

## Symbolic Power, *Illusio* and Affectivity in the Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu

### Poder simbólico, *illusio* y afectividad en la sociología de Pierre Bourdieu

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**Abstract:** Strictly speaking, Bourdieu did not develop specific works on emotions and affects. However, as we expect to show, the emotional dimension is an integral part of his perspective and a gateway to his reflections on power. With this premise, the objective of this paper is to analyze Bourdieu's perspective on symbolic power, based on the notion of *illusio*. Can *illusio* be understood as a mechanism of power and symbolic domination involving forms of emotional expression? Based on the analysis carried out, we support an affirmative answer to this question, assuming *illusio* as a principle of perception, emotional investment, adhesion and belief, by means of which the agents affectively commit themselves to the asymmetric logic of the fields in which they participate, moved by aspirational mechanisms from which they end up indirectly legitimizing the social order.

**Key words:** Bourdieu, symbolic power, *illusio*, domination, emotions, affections.

**Resumen:** En sentido estricto, Bourdieu no desarrolló trabajos específicos sobre las emociones y los afectos. No obstante, como esperamos demostrar, la dimensión emocional forma parte integral de su perspectiva y constituye una vía de acceso a sus reflexiones acerca del poder. Con base en esta premisa, el objetivo del presente artículo es analizar la perspectiva bourdiana sobre el poder y la dominación simbólica, tomando como base la noción de *illusio*. ¿Puede la *illusio* entenderse como un mecanismo de poder y dominación simbólica que involucra formas de expresión emocional? A partir del análisis realizado, sostenemos una respuesta afirmativa a esta pregunta, asumiendo a la *illusio* como un principio de percepción, inversión emocional, adhesión y creencia por el cual los agentes se comprometen afectivamente con la lógica asimétrica de los campos en que participan, movidos por mecanismos de tipo aspiracional desde los que indirectamente terminan legitimando el orden social.

**Palabras clave:** Bourdieu, poder simbólico, *illusio*, emociones, afectos.

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## Presentation

Over its four decades of development, the sociology of emotions has managed to consolidate its field and root the relevance of studying affective life, considering its production conditions, the functions it fulfills and the social effects it generates (Bericat, 2000: 150).<sup>1</sup> For its part, supported on the linguistic and cultural turns, the *affective turn* has contributed not only to remark the presence of this dimension in social life, but to place it as an interpretative resource to analyze diverse social processes in *affective key*.<sup>2</sup>

The present work starts from the conviction that this sort of analytical exercise is susceptible to extend to the study of classic and contemporary productions in social theory. In this sense, as pointed out by Abramowski and Canevaro (2017: 11), the enthusiasm for rereading fundamental sociologic works in an affective key would seem to disprove the intended minor nature given to the enquiry on emotional life. The appropriation of the main contributions from classic and contemporary authors and the deepening of some of their working suppositions are part of the foundations upon which the present-day sociology of emotions and affections stands (Ariza, 2016: 14).

In this context of interests, in the present work an exercise in approaching the analysis of the relationships between the concepts of power, symbolical domination and *illusio* in the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), placing the affective dimension as a central variable. Specifically, it is sought to identify the role and weight of emotions and affections acquire in Bourdieu's explanation of symbolical domination processes and the affective production of social order, when the symbolical notion of *illusio* is introduced as an axis category analysis.

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1 Sociology of emotions appears in the context of American sociology, with works by Kemper (1978), Hochschild (1983), and Scheff (1988), where distinguishable are the culturally located nature of emotions, and their social meanings, the collective forms in which they express, and the implications in the context of asymmetric social relationships.

2 The term *affective turn* appears in the 1990's. it designates a disposition that precedes emotions. Something perceived and felt, before social meanings, even if it contributes to constitute them. Sedgwick and Frank (2003) speak of affect as something that may take positive and negative valences. Authors such as Ariza (2016 and 2020), García and Sabido (2014) retrieve the contributions of the affective turn in its relation sense, to approach the way in which the agents may *affect* and *be affected by others*, in the context of fundamental social bonds that configure collective order.

Strictly speaking, Bourdieu did not produce works devoted to study emotions. Nevertheless, as we expect to demonstrate, understanding the affective dimension is included in his analyses of contemporary societies. In the face of the dominant interpretation of a merely residual presence of emotions in Bourdieu's work, authors such as Aarseth (2016), Crossley (2001a and 2001b), Räsänen and Kauppinen (2020), Reay (2000 and 2015), Skeggs (2004a and 2004b), and Threadgold (2020) have stressed the crucial role of them in their general explanatory framework.

On the basis of this supposition, we state that the affective dimension, in spite of not being directly worked by Bourdieu, is an integral part of his thinking and is an access way to his reflections on power.<sup>3</sup> Within this context, we consider that an analysis of the concepts of power, symbolic domination and *illusio*, enhanced by the incorporation of the emotional dimension, may contribute to a more complete understanding of the forms of domination entailed by consented obedience. In a mere specific sense, we put forward that *illusio*, defined in the first place as a constitutive element of the values of a field, and *social desired socially configured* at once, linked to values, capitals, plays and stakes of such field, may contribute to the analysis of these particular forms of obedience from considering its unfolding into three principles that are developed and discussed in the present work:

a) A *perception* principle from which the objects and values proper to a field are constituted as valuable, and also the main games and stakes.

b) An *investment* principle by means of which the agents commit to material, symbolic, and emotional *strategies* to reach the ends and valued defined by the field.

c) An adhesion and normative principle by means of which the agents, by accepting the games proper to these fields, also accept their current values, assume the legality of their prescriptions and adjust their behaviors to the emotional regimes established in them.

Supported on these premises, our analysis follows a double route. On one side, the concepts of power are progressively reviewed, symbolic domination and *illusio*. On the other, the implicit presence, but not least important, of the emotional dimension in the configuration of such notions. Inscribed in the logic, the work is divided into three sections. In the first, the concepts of power and symbolic domination are exposed. In the second, these concepts

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3 We are aware of the specificities and differences that exist between the fields of the sociology of emotions, affects and sensibilities. However, since discussing them is not the specific object of this work, we encompass the contributions from these approaches in the notions of *affective dimension* and *emotional dimension*.

are revisited, establishing connections with the emotional dimension by incorporating the *habitus*. Finally, in the third section we revise the notion of *illusio*. On one side, as a connecting concept between the notions of *habitus* and field; on the other, after the review of the effects of *illusio* as mechanism of symbolic domination, understood from the three aforementioned principles. On the basis of this development, the implications derived from the conceptualization of *illusio* are discussed at last, assumed as a form of “domination by emotions”, which obtains its symbolic efficacy incorporating the interests, desires and aspirations of the agents in the context of asymmetric logics in the fields in which they participate.

### **Approximations to Bourdieu’s concepts of power and symbolic domination**

Due to its centrality in the field of social sciences, power has been the object of multiple definitions and approaches. A brief overview of the history of these developments shows its multidimensional and polysemic character (Clegg and Haugaard, 2009: 1).

Power has been characterized as a resource, a property, or a sign of capacity to influence the others.<sup>4</sup> It has been assumed as a byproduct of human agency, or effect of structural conditions (Lukes, 2005). It has been conceived from its relational, historic, and situated character. It has been understood as a transversal condition to all social processes, locating its presence beyond the political arena to move it to the more comprehensive domain of “the political”, including the world of daily interactions, personal dimension, bodies and sensibilities (Dreher and Göttlich, 2019). In parallel, it has changed from being considered exclusively as a domination mechanism (power *on*) to assume its productive and summative power (power *for*), not reduced to the generation of control and conditioning processes (Göhler, 2009: 28-29).

Without losing sight of the relevance of these perspectives, the approximation we assay here is assumed as an approach focused on two topics present in Bourdieu’s work we believe central to understand his vision on power: the consideration of its symbolic dimensions and the assumption of its presence as a structural-order mechanism, linked to the operation logic of social fields (seen as spaces for games and battlefields).

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<sup>4</sup> In this sense, it is worth bringing to mind Max Weber’s definition, from its posthumous work *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, in which power is described as “the likelihood of imposing our own will, in a social relationship, even against any resistance, and regardless of the foundation of such likelihood” (Weber, 2002: 43).

Both topics are approached, besides, bearing in mind their expression of the emotional kind. The consideration of this dimension is not casual in the context of the present work. We start from the presupposition that emotions do not only represent another object to be sociologically explained, a residual category of sociologic analysis (Alexander, 2003: 109), or a second-order variable, but they can become an explanatory principle useful to understand fundamental problems of social life. As pointed out by Bericat (2000: 151), if the explanatory resource provided by emotions is discarded, crucial phenomena such as nationalism, racism, or identity would be barely understandable. Would it be the same regarding the comprehension of phenomena of power and domination? The stake on a positive answer to such questions makes room for these lines, directed at analyzing Bourdieu's perspective on power and symbolic domination, from the incorporation of emotional-order components present in such notions.

#### *From material to symbolic power in Bourdieu's standpoint*

From Bourdieu's standpoint, power is a dimension present in all the spheres of social life in its material and symbolic expressions. As regards the first sphere, power in its material dimension objectively expresses from the positions of the agents, the capitals they have, and their trajectories over time, according to the logics proper to each social field. The existing differences between the agents regarding the afore cited aspects are noticed in *differentials of power*, which enable (or restrict) the possibilities of action in each field (Bourdieu, 1999: 173).

Furthermore, with the concept of symbolic power, Bourdieu refers, in the first place, to the capability held by institutions, groups and eventually, agents, to impose significations as valid, hiding their production conditions (Bourdieu, 2000b: 93; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1998: 44). It is a power whose strength is the capability to classify and legitimize the social world, postulating its truths as necessary. The production of these mechanisms to define the reality is an expression of the power relationships present in the material organization of societies. All in all, the origin is opaque and largely unknown for the agents involved.

On the other side, Bourdieu describe *the power of symbolic violence* as a specific imposition form exercised upon the agents, counting on their acceptance and complicity (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1995: 120). This paradoxical situation is possible because their legitimate action, principles of vision and division of the world that validate the prevailing interests,

dissimulating its arbitrary nature. Owing to this, the dominated think of themselves from categories they share with the dominating actors and groups (Bourdieu, 1999: 139). Upon this basis, symbolic power institutes from a logic that supposes processes of unawareness and recognition. Unawareness about relationships of force upon which such power is supported and the objective truth of their arbitrariness (Bourdieu, 1999: 116). Recognition granted by those who suffer this domination by accepting, taking as valid and proper, the categories from which the imposed asymmetry criteria are reproduced (Bourdieu, 1999: 221).

The first function of symbolic power is objectified in the production of *classification systems* with which reality is organized (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1998: 46). The symbolic classification systems are not mere instruments of knowledge and communication, but also domination and social-differentiation instruments (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1995: 22). Not only do the symbolic systems reflect social relationships and organize the social world, they also *contribute to constitute them* (Bourdieu, 2000a: 90). In this sense, they represent relevant spaces linked to symbolic struggles to build meanings and maintaining their order or transformation (Bourdieu, 1999: 248-249).<sup>5</sup>

### **Emotional expression of symbolic power: domination through *habitus***

The set of dispositions and schemas of sensation, perception and understanding from which agents interiorize the social world constitute what Bourdieu calls *habitus* (Bourdieu, 2007: 86, 88-89). This concept is key to tie the various categories of the theoretical system and overcome the typical dichotomy established between notions of structure and agency. Bourdieu tries to overcome it, stating that the simultaneous production of both dimensions and the primacy of relationships, over the tendency to conceive them independent (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1995: 23). Society is generated and reproduced by means of producing internalized structures in the agents, which function as structuring-structures of the collective ways of thinking, feeling and acting that configure society. In this sense, *habitus* is a generating principle of long-lasting practices, transferrable to various fields, and is composed of structures incorporated into the form of a schema of sensation, appreciation, and action (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1998: 73-74, 99).

<sup>5</sup> For a broad revision of the concepts of power and symbolic violence in Bourdieu, *cf*: Atkinson (2012), Burawoy (2012), Coste *et al.* (2008), Fernández (2005), Kim (2004), Moon (2013), Reed (2013), and Tiednes (2000).

*Habitus* comprises the set of socially produced dispositions that are shared by individuals of a same social group, class, or gender (Bourdieu, 2007: 97-98). This set unifies the individual with their class and groups of belonging, at once it differentiates them from individuals of other groups (Bourdieu, 2007: 173). For its part, *habitus* expresses the interiorization of conditions of social life, this process internalizes hierarchies, distinctions and operation logics present in various social fields (Bourdieu, 1999: 131).<sup>6</sup> Differences in the position of the agents in the fields are noticed in the differenced access conditions to material and symbolic resources available in the various fields (capitals). To the extent this set of capitals, beyond its specific power in each field, configures forms of power, recognition and status for those who hold them, it becomes *symbolic capital* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1995: 65). Rigorously, symbolic capital is not a specific sort of capital, but the returns the capitals possessed give their holders, in terms of recognition, status and power (Bourdieu, 1997: 151). Following, the affective-order repercussions of this fact will be analyzed.

### *Power and symbolic domination seen from the standpoint of affects*

Even if Bourdieu did not produce works devoted to the analysis of affective dimension strictly speaking, far from being an irrelevant or marginal topic in its work, the emotional dimension is at the base of the reflections that led him to the theory of habitus presented for the first time in *Outline of a theory of practice* (Fernández, 2005; Dukuen, 2010 and 2011).

As an evidence of the latent presence of the topic in his oeuvre, it is worth bringing to mind that the doctoral thesis envisioned by Bourdieu before his stay in Argelia, under Canguilhem, had as a general goal to “analyze the temporary structures of affective life” (Yacine, 2008: 11); an uncompleted project of which, however, some pages survive in *Outline of a theory of practice*, devoted to the correspondence between the language in which emotions are expressed and the somatic manifestations associated to it (Bourdieu, 2012; Sapiro, 2007a: 42).

In close relationship with this datum, a testimony by Bourdieu himself may be added; in June 2000, in an interview with Gisele Sapiro (2007b), he pointed out that the *triggering* element of the journey that took him to the theory of habitus put forward in *Outline...* was his opposition to Sartre’s

<sup>6</sup> For a review of the notion of *habitus* in its affective dimensions *cf.*: Crossley (2001a and 2001b), Dukuen (2010 and 2011), Green (2008), Räsänen and Kauppinen (2020), Reay (2010 and 2015), Cedillo *et al.* (2017).

theory; particularly, regarding the postulates developed in Sartre's *Sketch for a theory of the emotions* (Sartre, 1973; Sapiro, 2007b: 59). The need to critically face Sartre's perspective and produce an alternative standpoint for the structuralist and rationalist action theories, were, as Bourdieu remembers, the starting point for the construction of his theory of *habitus*. If this retrospective balance is taken fully, it may be stated that the theory of *habitus*, at least in its original formulation, had a starting point the sphere of emotions (Dukuen, 2011: 1; Sapiro, 2007b: 59-60). Another element that adds in this regard is noticed in the parallelisms between Sartre's work (*Sketch for a theory of the emotions*) and Bourdieu's in 1973 (*Outline of a theory of practice*).<sup>7</sup>

The confirmation of this initial presence of the affective topic may be verified in the references made by Bourdieu in his research works in Algeria, between 1958 and 1963, around the relationships between temporary structures, labor and domination in the economic practices of Algerian farmers, where, as pointed out by Dukuen (2011), texts such as "*Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*", later published as *Algeria 60* (Bourdieu, 2013), refer the sentiments of honor, guiltiness, and resignation as pre-reflexive strategies to face the conditions of colonial submission. They are resistance strategies, which are, at once, modes of existence marked by "usualness in pain" (Dukuen, 2011: 3-6; Bourdieu, 2006: 108-109).

In this same line, as a result of the research carried out upon his return from Algeria, Bourdieu's next study presents for the first time the notion of *habitus*, taking as a reference the topic of perception between the farmers' bodies, in Bearn in southwest France (Bourdieu, 2004: 113 and 115). As pointed out by Dukuen (2011: 2) as regards this work, "the socially instituted body in the modernity of *habitus* will be from here on the key of Bourdieu's anthropology and the central anchoring point of his theory of symbolic violence". From this initial formulation, *habitus* comprises the production of disposition with which we establish relationships with the world. The construction of these relationships is carried out from a practical and emotional dimension (Dukuen, 2011: 2-4). It is convenient to stop for a moment in this work, later published as *Le bal des célibataires* (Bourdieu), with a view to observing the close relationship between body, affectivity, and forms of domination, in the light of processes marked by deep changes in the economic and sociocultural orders, and their expressions in individual and collective experiences, from the emergence of

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<sup>7</sup> The development and substantiation of this affirmation surpasses the scope of this article. All in all, its enunciation as a mere working hypothesis may be useful for later reflections.



a new *sentimental regime* (the end of a marital conception supported on a patrimonial logic and the emergence of election marriage, which champions romantic love). In this line, Bourdieu devotes the final section of “Celibacy and peasant condition” to the analysis of the peasant *hexis* and the social perception of the body. Here, the formulation of a conception of *habitus* with strong body referents and of emotional order, as presented in this celebrated passage where, by describing a moment of a Christmas dance, the construction of a negative perception of the peasant body is validated:

This modest country dance is [...] the stage for an actual clash of civilizations. All the world of the city storms into peasant life through it [...] [In] like manner, the dances of the past were solidary with the peasant civilization, modern dances are with urban civilization; by demanding the adoption of new body uses, it asks for an authentic change of “nature” [...] Being in such a situation, peasants have no option but to interiorize the image of themselves the others have about them, even if it is a stereotype [...] Thereby, they feel uncomfortable with it and deems it a nuisance. This negative awareness of the body [...] forbid dancing, and simple and natural attitudes in front of women [...] The fear of ridicule and shyness [...] are related to an acute awareness of the proper being and proper body [...] Unwillingness to dance is nothing but a manifestation of that acute awareness of the expressed peasantry, likewise, as noticed, by means of mockery, and irony about themselves (Bourdieu, 2004: 113-117).

The relevance of this passage is in its forcefulness underscoring the effects of the somatization of social relationships in conflict, as well as the production of classificatory perception schemas that, when incorporated and held in the deepest socialized body, contribute to the production of forms of symbolical domination expressed in the way subjugated agents define themselves and define their future horizons (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1995: 28). In this way, the example shows, in the sphere of the described microcosmos, the application of classificatory systems that normalize discrimination practices by gender, class, social background, manners, body smells, et cetera. On the basis of this instance, we are able to present some conclusions on the relationships between *habitus* and symbolical power.

The configuration of *habitus* and its role as an interiorization mechanism of symbolical violence has a correlate in the emotional dimension. The interiorization of these forms of domination is expressed as specific emotions that, in the case of agents with inferior positions in the field may express shyness or shame as regards the way of carrying a body or by means of expression of social resentment or apathy, when the proper condition is taken up with disconformity. In function of this considerations, such form of domination may be defined as “body-affective”.

By means of the body we learn. The social order is in the bodies by means of this permanent confrontation, more or less dramatic, but which always *offers a distinguished place for affectivity* and more precisely to affective transactions with the social environment [...] the most serious social duresses are not aimed at the intellect, but to the body, treated as a *reminder*. The essential in the learning of masculinity and femininity tends to inscribe the differences between sexes in the bodies [...] in manners of speaking, behaving, looking, sitting, et cetera. And the institution rites are nothing but the limit of all the explicit actions by means of which bodies strive to inculcate social limits, or in other words, social classifications (masculine/feminine division, for example), in naturalize them as divisions in the body, the body *hexis*, dispositions and principles of collective vision and division (Bourdieu, 1999: 186-187).

This set of statements has important concurrences with developments of the sociology of emotions. Particularly, Hochschild's (1983) contributions, who analyzes the fulfillment of rules of feeling and emotional exhibition and their differenced effects in relationships of domination. These expressions of emotional regulation reveal the presence of power social mechanism by means of which an individual in asymmetric relationships may be forced to act against their own desire. The resulting affective expression is an effect of the domination bodily and emotionally experienced, which remarks the central supposition of the sociology of emotions and affects as regards the exercise of power, in total concurrence with Bourdieu's developments about symbolic power: asymmetries are embodied; are experienced in the body and are felt as emotions (Hochschild, 1983: 188; Turner and Stets, 2005: 37).

Furthermore, the concept emotional management, central in Hochschild (1983), refers the actions whereby these forms of regulation of control are produced. This process is not a mere act of affective repression, but also in many cases, the act of "forcing oneself to feel" (Bericat, 2000: 161). By means of such process of emotional management, which produces a personality adapted to the current emotional regimes, the incorporation of *illusio* is produced as an integral part of the agents' emotional dispositions.<sup>8</sup>

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8 The notion of "emotional regime" comes from William Reddy (2001) and has been importantly developed in works by Federico Besserer (2014), under the denomination "regimes of sentiments".

### ***Illusio*, field and symbolic domination: an approximation from emotions**

Despite its evident relevance, the concept of *illusio* has a late origin in Bourdieu's works, being the object of successive re-elaborations over time by the author.<sup>9</sup> As Durand (2014: 2) points out, the concept is already suggested in the 1977 text, "the production of belief" (Bourdieu, 1977: 3), where a critique is made to the sacralization of high culture and the belief in the transcendent value of art to place that *illusio* as a component of the cultural field and a product of the same system of relationships that make cultural productions possible. The notion will reappear two years later, in the argumentative framework of *Distinction* (1979/1998) to remark such criticism, adding now that the belief in the value of culture and its transcending nature is the original investment which gives meaning to the logic of cultural field and their main stakes and games. *Illusio* is already named and presented here as a synonym to belief, participation and commitment with the constitutive games of every social field (Bourdieu, 1998: 28 and 247). Finally, the concept will reach its full development in the 1990's decade in books such as *Pascalian Meditations* and *Practical Reason* (Bourdieu, 1997: 141; Bourdieu, 1999: 129). As Bourdieu himself pointed out in these works, its more constant and systematic use during this stage responds to the purpose of placing the term (now used with that of *social libido*) in a contraposition relationship with the notions of profit and benefit, proper to economic-utilitarian doctrines (Grenfell, 2014: 151), with a view to giving an account of the deep motivations that guide the participation of agents in various social fields (Bourdieu, 1997: 142). In this regard Bourdieu (1997) himself states:

After defending my use of the notion of interest, I will now try to show that it may be substituted by more rigorous notions such as *illusio*, investment, or even libido. In his famous book, *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga states that by means of a false etymology, it may be as if *illusio*, a Latin word that comes from *ludus* (game), would mean to be in the game, be in it, take the game seriously. *Illusio* is the fact of being in the game, believing the game is worth playing. In point of fact, the world interest, in a first meaning, meant

9 Adding to this situation, the applications of *illusio* are recent, which hints that it is a scantily recovered concept (Costey, 2005: 13; Colley, 2014: 668; Colley and Guéry, 2015: 5). All in all, it is possible to enlist its use in works in the fields of art (Nulley-Valdés, 2022), religion (Felter, 2012), entrepreneurial studies (Colley, 2012; Tatli *et al.*, 2014; Lupu and Empson, 2015), professions (Colley and Guéry, 2015; Nölleke *et al.*, 2022), education (Wellington and Nixon, 2005; Widin, 2010; Rowlands and Rawolle, 2013; Castillo and Pineda-Puerta, 2016; Daoust, 2020; Patfield *et al.*, 2021; Ydhag *et al.*, 2021; Zemblyas, 2007), and sports (Garrigou, 2006; Cooper and Johnston, 2012).

what I have encompassed in this notion of *illusio*, that is to say, the fact of considering that a social game is important [...] Being interested means “be part”, participate, thereby, recognizing that the game is worth playing (Bourdieu, 1997: 141).

On the basis of this approach, we are able to carry out a broader characterization of the notion of *illusio* from the outlining of some general lines and supported on the afore cited passage.

a) It is worth underscoring in the first place, the close convergence pointed out in the quotation between the notions of interest (in a broad sense), *illusio*, investment, and social libido. The three last notions expressly remark its distancing from references of pragmatic utilitarian nature, rational calculation or linked to considerations on motivations in terms of individual sociology. In this sense, *illusio* refers to interests, desires, and aspirations, historically and socially configured, located in the logic of various social fields.<sup>10</sup>

b) The second term, the concept of *illusio* denotes, in a parallel and articulated manner, operative conditions and principles, present in the fields and in the practices of the agents. On one side, *illusio* remits to a specific sort of interest, participation and commitment established by the agents with the values, games and stakes that provide a field with meaning, assumed as a social space of struggle. These specific modes of participation and commitment are dually constituted: the acquired dispositions (i.e., *habitus*) and the operation logics established by the fields. In this sense, as pointed out by Crossley (2001b: 87), the concepts of field and *habitus* are associated in a circular relationship that takes the notion of *illusio* as a center (Costey, 2005: 7).

c) In this context, *illusio* appears as a principle incorporated by the habitus, which fixes a mode of relation and pertinence with the field: it remits, on one side, to the “belief in their main games and stakes”, while on the other, to the specific mode of active incorporation in them, deeply rooted and unaware, which motivates in the agent the development of *specific strategies and investments* (Colley, 2014: 669).

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10 From Bourdieu’s standpoint, the notion of field is not limited to the indication of separate spheres of actuation, articulated by common practices (economic, political, and cultural, etc., fields). Beyond this basic characterization, for Bourdieu, a field is mainly a set of historic objective relationships between positions taken by agents that develop strategies and diverse mechanisms of relation, opposition and struggle, for the purpose of possessing, redistributing, or maintaining specific capitals. For Bourdieu fields are spaces for competence and struggle, framed within an agonistic conception of the social world (Bourdieu, 2007: 83, 108-109; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1995: 23).

Being a player is “being one with the field”; seeing, thinking and acting according to its structure and form; that is, in other words, sharing an *illusio* with the participants with the native participants, established in “full right” and considering vañid interlocutors in such field (Crossley, 2001b: 88).

d) In parallel to the above, each field establishes an *illusio*, as principle or referent of purposes, values, expectations, goods and desirable individual or collective accomplishments. Hence, *illusio* remits to the referents of value that provide the field with meaning. “Each field produces and gives life to a specific form of interest, a specific *illusio*, as a tacit recognition for the value of the stakes of the game and as a practical domain of its rules” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1995: 80). For the characterization of the field is important both *what is being played* and *the nature and logic of the very games*; this is, the sort of strategies and investments, stakes made (Costey, 2005: 16).

e) *illusio* is a referent that shades and dissimulates the struggle present in various fields, providing the games, stakes and results with legitimacy before the players. This legitimation process generates from the production of narratives that underscore values, ideal and interests apparently transcending and general (never put forward as individual or egotistic) that discursively shape the field. The validity of *illusio*, for its part, ensures the belief in the legality and validity of the field and its continuity. *Habitus* links with the field by means of *illusio* (Atkinson, 2021: 4), as from it incorporates the values of the field and finds in *illusio* the reasons to partake of the games and main stakes in the field (Costey, 2005: 15; Calàs, 2019: 4).

Once these considerations are established, we are able to summarize the fundamental characteristics of the notion of *illusio* in three general principles, following in this regard the argumentative line developed by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1995: 61, 68, 87, 120) and its retrieval in works such as those by Calàs (2019: 2), Costey (2005: 16-17), and Lupu and Empson (2015: 9).

*Illusio* operates, on one side, as a *perception principle* from which the objects and values of the field become valuable, as well as their main games and stakes. This operative principle is the result of interiorization, by means of *habitus*, of classificatory systems that operate in the field. From this, distinguishable is what is proper and alien to the field, the scale of values, hierarchies and distinctive criteria that organize the objects, practices and the resources considered capitals in the field, as well as the aspirations and values consecrated as valuable inside the field. From such principle, an emotional orientation is defined for the components of the

field and attribution criteria uncontested in their constitutive arbitrariness; orientation patterns and *positive or negative affective valences* for objects, practices, individuals in the logic of the field are defined (desirable values, disposable objects, discredited agents or placed in discredit, etc.). Under these conditions, *illusio*, conceived as a perception principle that produces effects of reality in its effects, turns into a principle of belief.

In a second sense, *illusio* works as an investment principle, not only material and economic, but symbolic and emotional. In this way, not only does *illusio* represent a mere desire, but a *desire capable of unleashing strategies and investments* of various kinds. The axis of these actions is interest, assumed as a motivation socially configured around the field referents (Grenfell, 2014: 154). In this sense, *illusio* is a sort of desire socially configured (social libido) that takes the form of objects, practices and strategies defined as valid inside the field, and in this way, it fits to its emotional regimes. This form of socially configured desire, which is set as a goal and end, works as a *trigger* of action, as an *energy principle of it*. Such statement concurs with the relevant thesis put forward by Eva Illouz (2007: 15), as regards the that emotions are the *energy component of action* and allow supporting, in a broad sense, the relevance of incorporating, together with the traditional model of economic and moral agency, an *agency of the emotional kind* that integrates the affective valences from which to build the social world.<sup>11</sup>

*illusio* remits, in a third meaning, to a principle of *adhesion and abidance by the normativity of the field*. As such, it becomes a criterion by whereby the tacit acceptance of the logic of the field, its games, stakes and even results is produced. It represents, in this way, a sort of practical and adherence faith to the value of the game and its legitimacy. At this point, the principle of belief in the value of the game leads to moral and emotional control mechanisms by means of which the subjects regulate their behaviors, defining the change from “I want”, an indicator of socially configured desire, to the “I must” adjusted to the field normativity, with the corresponding mechanisms of wait, constriction and sacrifice that compose the specific emotional regimes of each field. By means of such principle adhesion and abidance, desires and expectations are adjusted as are the strategies to follow, with a view to being considered as legitimate and valid. Likewise, the acceptance of dissimilar

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11 In a sense close to these statements, Swedberg (2003: 2) postulates the interest, as socially configured desires (*illusio*), as the fourth key concept in Bourdieu's sociologic analysis (with the triad: habitus, field, capital) and puts forward the relevance of placing it, with its deepest referent, desire, as a central category inside the explanatory theories of action and the social theory as a set. In the same sense, cfr. Widick (2003).

results in the games developed in the fields, of the differenced and uneven conditions of participation are a fundamental element and a result of *illusio*, reinforcing its role as structurer of *affective commitments* the social agents establish with the games in the field and in a general sense with the social order. In this context, the disposition of habitus operate as adjustment mechanisms that define the horizons of possibility of the agents, fixing in their minds “what is” and “what is not for us”, while it is considered that it can be reached or deserved (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1995: 90).<sup>12</sup>

*The three principles of illusio, and their affective expressions: towards an integral vision*

Multiple are the topics and problems that a concept such as *illusio* poses for social research and, particularly, for the sociology of emotions and affects. Following, we enounce in a general manner some of them with a view to pointing out some of their scopes and main implications.

From Bourdieu’s standpoint, the main function of *illusio* as a principle of belief is to produce the conditions of legitimacy of social life. Each field possesses a specific form of *illusio*, which work as a reference for belief and value for the games it establishes. In this way, the foundational referents of the *illusio* of a field intend to strengthen the belief in the value and sense of participating in it, in function of the benefits of such participation, weighed not only by utilitarian criteria. That is to say, *illusio* is the principle of emotional order that “hooks” the agents to partake of the practices in each field. The extension of this principle to all the aspects of social life is to recognize a social integration mechanism in *illusio* (Costey, 2005: 14, Threadgold, 2018: 40).

*Illusio* does not work as an external, abstract and independent principle of the agents, but as an incorporated belief (Bourdieu, 1999: 136). Moreover, in its institutions each field defines *a specific form of illusio*; that is to say, referents and forms of value, which from the standpoint of other fields may seem absurd or scantily realistic (such as judging religious interest from the economic standpoint or a profit criterion from moral or art. Each

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12 In this line, authors such as Hage (2011: 85) and Threadgold (2020: 32) refer to *illusio* in a metaphoric sense as a “social gravitational force”, as it exercises an affect of effective *attraction* on the agents from vesting in value and transcendence that it gives to values, objects and practices of the field; in this sense, “tied” to their logic, subject to their own desires and decisions.

field establishes interest and disinterest spheres, and defines its referents in aspirational terms under the form of goals and ideals (Costey, 2005: 15).<sup>13</sup>

In this way, what is considered a disinterested act in a field pursues ends that are valued from others. The referents of interest turn into the axis of the games that take place in each field (Costey, 2005: 16). *Illusio* is not a principle with specific and homogeneous contents, but as a broad range reference in which the interests of various agents can be adjusted. This high degree of generality makes its acceptance possible: a sort of implicit consent not reflectively nor coordinately made (Costey, 2005: 19-20).

Furthermore, together with this general nature, the continuity of fields demands the coexistence of particular sorts of *illusio* with more accurate contents from various contexts and conditions. Considering *illusio* as a principle of social order gives the notion the role of *social libido* that transforms drives into desires, specific motivations and interests, coupled with the logic of each field (Bourdieu, 1997: 153). While *illusio* activates forms of practical participation in the game, it operates as wanting institution and orientation, socialized libido that coordinates and generates its own strategies, producing emotional commitments to social order while at once, it is the base for the generation of affective investments aimed for obtaining symbolic capital, expressed as status, recognition and power (Bourdieu, 1999: 180; Felter, 2012: 62; Lupu and Empson, 2015).

*Illusio* is a principle of belief and affective investment generation, articulated with specific emotional structures and modes of relation that work as forms of power accepted and required by the agents that experience them, as long as the criteria of aspiration and hope remain valid. This sort of domination by emotions is inscribed in the body; it remits to dispositions not only moral, but also sensitive, ethical and aesthetical. To sum up, the production of specific and historical determined and *habitus* and *ethos*, which configure as *esprit de corps* (Bourdieu, 1999: 191). In the forms of relation-domination articulated by *illusio*, aspirations and socialized desire are articulated with emotional components linked to hope, sacrifice, tolerance and resignation. With this, the “aspiration” and “acceptance of sacrifice” configure as converging dispositions, incorporated from initial socialization, but that may be transferred then to multiple spheres of mature life producing an *emotional culture* that imposes a specific *ethos* to the set of practices. It is

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13 The referents of value are instituted in function of the logic of each field and remit to their main stakes (profit in the economic field, power in the political). The question about whether these aspirations as a whole may remit to the imaginary of “happiness”, with its respective load of arbitrariness and symbolic power.



an ethics of sacrifice linked to desire and represented in the motto: “in order to aspire, it is necessary to deserve”; a feature that is observable in several organizational and labor cultures, but also in the dominating modes of experiencing love, satisfaction and personal fulfillment (Lupu and Empson, 2015). In this sense, *illusio* may serve as a trigger for action, but also as an inertia principle (*connatus*), which occasionally reflects from practices that denote discipline, acceptance, complicity or mute resilience; validation carried out by *illusio*, by adhesion to the principle and logic of the game, permanently waiting to be rewarded. In this way, aspiration turns into the “emotional hook” that makes disciplining and sacrifice possible.

In function of the considerations above, we have to wonder whether the *illusio* established in such terms is present in every kind of practice. That is, if it constitutes a dimension inherent to all social life. Furthermore, it is worth questioning if its presence may be separated from the domination processes. As regards this last point, it may be said—according to Bourdieu’s standpoint (1999: 201)—that the oppressive nature of *illusio* is the expression of the against condition of society, and thereby, its production is linked to material and symbolic struggles present in this. As regards the first question, it may be pointed out—also supported on resentences by Bourdieu himself—that imagining a life without *illusio* is only thinkable as a form of material renunciation; in this way, only as a contemplative and introverted existence (Bourdieu, 1997: 142) or at the other end, a total loss of meaning and significance regarding the social world, its values and struggles (apathy).

Save this sort of solutions, it seems impossible to subtract from the *illusio* present in the various fields. Even in a contesting manner, alternative *illusio* are produced. In this sense, the term *collusio* refers to the articulation of collective sensitivities that may lead to abide by currently valid values, or on the contrary, to alternative values of *illusio*, which would mean assuming different stances regarding the dominant values of the field (Bourdieu, 1999: 91). Under the form of *collusio*, collective aspirations may eventually make room for reasserting actions, collective forms of subversion and “contests of emotions” (Besserer, 2014):

What the Stoics called ataraxia is the indifference or tranquility of the soul, detachment that is no disinterest. *Illusio* is therefore, the contrary to ataraxia, it is the fact of being inside, of staking on the antes of specific games [...] it would also be suitable to the term investment on the dual sense of psychoanalysis and economy. Every social field [...] tends to make everyone in it have this relationship with the field, I call *illusio*. They may want to disrupt the relationships of force in this field, but indeed because of

that, they grant recognition to the antes, they are not indifferent. Wanting to make a revolution in a field means to admit the essential of what is tacitly demanded by such field, particularly, what there is a stake in it is sufficiently important so as to be willing to make a revolution in it (Bourdieu, 1997: 142).

Being observed from the particular standpoint of *illusio*, emotional orientation maybe conceived as essential components of social action and the operative logic of the fields. Consequently, a central task of sociology may seem to consist in determining the process of production and transformation of these forms of *illusio*, as mechanisms that enable domination and social integration under asymmetrical and agonistic forms.

Libido would also be totally pertinent to express what I have called *illusio* or investment [...]. One of the tasks of sociology is to ascertain the way the social world turns the biological libido, undifferentiated drive, into social libido, specific. There exist, indeed, as many sorts of libido as fields: for the labor of the socialization of the libido is precisely the transformation of drives into specific interests, socially constituted interests which only exist in relation with a social spaces within which certain things are important and others, indifferent, and for some socialized agents constituted with a view to establishing some differences corresponding to some objective differences in such space (Bourdieu, 1997: 143).

## Final considerations

From Bourdieu's standpoint, power is a dimension transversal to all social fields. A social field is a space for game and a space for struggle, at once, a field of interaction and a set of positions organized by emotional regimes that configure the emotional practices and affective investments the agents make. In the search for attaining the values instituted by *illusio*, we are summoned to partake of the games established by the fields, making use or facing the multiple forms of power. By means of the strategies we develop, we experience the possibilities and limits of our power of agency. In the context of material and symbolical struggles that codify the competences and games imposed by the field, there appear forms of intervention power and influence power upon others (individually and collectively). In the distribution, defense and attainment of positions, as well as in the strategic use of resources, values and relationships, forms of subordination and domination may be established.

In the very agency and adjustment of habitus to the horizons of possibilities (what is and what is not for us), that is to say, the interiorization processes of principles of vision and division of the world, mechanisms of

symbolic domination incorporate. Finally, in a broader sense, linked to the logic of field operation as a set, forms of structural domination are established. In all these expressions of power. In of these expressions of power, emotions are present in different forms and very diverse degrees.

The concepts of symbolic power and *illusio* fulfill a capital function in Bourdieu's theoretical perspective. In both cases, these concepts allude to principles of perception, investment, adherence, and belief in the legitimacy of social order, at once to a principle of emotional order whereby agents effectively commit to such order, as they assume the values that organize collective life.

By means of *illusio*, agents “hook” their aspirations to the principles that substantiate the asymmetric logics of relation they suffer. Far from circumscribing this mode of “domination by affects” to the space of interpersonal interactions. Bourdieu makes it part of social life as he inscribes it to the asymmetric logic and agonistic of the fields. *Illusio* represents, in this way, a category that traps the emotional mode by means of which the arbitrariness of the fields is incorporated as a proper end and valid by the agents, making them carry out emotional investments that “hook” them to forms of domination of which they are unaware of, as long as they are linked to their own goals and desires. From this standpoint, power and domination are not restricted to economic-relation logics or the imposition of devices of moral order, which leads to the incorporation, together with traditional models of economic and moral agency, emotional agency that integrates the affective valences from which the social world is also build, and in a significant manner.

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