firestorm of law and order – a decade or two after having exported labor deregulation and disciplinary workfare. For instance, 'zero-

tolerance' policing was tried and tested out in New York City and then disseminated in Western Europe and Latin America by globe-trotting experts and pro-market think tanks. Exportation does not mean mechanical imposition and replication: each country has adapted (and sometimes rejected after trying them) US nostrums in accordance with its own political history and institutional makeup. Indeed, the theoretical focus on the United States makes it possible to draw a spectrum of national trajectories that diverge from it and to search for the factors behind this divergence. Sketching the plurality of roads to the penal state, in return, allows us to dig deeper into the causes of *American extremism* – rather than *exceptionalism*.

On the topic of agency and resistance, my response is threefold. The first is a matter of logical priority: you must identify structural forms and mechanisms of domination before you can pay attention to how agents on the ground respond to them. My attention is trained on the former and I am happy leaving it to others to probe the latter. Second, I am alert to agency but I prioritize agency from above because state managers, corporations, think tanks, and criminal justice professionals have played the lead role in driving marginality and penality over the past three decades. (Academics are wont to fall for the 'romance of resistance' from below because it satisfies their mystified identification with the underdog). Third, the question of subaltern resistance is at bottom an empirical question. When I scan labor and punishment trends around the world, I find that the precariat has neither the position nor the dispositions to successfully challenge them: so far, their 'resistance' has failed to make a difference. More generally, the postindustrial working class has failed to fashion new modes of group-making and claims-making suited to the emerging class structure, characterized by precarization at the bottom and financialization at the top.

DV: In *Punishing the Poor* (2009), you enroll Bourdieu's concept of 'bureaucratic field' to map out the rise and spread of the 'penalization of poverty' as an integral component in the formation of the neoliberal state. What led you to this little-used concept and what role does it play in your rethinking of punishment as a 'core state capacity'?

LW: Very coarsely put, four classical theoretical traditions feed the study of punishment (aside from the vast body of criminology which is aggressively anti-theoretical). The Durkheimian strand construes penality as a form of communication, an expressive language that channels collective emotions, through which the boundaries of the community are drawn and dramatized, as illustrated by *Wayward Puritans*, Kai Erikson's (1966) classic study of the Salem witch trials. The neo-Marxist tradition, running from Engels's writings on the law to Rusche and Kirschheimer's ([1939] 1995) *Punishment and Social Structure* to contemporary studies of the link between incarceration and unemployment, conceives criminal justice as a material instrument of class control whose trends mirror those of the sphere of production. W.E.B. Du Bois dispersed writings on criminality and punishment, such as his piece on 'The Spawn of Slavery: The Convict-Lease System in the South' (1904), fits within this materialist tradition in that he adds racially-inflected penality as a lever for exploitation.

The third lineage, descended from Max Weber and Norbert Elias, focuses on professionals of rationality and risk, elite mentalities and cultural sensibilities. I put Michel

Foucault and his epigones within this broad Weberian lineage, given his concern for the uniqueness of the West and the rationalization of domination through the societal diffusion of 'disciplines' designed to 'make bodies docile and useful' in *Discipline and Punish* ([1975] 1977). Foucault's portrayal of the 'disciplinary society' bears more than a passing resemblance to Weber's 'iron cage'. Lastly, there is a distinctively North American tradition that focuses on the micro-mechanisms that produce criminal deviance, shape identities, and mold the self of the criminal and the inmate. The study of labelling initiated by Frank Tannenbaum and Edwin Lemert, Erving Goffman's (1961) *Asylums* and John Irwin's (1970) *The Felon* are exemplary statements of this approach which grasps punishment from the standpoint of the punished and their coping strategies.

Where does Bourdieu enter onto this theoretical scenery? He gives us two concepts to rethink punishment: the notion of 'symbolic power' points to the monopolization of the capacity to impose consequential classifications on society and to inflict dishonor on its members in the form of penal sanction; the notion of 'bureaucratic field' suggests that there is a *struggle going on inside the state* between rival agencies that purport to resolve social problems by applying supportive social treatment (the feminine Left hand) or disciplinary sanctions (the masculine Right hand). The Bourdieusian take invites us to make three interconnected moves that reconfigure the *problématique* of punishment as political activity. The first is to *decouple crime from punishment* and to acknowledge that, from the time of its historical invention in the late 16th century, the penal prison has always served as an implement to manage urban marginality and to assert the prerogatives of the ruler through the theater of penal sanction. The second move is to treat social welfare policy and penal policy as *two sides of the same coin of poverty policy* and to acknowledge that these two policy streams must be understood together, insofar as they treat the same dispossessed and disreputable population and deploy the same discursive tropes and administrative techniques. The fact that, compared to other post-industrial nations, the US is an outlier in both welfare and punishment is not a happenstance: there is a deep structural and functional relationship between these two domains of state action.

The third move is to *hold together the material and the symbolic moments of punishment* and to realize that its functions of control and communication, associated with the Marxist and the Durkheimian schools respectively, are not antinomic but complementary and even mutually sustaining. When you arrest a suspect and incarcerate a convict, you are simultaneously exerting physical force and symbolic force: you are curtailing the material entitlements of that person as well as broadcasting a moral message by amputating his membership in the civic compact and soiling his dignity. Lastly, with Bourdieu we can integrate within a structural perspective the agentic role of state managers, technical specialists and social elites (as recommended by the neo-Weberian perspective) as key protagonists occupying the different positions that compose the field of power, within which the bureaucratic field itself is located, as well as the identities forged by the targets of penal action (as favored by the symbolic interactionists). In short, Bourdieu's tools allow us to absorb and transcend the four theoretical perspectives that preceded it.

You are right to note that 'bureaucratic field' has been little used, and this is something of a mystery to me because Bourdieu's 1993 article, 'Rethinking the State: Genesis

and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field', is one of his most powerful and germinal texts. (It is on an intellectual par with, and echoes, 'Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field' [1971], which serves as template for all of Bourdieu's subsequent studies of fields.) On my reading, together with his related writings around *The Weight of the World* ([1993] 1998) and his course at the Collège de France *On the State* ([2012] 2016), it offers not one but three intermingled models of the state: a genetic account of the multisecular transition from the dynastic to the bureaucratic mode of domination correlative of the invention of the 'public'; a structural model of the state as the 'central bank of symbolic power' that fosters the institutionalization of the 'universal'; and a functional model of the dynamic interplay of the 'two Hands' of the state, that which protects and that which disciplines. I draw on the latter two models to place criminal justice squarely in the Right hand of the state; to point to the ongoing colonization of Left-hand functions by the Right hand (as when protective welfare turns into disciplinary workfare); and to propose that the growth and glorification of punishment as a material cum symbolic agency for managing urban marginality (what I call 'prisonfare') is a key element of contemporary statecraft.

DV: What is the relationship between workfare, prisonfare, and neoliberalism as an institutional regime sweeping through advanced societies? Here you offer a frontal challenge to the economistic conception of neoliberalism that dominates academic and political debates.

 LW: In the 'Theoretical Coda' to *Punishing the Poor*, I contend that the meshing of workfare and prisonfare partakes of the making and makeup of the neoliberal state. Economists have propounded a conception of neoliberalism that equates it with the rule of the 'free market' and the coming of 'small government' and, by and large, other social scientists have adopted that conception. (This is the case, most prominently, of David Harvey in his *Brief History of Neoliberalism* [2007] and of Colin Crouch in *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism* [2011], but also of Anthony Giddens in his early apology of *The Third Way* [1998].) Problem is that it captures the ideology of neoliberalism, not its reality. The comparative sociology of *actually existing neoliberalism* reveals that it involves everywhere the erection of a *Centaur-state,* liberal at the top and paternalistic at the bottom. The neoliberal Leviathan practices *laissez faire et laissez passer* toward corporations and the upper class, at the level of the causes of inequality. But it is fiercely interventionist and authoritarian when it comes to dealing with the destructive consequences of economic deregulation for those at the lower end of the class and status spectrum.

 This is because the imposition of market discipline is never a smooth, self-propelling process; it meets with recalcitrance and triggers resistance; it translates into diffusing social instability and turbulence among the lower class; and it practically undermines the authority of the state. So, it requires institutional contraptions that will anchor and support it, chief among them an enlarged and energetic penal institution. This is something that Karl Polanyi detected in *The Great Transformation* (1945): the commodification of land, labor and money in the half-century leading to the Great Depression tore the social fabric and generated a 'countermovement' aimed at re-embedding them into society. This 20th-century countermovement came from below

and took the form of trade unions and leftist parties offering a socialist alternative to mercantile capitalism. At the onset of our century, this countermovement comes from above; it takes the form of a rightward tilting of the field of power from the Left hand to the Right hand of the state and the reaffirmation of the disciplinary mission of the Leviathan. The building of the penal state is thus a political response to the diffusion of advanced marginality which, paradoxically, the state is chiefly responsible for through its policy of economic deregulation and urban withdrawal. Neoliberalism, then, is best characterized, not as market rule, but as a *bifurcated form of state-making* which is constitutively corrosive of democracy insofar as it splinters citizenship along class lines, saps civic trust at the bottom, and sows the degradation of republican tenets. (Here I converge with Wendy Brown's arguments in *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* [2017].)

So much to say that punishment is not just a topic in the study of crime and deviance but a chapter in the sociology of the state and the theory of group-making. Penal sanctions are a form of *public dishonor*. This is where the link with ethnicity comes in: 'race' as denegated ethnicity is also a form of public dishonor, which explains that punishment everywhere targets populations both destitute *and stigmatized* (a dimension that materialist theories of punishment such as neo-Marxist political economy are totally incapable of grasping). Indeed, *penality can be understood as 'negative sociodicy'*. The term *theodicy* was coined in 1710 by Leibniz in his effort to show that the existence of evil does not contradict the goodness of God. It was reformulated by Max Weber in his sociology of religion, which introduces a dichotomous distinction between the 'theodicy of good fortune' (*Theodizee des Glückes*) and the 'theodicy of suffering' (*Theodizee des Leidens*) or misfortune. The two theodicies serve same function: to justify privilege at the top and deprivation at the bottom, and thereby perpetuate social hierarchy. In his work on education, Bourdieu secularizes the notion to speak of *sociodicy*: the legitimation of the existing order via the consecration of inherited cultural capital. We can reintroduce the Weberian duality back into Bourdieu's view of the state as the fount of honor to discover that the prison operates as the fulcrum of *negative sociodicy*, the public legitimation of the dereliction of the rejects of the market, by extending to them the trope of individual responsibility and (de)merit that anchors the positive sociodicy effected by the higher-education system at the other end of the class structure.

DV: In your recent book, *The Invention of the 'Underclass': A Study in the Politics of Knowledge* (2022), you use the case of the runaway diffusion of this notion across the academic, journalistic, and policy fields, as well as across the Atlantic, followed by its sudden disappearance to tackle head on issues of concept formation and to spot the traps in which 'the social epistemology of dispossessed and dishonored categories in the city' is wont to fall. What led to you write this book and what is the central argument you wish to drive home about theorizing groups?

LW: The Invention of the 'Underclass' is a book I have carried in my head for three decades. Its seeds were planted in the days of my close collaboration with Bill Wilson in the late 1980s by my perplexity at the category and its stunning academic success: should it figure into the sociology of marginality as *tool* of analysis or as an *object* of analysis? (After I finished the book, sorting through my archives of that period, I found the draft

table of contents for such a volume dated October 1988 and it is nearly identical to the final table of contents of 2022!) It draws on the *Begriffsgechichte* of Reinhart Koselleck and the theory of fields and symbolic power of Pierre Bourdieu to chart the strange career of this pseudo-concept and its implications for theories of urban marginality and for the forging of concepts in social science more generally.

At century's close, American social scientists, policy analysts, philanthropies and politicians became obsessed with this fearsome and mysterious new group said to be ravaging the ghetto. The scarecrow category and its demonic imagery, incarnated by the dissolute 'welfare mother' on the feminine side of the family and by the dangerous 'gang banger' on the masculine side of street, were then exported to the United Kingdom and continental Europe and agitated the international study of exclusion in the postindustrial metropolis. I combine intellectual history, participant observation, and conceptual analysis to trace the genesis, metamorphoses, and sudden vanishing of this racialized 'folk devil' (to borrow the apt notion of Stanley Cohen), from the structural conception of Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal to the behavioral notion of Washington think-tank experts to the neo-ecological formulation of sociologist William Julius Wilson. The structural, behavioral and neo-ecological conceptions of the 'underclass' form what I call the 'Bermuda triangle of the underclass' in which the changing historical nexus of caste, class and state in the metropolis effectively vanishes from sight.

What accounts for the 'lemming effect' that drew a generation of scholars of race and poverty over a scientific cliff? What are the conditions for the formation and bursting of such 'conceptual speculative bubbles'? What is the role of think tanks, journalism, and politics in imposing 'turnkey problematics' upon social researchers? Answering these queries constitutes an exercise in epistemic reflexivity in the tradition of Bachelard and Canguilhem that I had long yearned to engage in (Canguilhem's little known case study, *La Formation du concept de réflexe aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* [1955], is the model to emulate here). It leads me to sound a clarion call *against epistemic promiscuity*, the tendency of scholars to deploy a mix of instruments of knowledge and criteria of validation circulating in different universes – science, journalism, politics, everyday life – and to accept notions without checking their origins, changing meanings, and the social unconscious they carry. I also urge social scientists to defend their intellectual autonomy against the encroachments of outside powers, be they state officials, the media, policy institutes, or philanthropies, especially when they are studying problem populations deemed derelict, deviant, and dangerous (the current US cottage industry of research on 'prison reentry' comes to mind).

The tale of the 'underclass', as the illegitimate daughter of the ghetto uprisings of the 1960s and of the deep caste trauma they caused among whites, has exacerbated racialized representations of urban destitution and perpetuated the poverty of a classless sociology of poverty. In addition, it has reinforced the aggressive anti-structuralism that has dominated research on poverty since the 1960s, as it substitutes rates for relations, populations for institutions, and administrative constructs for sociological categories, and it obfuscates the role of the state as producer and distributor of marginality across physical and social space. Through the reflexive sociology of the rise and fall of the 'underclass', I offer a critique, not just of the normal science of race and poverty in the American 'inner city' during a pivotal conjuncture, but of a particular style of sociology

one might call *normalized empiricism*: research that is blissfully atheoretical, unthinkingly adopts state categories, concentrates on issues of measurement and inference at the cost of conceptualization, and keeps the phenomenon studied at arm's length. From there, I elaborate a minimalist set of criteria for what makes a good concept in social science, pertaining to semantics, logics, and heuristics, liable to minimizing epistemic troubles such as those epitomized by the 'underclass'.

But this is not all: in *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*, Gaston Bachelard stresses that 'knowledge of reality is a light that always casts shadows somewhere'. This means that we must always query a concept (theory, problematic, paradigm) for what it obfuscates, occludes, or omits – assess, that is, its *epistemic opportunity cost*. Here I show that the obsessive focus of investigative attention and remedial action on the individual behaviors, family, and neighborhood of the 'underclass' in its three variants obscured key developments in the structure and texture of urban marginality in the closing three decades of the 20th century and since: the fragmentation of wage work and the correlative coalescence of the precariat; the impact of the influx of new migrants on the functioning of both labor and housing markets; the explosive growth and proliferating reach of the penal state; and the crash of the dark ghetto leading to its replacement by the malign constellation of the hyperghetto.

As a bonus, I draw on the lessons of the tale of the 'underclass' to propose a resolution of the vexed question of 'race' which has surged to the forefront of academic debates and politics. In the book's coda and in an article entitled "Resolving the Trouble with 'Race'" (published in the *New Left Review* in April 2022), I contend that race is best construed as *denegated ethnicity*, an ethnic form, anchored by what Weber calls 'positive or negative social estimation of honor', that successfully pretends to be founded, not in the vagaries of history and culture, but in the necessities of biology and nature – or a conception of culture as so deep-rooted and slow-changing that it is tantamount to a nature. This means that every time social scientists utter the paired words 'race and ethnicity' or 'race and racism' they play into and replicate the symbolic legerdemain of race, which is precisely the collective belief that it is fundamentally different from ethnicity, and thus requires its own concept. Then the task becomes to uncover how such an ethnic classification system (a hierarchical array of cognitive categories) is transmuted into a stratification system (a distribution of capitals to the corresponding populations), and vice-versa.

The '*classification-stratification' framework* is not only semantically clear, logically coherent and parsimonious, and empirically heuristic. It also has the virtue of bringing under a single theoretical umbrella the making and unmaking of all manners of social collectives, based on class, age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity (including race as disguised ethnicity), somatic properties (skin tone, height, corpulence, looks), region, nation, religion, nativity, citizenship, etc. This argument is a contribution to what you could call the emerging *group-making school* in the study of ethnoracial domination, inspired by Bourdieu, and comprised of Rogers Brubaker, Andreas Wimmer, Mara Loveman, Matt Desmond and Mustapha Emirbayer, Ellis Monk, and a few others. What these scholars share, in my view and words, is an eye for conceptual traps and a correlative recognition for the exigencies of theoretical elaboration upstream, a keen awareness of the disjuncture between folk and analytic constructs, and a stress on the historicity of categories – and thus on the dangers of accepting them at face value. Most importantly, they draw

on a *historicist social ontology* for which 'groupness' is a matter of degree and boundaries are drawn through symbolic struggles that are not discursive games floating up in the ether (as in so many 'constructivist' accounts) but battles whose outcomes are inscribed in both objectivity (say, segregated neighborhoods) and bodies (as with comportment and emotions), and carried out by identifiable symbolic entrepreneurs, chief among them the state.

Now, to assert that race is a subtype of ethnicity, logically as well as historically, is not to deny the brute and brutal reality of racial domination, which is what worries many scholars who cling to the 'race and ethnicity' duet as if their life depended on it. On the contrary: it is to give ourselves the means to discover under what conditions ordinary ethnicity, which tends toward horizontality and fluidity, get turned into racialized (misrecognized) ethnicity, which skews toward verticality and rigidity, and with what effects in what domains of social life and sectors of subjectivity.

DV: I would like to return in conclusion to the work that was the entry-point of your foray into Chicago's South Side, namely, *Body and Soul*. In the expanded anniversary edition just published, you recapitulate at length the 'making of' the study and how you came to craft the methodological stance of 'observant participation'. But I am curious about the specifically theoretical inspiration and implications of 'carnal sociology'. For one thing, while there are clear references to the works of Bourdieu, Durkheim, Mauss and even Michael Polanyi, the book makes no mention of the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. Which authors did you turn to for theoretical cues and what are the distinctive tenets of the 'carnal sociology' you advocate?

LW: Theoretically, carnal sociology situates itself at the meeting point of phenomenology of the Merleau-Ponty variety (especially *The Phenomenology of Perception* [1945]), Bourdieu's theory of habitus, and the broad current characterized as the 'embodied turn' in cognitive science (associated with Francesco Varela, Andy Clark, Antonio Damasio, George Lakoff, Alva Noe, etc.; see Lawrence Shapiro, *Embodied Cognition* [2015]). It is a mode of social analysis premised on three propositions. The first is an *ontological claim*: the social agent is a suffering being of flesh and blood who relates to the world, acts in the world, reflects upon the world through her entire sensorium, a sensorium that is itself shaped by her social biography and social position, and thus history, and the social conditions and conditionings to which it has subjected her.

This is an alternative to the two dominant views of the agent in the social sciences today: on the one hand, the neo-Benthamite 'utility maximizing machine' represented by *homo economicus* (canonical in economics, dominant in political science and management); on the other hand, the neo-Kantian 'symbolic animal' who follows norms, makes meaning, and reads signs also known as *homo culturalis* (canonical in anthropology, dominant in sociology and history, and in sectors of social psychology). The first presents itself as universalist, it is moved by interest, it aims at nomothetic propositions; the second as historically specific, it is moved by culture (and its variants: identity, language, scripts, etc.), it tends toward ideography. Both acknowledge that they are simplifications but they claim to be fruitful ones.

These two views of the agent are generally seen as antagonistic: you must choose one or the other, Gary Becker or Clifford Geertz, whether you do so consciously or not. But what these two figures share is a *dualistic ontology* descended from René Descartes – and his opposition between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, body and mind – that reduces the agent to an active and intelligent mind mounted on an inert and idiotic body, in the double sense of dumb and uniquely individualized and thus particular. By contrast the flesh-and-blood agent of carnal sociology offers a monist vision of the agent where the 'body-mind' (as John Dewey called it in *Experience and Nature* [1925]) is a singular entity, where the mind is embodied and the body mindful, in keeping with cognitive theorists such as Andy Clark who aim at 'putting brain, body, and world together again' (to quote the subtitle of his book *Being There* [1997]). One way to characterize carnal sociology at the ontological level is to say that *it takes being there seriously*: social agents are located in a particular point in physical and social space, endowed with resources (capitals), but also with categories, skills and desires (the three components of habitus) lodged in their intelligent organism as the sedimentation of their history.

The *incarnate agent* – that we may call *homo libidinis* – is a more realistic model than either the neo-utilitarian or the neo-symbolist model. It is also more fruitful because it subsumes them; for instance, it can treat the real rational agents that exist in highly rationalized universes as a particular case of incarnation. We can begin to flesh it out by recognizing six universal properties of the incarnate agent (according to the 'Six S paradigm' I propose in 'For a Sociology of Flesh and Blood' [2015]): symbolic (yes Ernst Cassirer was right), sensate (and the six senses are both biologically given and socially trained), suffering (because open to the world), skilled (she learns and perfects abilities), sedimented (carrying her history inside), and situated (in social and physical space).

The second claim of carnal sociology is *methodological*: the fact that the social agent is incarnate, a fleshly, sentient, suffering creature fated to die and who knows it is typically dismissed by social scientists, reduced to irrelevance (the brute fact is there, we acknowledge it, but it does not matter for our investigation and analysis) or more typically construed as an obstacle to knowledge. This is because the social sciences are dominated by a top-down, mentalist, abstract, and passive notion of knowledge = 'knowing that' (bits of information carried by language, located in the mind). We need to move to an embodied, concrete, and active conception of knowledge = procedural knowledge, 'knowing how to', and capture the bottom-up, visceral grasp of the social world we all have prior to positing objects through language and discursive knowledge. (Even when knowledge becomes discursive and mental, it rests on a tacit infrastructure of practical abilities and embodied categories; see George Lakoff and Rafael Nuñez, *Where Mathematics Come From: How the Embodied Mind Brings Mathematics into Being* [2000].) Carnal sociology turns the standard view that the (dumb) body is an obstacle to knowledge upside down and construes *incarnation as a pathway to social knowledge*: based on a radicalization and extension of Bourdieu's concept of habitus as having three dimensions (cognitive/categories, conative/skills, emotive/desires) and on the distinction between generic/primary and specific/secondary habitus, it proposes that the practical acquisition and deployment of habitus can be used as method and not just an object of study.

This is based on the principle of symmetry: what is true of the social agent generically is true of the social scientist specifically. If agents 'out there' know the world by body, through tacit schemata acquired in and for practice, as Bourdieu suggests in his *Méditations pascaliennes* (1997), the sociologist can tap that knowledge by subjecting herself to the same forces, profits, and perils as the agents she studies. This opens the door for what one might call observant participation or 'enactive ethnography', *the embedded and embodied study of a phenomenon by performing it*. It is a different epistemological position and a more demanding methodological stance than classical 'participant observation' where the investigator is content to 'ride along' the action without engaging in it for purposes of mastering it to some degree, however small, and to capture the categories of social construction that propel agency in that world. Such studies are rare because they are more demanding existentially, more time-consuming, and because of the academic prejudice against the body, conventionally seen as obstacle to knowledge, the overly mentalist notion of knowledge, and the externalist view of structure (construed as residing outside of agents when it resides both outside and inside them). But a small number of them is enough to suggest the fruitfulness of this approach: sample Matthew Desmond's *On the Fireline: Living and Dying with Wildland Firefighters* (2007), Bourgois and Schoenberg's *Righteous Dopefiend* (2011), Timothy Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (2011), and Claudio Benzecry's *The Opera Fanatic: Ethnography of an Obsession* (2011).

The third premise of carnal sociology is an *empirical claim* about the fabrication and deployment of embodied capacity: the ontological and methodological claims of carnal sociology are put to the test and validated by the fact that the *forging and workings of habitus are fully open to investigation*. The knowing body is not a 'black box'; it does not stand beyond the realm of observation; on the contrary, the techniques whereby it is forged, the ceremonies in which it is invested, the manners in which it is deployed are all available to investigation. We can reach the same level of 'granularity' (to quote Emmanuel Schegloff) in descriptions of embodied action as the ethnomethodologists applied to discourse analysis.

In a nutshell, carnal sociology treats the mindful body not just as socially construc-*ted* but also as socially construc-*ting*; as active, intelligent and creative and not as passive, dumb, and mechanical; as a lively force generative of deft cognition and skilled action in the world that can observed and captured *in actu*. This applies to the sentient organism of the social scientist, no less than to that of his subjects. This means that the investigator should, to the greatest possible extent, situate herself in the vortex of action she studies to plumb the cognitive, emotive, and conative schemata that make up the competent and appetent agent in that universe. For instance, in my current ethnographic study of the workaday world of prosecutors, public defenders and judges in the county criminal court, I strive to embed myself as deeply as I can socially and symbolically – carnality as method – given the practical limits posed by the institution and its imperatives, such as judicial decorum, safety, and confidentiality. And I make a concerted effort to excavate the tacit, embodied, 'how-to' knowledge that guides courts attorneys in their ordinary activities – carnality as object. This allows me, for instance, to move beyond the fictive 'paper prosecutors' that populate law journal articles to the real judicial agents of flesh and blood whose discretion, far from being total, is bounded, not only by their membership in an office, an assignment team and a cohort

of deputies, but also by their trained emotional and moral capacities, which themselves are visceral stances in and toward the world.

One crucial final point: to say that you have to dive deep into the well of action does not mean that you drown in subjectivism or fall back into raw empiricism: the analytic concept of habitus provides both a guide and tool for parsing through the flow of experience. To recommend that you 'go carnal' is an invitation to keep tilling the demesne of practice until you grasp, with both your guts and your mind, why the natives think, feel, and act the way they do.

Acknowledgements

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

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