

Heinrich Wilhelm Schäfer

HabitusAnalysis 1

Epistemology and Language

 Springer VS

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Heinrich Wilhelm Schäfer
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In memoriam Otto Maduro

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And as for certain truth, no man has seen it, nor will there ever be a man who knows about the gods and about all the things I mention. For if he succeeds to the full in saying what is completely true, he himself is nevertheless unaware of it; and opinion (seeming) is fixed by fate upon all things.
(Xenophanes of Colophon, Fragment 34, in: Freeman 1948, 30)

Language may be compared with the spear of Amfortas in the legend of the Holy Grail. The wounds that language inflicts upon human thought can not be healed except by language itself. Language is the distinctive mark of man-and even in its development, in its growing perfection it remains human-perhaps too human. It is anthropocentric in its very essence and nature. But at the same time it possesses an inherent power by which, in its ultimate result, it seems to transcend itself. From those forms of speech that are meant as means of communication and that are necessary for every social life and intercourse it develops into new forms; it sets itself different and higher tasks. And by this it becomes able to clear itself of those fallacies and illusions to which the common usage of language is necessarily subject. Man can proceed from ordinary language to scientific language, to the language of logic, of mathematics, of physics. But he never can avoid or reject the power of symbolism and symbolic thought.
(Cassirer 1942, 327)

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Preface

It was on one of those colorful, battered Guatemalan buses transporting the indigenous peasants across the highlands that, in 1983, I began to read Bourdieu's *Outline of a theory of praxis*. People around me sat closely packed among sacks of corn, some with hens on their laps. Military patrols at the important road crossings made us get off the bus and on again every now and then. So my reading of Bourdieu was somewhat interrupted by one of the lesser hardships of war. But the reading was as necessary as it was pleasant. I was preparing field research for 1985 and 1986 on religious movements in Central American war zones, and was acquainted with Berger/Luckmann's phenomenological sociology—which was, at that time, in Germany considered as state of the art for doctoral research such as the one I was going to conduct. I was, however, not convinced of its usefulness for my task.

When we were ordered to leave the bus, the peasants were noticeably fearful which showed in the way they quickly moved to get out of the bus and lined up alongside the vehicle. Some were interviewed by the soldiers, sometimes in a friendly and almost joking way, sometimes in an outright interrogation. Imagine a tall and sturdy military official of the Guatemalan counter-insurgency army standing in front of a small, skinny farmer with his raddled sandals and threadbare traditional trousers. What kind of fun could the officer show that would not scare the peasant? Or else, was this particular peasant collaborating with the military? What would his fellow villagers think and do about jokes and smiles between the peasant and the officer?

War is an intense social context, and it is hard to imagine two “subjects”—for instance, a peasant and an officer—constructing their social reality by merely intersubjective communication, as if they were not turned into “master and slave” (Hegel) by their objective positions in the social structure even before any conversation could start. Their encounter bears all the burden of social inequality and violence that characterizes the difference between the social positions of both men; and it shapes their religious beliefs as well. Even if they belong to the same

religious tradition—Pentecostal in this case—their religious beliefs answer to completely different contexts of life and religious needs. Their discourses may sound quite similar at first; but listening more closely and with attention to the contextual meaning one recognizes two very different religious identities. Similar, however, is the intensity of their faith. Religious movements—particularly Pentecostals, and even more so in armed conflicts—have strong religious convictions that, during war, guide their strategies of survival. These convictions have to be taken into account by an interpretative sociology (according to Max Weber’s “understanding,” *verstehen*). However, convictions are almost systematically misunderstood if they are taken as a context-free symbolism, as sign-systems believed in by free individuals. The semantics by which actors generate their convictions acquire their meaning only if they are used within social contexts. These contexts are constituted by objective conditions, such as war, poverty, or wealth. But for an understanding of the relation between these conditions and the convictions and practices of the actors, an “actorless” functionalism or a doctrine of a strong social or biological determination of human thought and action is of little use. Bourdieu might have had similar feelings when he was performing his first field studies during the Algerian war. In any case, he designed a theory suitable for harsh conditions and strong beliefs. At least, reading into praxeology presented me with a timely answer for an urgent theoretical need. The book turned out a pleasant read and—at the same time, during the bus ride—it was great to see that this theory really helped me to understand the situation.

Later on, the theory of the social space—as developed in Bourdieu’s *Distinction*—was to provide a frame to locate the peasant, the army official, and any other interlocutor in their respective positions in society. Even further on, the model of the religious field served to distinguish different religious actors, such as Pentecostal congregations, the Roman Catholic hierarchy, Base Communities, in terms of the power they exerted relative to one another. Both models provide objective frames to understand better the central object of research: religious convictions in their social context.

According to this principal interest, what I was really fascinated by were Bourdieu’s thoughts about habitus, practical sense, and practical logic—as developed in *Outline* and subsequently in *The Logic of Practice*. The concept of practical logic allowed me to understand how convictions, knowledge, and even calculus work in social relations; and thus it helped to explain better the socially shared meaning and its effects on social relations as well as on the exchange of goods and, eventually, on social structure. The concepts of practical sense and habitus facilitated the understanding of how such knowledge, convictions, preferences etc. are created by humans as cognitive, emotional, and bodily dispositions of perception, judgment,

and action in interdependence with the social relations and structures that actors live in. These concepts also helped me to see how convictions and preferences operated by means of the practical logic in different fields of praxis, and the religious field in particular. If I should find out the logic according to which the religious, political, and social convictions, indeed knowledge in general, of the military official, the peasant, and all the others operated, I could not only describe what they were doing, but understand why they were doing it. In Max Weber's terms, I could understand their motivation and how it is that sometimes people stubbornly keep saying and doing the same outdated things, yet at other times they rapidly change their minds, undergo a religious conversion, or find creative new ways of problem-solving and even of "re-inventing" themselves.

While I was fascinated by these perspectives, I also noticed that Bourdieu had not developed methods and models for qualitative research on human attitudes, especially not for research by means of interviews.¹ With regard to Bourdieu's writings on religion, the situation was similar. His articles from the early seventies were interesting from a theoretical point of view, but they proposed quite a narrow concept of religion and did not provide adequate tools for a study like the one I was going to realize.² Clearly, it was a better idea for my project to stick to habitus, practical sense, and practical logic.³ So, if I was going to do research on religious practical logics of Pentecostals in the Guatemalan and Nicaraguan wars, I had to develop a Bourdieu-based method of my own.

In January 1985, my wife, an anthropologist specializing in Mesoamerica, and I set out for two years of field studies in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and the USA.⁴ After conducting some explorative interviews, we discussed hermeneutical issues of understanding the cultural "other" (Schäfer 2002) while designing the guidelines for interviews and observation. The influence of cultural anthropology in our debates

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- 1 His only intent in qualitative, interview-based research appeared much later (Bourdieu et al. 1999, F: 1993, G: 1998). However, in that book he does not develop such a method either (see vol. 3).
 - 2 Bourdieu 1987, F: 1971a, G: 2011a; Bourdieu 1991, F: 1971b, G: 2011b.
 - 3 Similarly see Verter (2003, 150): "In order to see Bourdieu's relevance for sociologists of religion, one must—quite paradoxically—turn away from his writings of religion."
 - 4 The project was financed by the *Evangelisches Studienwerk Villigst* and the *World Council of Churches* who considered it useful to have a close up snapshot of the Pentecostal movement in Central America at the time of intense political conflict about US-American and Soviet geostrategic influence in that region. Originally, the institutional frame was a doctoral thesis in ecumenical theology at the University of Bochum with Prof. Konrad Raiser (see Schäfer 1992a). As time went by, the project turned sociological and methodological.

fitted very well with Bourdieu's background in that discipline. In consequence, our interview guideline provided ample space for the interviewees to talk about *their* experiences, *their* beliefs, and *their* modes of action. With this interview-guide as our key instrument, we started into two years of incredibly intense and in many ways very moving field studies on people deeply touched and mobilized by an environment of violence, disorder, and threat.

In my own research,⁵ the interviews (about 100 in each of the two countries) constituted the central interpretative axis, complemented by taped sermons (some 50 in each country), minutes of services for the analysis of church rituals (approx. 80), and of course a field diary. After these two years and our return to Germany, I began to analyze a sample of the interviews and sermons. In the light of the theory of habitus and from the analysis of the interviews, there emerged an analytical method with its focus on the semantics of ordinary religious language. I re-examined structuralist, hermeneutical, and pragmatist methods of analysis for their usefulness for my purpose. The most striking discovery, leading me back to my undergraduate days and propaedeutic courses in theology, was the organization of basic relations of Aristotelian logic in the model of the propositional square. The logic organized in this model, used since late antiquity in Western theology and philosophy, had already helped Augustine of Hippo to distinguish between the paradise, this world, and heaven.⁶ In the sixties, the model had been taken up again and transformed by Algirdas Julien Greimas for semiotics. While Greimas' square provided interesting stimuli for learning more about the semiotic application of conceptual logic, for my task it was focused too much on abstract semiotics, on the meaning of concepts understood merely as their value within the "universe of signification" (Greimas). They also lacked relation to the experience of the actors and to their social context. Instead, the model from classical antiquity—since it organizes propositions and not just concepts—offered better conditions for adaptation to praxeological sociology. Finally, it took me two years—and the complaints of friends and professors that I was spending the best years of my life in a den—to develop and test the central tool and method of HabitusAnalysis, the *praxeological square*, by analyzing interviews, evaluating field observations, computing data, interpreting gray literature and official documents, and writing some 600 pages

5 My wife employed other techniques for her study.

6 See Augustine's distinction between being able to not to sin (*posse non peccare*, man in paradise), not being able not to sin (*non posse non peccare*, unsaved man) etc.

on Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals in Guatemala—a piece that, due to adverse conditions, has not been published until the present day.⁷

The nascent method of HabitusAnalysis by the praxeological square represented an important advancement in the study of the Pentecostal movement in Latin America. In the literature about religious renewal in Latin America during the 1980s there was no internal differentiation within what was called “the Pentecostals.”⁸ In contrast, HabitusAnalysis brought to light that there was an extremely important difference, and even a division, within that religious movement. This difference was in line with the social difference between a certain cluster of believers in the lower class (rural and urban) and another cluster in the upper middle and upper classes. Under the conditions of war, this difference turned into open confrontation and controversial strategies. HabitusAnalysis evidenced that—in spite of a similar repertoire of religious symbols—along this line of conflict two completely different religious habitūs had developed in a relatively short stretch of time. Upper middle class and upper class believers practiced a charismatic and theocratic religion of divine power (dominance, *Weltbeherrschung*, Max Weber), while the poor Pentecostals followed an apocalyptic, pre-millenarian religion of withdrawal from the world (*Weltflucht*, Max Weber). The former believed that their problems had originated from demons, active not only in personal threats (like alcoholism or bulimia) but also in social ones (like the guerrilla, the unionist movement, social democrats, and socialists). Their religious identity was based on the belief that the Holy Spirit had given power to the individual believer and to “Christian” institutions (like the military) to exorcize the demons. Exorcism, “spiritual warfare,” became the central practical operator. For their part, the poor Pentecostals faced military violence, hunger, the non-existence of schooling, and economic scarcity. They found themselves in a situation of “no way out” (*no hay para donde*) and understood their plight as a necessary consequence of the end times drawing near. In this situation, they waited for the imminent return of Christ and the rapture of the true believers into heaven. Their strategy was to withdraw from social and political commitment and to concentrate on preparing for the rapture exclusively by church attendance and solidarity among their congregations.⁹ The

7 Instead, a more general study of the historical and macro-sociological conditions of Protestant mission in Central America was accepted in 1992 as doctoral dissertation at Bochum University, Germany, under the supervision of Prof. Konrad Raiser.

8 See Domínguez and Huntington 1984; Stoll 1990; D. Martin 1990, for the most widespread publications in English. The same is true for publications in Spanish, e.g. Samandú 1991; A. Martínez 1989; Valverde 1990.

9 While the detailed study had not been published, a condensed version of it appeared in Spanish (Schäfer 1992b). In fact, there were at least three currents within the Pente-

difference between these factions was not only patently obvious to HabitusAnalysis but also to the actors themselves, who mutually ascribed to each other erroneous concepts of Pentecostalism.

As the distinction between two fractions in the movement was innovative in the sociological perception of Pentecostalism in Latin America, the differentiation between Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals became widespread among social scientists. Among the movement itself it was self-evident. Today, however, the distinction has become considerably blurred again because of the very social and religious developments of the last three decades.

For the validation of my empirical results and for frequent tests of the method it was very useful that, from 1995 to 2003, I held professorships in Costa Rica at the *Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana*, an ecumenical institution, and at the *Universidad Nacional*. The former especially provided me with many opportunities to validate the results and the method of my research together with Pentecostals all over Latin America, and to realize some additional small studies. The reactions to my work were striking. The empirical results were approved up to 100%, not only by students, but also by Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal scholars throughout Latin America. A book¹⁰ published in Costa Rica in 1992 was well received by students, scholars, and even religious practitioners in Latin America. When I used the method based on the praxeological square in seminars on the sociology of religion or research methods, students applied it in tentative analyses to their own churches. In the final evaluation of one of the seminars—with Pentecostals from the Central American region—, one of the students commented that he would like to apply the method to North Atlantic churches and even to academics.

The most interesting and fruitful scientific experience during the dialogue with my Latin American Pentecostal students and many experienced “servants of the Lord” was to look closely at that “infinitesimal but infinite distance” (Bourdieu) between the theoretical model of a given praxis and its practical mastery, a distance absolutely necessary to be aware of if one wants to generate a telling explanation of praxis.¹¹ In other words, my work with Pentecostals not only made me confident that the model worked, and that it worked as a *praxeological* model. More importantly, it gave me a strong experiential confirmation of the hermeneutical fact, which I

costals during the eighties.

10 Schäfer 1992c, based upon parts of my doctoral dissertation in theology.

11 “The theoretical model that makes it possible to recreate the whole universe of recorded practices, in so far as they are sociologically determined, is separated from what the agents master in the practical state, and of which its simplicity and power give a correct *idea*, by the infinitesimal but infinite distance that defines awareness or (it amounts to the same thing) explicit statement.” (Bourdieu 1990a, 270, G: 2008, 467)

already knew theoretically: the model is just a *model* and neither the practical mastery nor a mirror of reality—but as a model, it is very helpful. Thus, readers who expect too much of *HabitusAnalysis*—to be given something like a camera to take a faithful image of religious reality—are invited to feel disappointed right now. The model simply reduces the complexity of praxis: it helps to understand better how the practical logic of actors is transformed according to the challenges they meet in their social context.

Model and method are rooted in praxeological theory. In consequence, the empirical study and its methodological reflection triggered further work in theory. First, I dealt with the problem of collective mobilization of social and religious movements by developing a theory of identity and strategy as a network of dispositions based upon the concept of habitus.¹² Second, I developed an outline of a praxeological approach to theology and to religious studies.¹³

Moving from theory back to method and empirical studies, I had the chance since 2006, through a professorship of Sociology of Religion and Theology at Bielefeld University,¹⁴ to design bigger research projects with considerable third party funding and a research team. While almost all our research projects have followed a praxeological approach, I shall here mention only those of my co-authors of the third volume of *HabitusAnalysis*. The first project relevant for the advancement of the method was focused on religious peace builders in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The field study was carried out in cooperation with the Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies at the University of Sarajevo. We studied religious groups and institutions of Abrahamic religions engaged in peace building. The idea was to cluster the groups in a model of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian religious field and, in a second step, to compare the habitus of the actors in order to find specific similarities and differences. Leif Seibert (religious studies, philosophy, and sociology) developed a scaled model of the religious field and, together with Zrinka Štimac, conducted 90 habitus-interviews.¹⁵ In the context of the Center for Interdisciplinary Research

12 The book was accepted as doctoral dissertation in sociology by two of the most long-standing Bourdieu experts in Germany, Hans-Peter Müller and Klaus Eder. Presently a thoroughly revised version is being prepared for publication. See Schäfer 2003; Schäfer 2005.

13 This book was accepted as Habilitation in ecumenical theology at Bochum University, Germany, also under the supervision of Prof. Konrad Raiser (Schäfer 2004a).

14 For more information on the team and the projects, see the website of the Center for the Interdisciplinary Research on Religion and Society (CIRRuS), <http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/religionsforschung> or google: 'cirrus uni bielefeld'.

15 Leif Seibert finalized the project with a prize winning doctoral dissertation in which he developed a fully-fledged model of the religious field and considerably advanced

at Bielefeld University, together with Adrián Tovar Simoncic (cultural anthropology, religious studies, and sociology) we then achieved a deeper understanding of identity politics within the theoretical framework of the field-concept.¹⁶ Further, with an empirical study on religious diversity in Mexico City, which was realized in cooperation with the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (UNAM, Hugo José Suárez), Adrián contributed a praxeological perspective on religion as a means of individuation in modernity as well as progress in field theory. Since late 2011, Adrián and Tobias Reu (PhD, NYU, in social anthropology), have been realizing a research project on religious actors and their socio-political strategies in Guatemala and Nicaragua. This project is designed to test the whole range of methods and models in just one field of research in order to provide a coherent presentation of the method in volume 3 of *HabitusAnalysis*. One of the models is the social space of religious styles. It had been tested before by Jens Köhrsen (economics and sociology) in a research project about religious taste and social stratification in Buenos Aires.¹⁷ Adrián and Jens have now co-authored the chapter on social space in volume 3. The scholars mentioned here have contributed directly to the publication of *HabitusAnalysis*.

Beyond the co-authors of volume 3, there are some more scholars in our research team who realize projects based upon praxeological sociology and who have contributed good ideas to the common task. Clara Buitrago (social anthropology) studies religious beliefs and modes of organization in the transnational praxis of migrants between Guatemala and the USA. Tamara Candela (Mesoamerican studies) studies life histories of religious peace builders in Guatemala. Sebastian Schlerka (sociology) works on “secularization as struggle.” Jacobo Tancara (theology and literature) studies the constitution of subjectivity in Bolivian marginal urban writing in comparison with Liberation Theology. Rory Tews (sociology) applies *HabitusAnalysis* to social entrepreneurs in the economic field in Germany.

For the solution of intricate problems in our statistical “background activities”—sampling for surveys in difficult places like Bosnia-Herzegovina, construction of scales, reliable factor analyses etc.—we count on the advice and services of the StatBeCe (Statistisches Beratungs Centrum, Bielefeld University, Prof. Dr. Kauer-

HabitusAnalysis. Leif is not only the author of the chapter on the religious field and contributor to the chapter on the analysis of the practical sense (both vol. 3). He also accompanied critically the work on the volumes 1 and 2.

16 “E pluribus unum?— Ethnic Identities in Transnational Integration Processes in the Americas,” a research group at the Center for Interdisciplinary Research at Bielefeld University.

17 The project was finished in co-tutelle with École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, with a *summa cum laude* doctoral dissertation.

mann), the statistician Kurt Salentin of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence, and Constantin Klein of the psychology branch of our Center for the Interdisciplinary Research on Religion and Society (CIRRuS). The surveys in Guatemala and Nicaragua relied on the expertise of Gustavo Herrarte and Irina Pérez Zeledón. The Center for Interamerican Studies (CIAS) at Bielefeld University in Bielefeld presents an interesting institutional frame for discussing praxeological takes on transnational religious and cultural relations. Moreover, our model of the social space with its simplified scales for economic and cultural capital has been used since 2009 in a project on spirituality lead by my colleague Prof. Heinz Streib (Streib and Hood 2013; Streib 2014). In the faculty of History, Philosophy, and Sociology, also Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey and Thomas Welskopp as historians with a sound knowledge of Bourdieu's work are challenging interlocutors. Additionally, during the last years we had the opportunity to engage in more or less intensive exchanges about our ideas with outstanding experts in praxeological social research and neighboring disciplines, like e.g. our colleagues Thomas Alkemeyer, Ullrich Bauer, Uwe Bittlingmayer, Jörg Blasius, Helmut Bremer, Andrea Lange-Vester, Otto Maduro, Ulrich Oevermann, Terry Rey, Ole Riis, Franz Schultheis, Hugo José Suárez, Michael Vester and Loic Wacquant. Many thanks to all of them for their kind attention and advice! We hope that our three volumes will be conducive to further exchanges in the future.

At the start of this publication project, I had in mind just one book on method, with much of it already written. The project has however tripled in volume for a variety of reasons. The first reason is critics. Over the last 10 years or so, we have presented the method at conferences, where it was well received and discussed. Taking both the constructive critiques *and* the misunderstandings seriously, the only consequence—other than keeping silent—is to write more, and explain better. Second, the *Lichtenberg Kolleg* in Göttingen, together with the German Research Foundation (DFG), gave me 10 months time in 2012 to work exclusively on the epistemological and theoretical foundation of the method. So I wrote more and, hopefully, explained better. Finally, in the research team we took the decision to change our plans with regard to the volume on method (vol. 3). Initially, the different components of HabitusAnalysis were described according to the empirical context they had been developed in: the qualitative analysis of the practical sense with data from Guatemala in the eighties; the model of the religious field with data from Bosnia-Herzegovina 2009; and the model of the social space of religious styles with reference to Argentina 2010. As our recent project in Guatemala and Nicaragua was proceeding and involved all three techniques of HabitusAnalysis, we decided to take our time and to rewrite the whole book based upon the new and consistent set of data from the this project in Central America. Max Weber once

said that politics was a slow drilling of hard boards, with passion and perspective. *HabitusAnalysis* seems to be similar.

During the years we spent working on this project, there were many people providing technical support, good advice, and amicable gestures. Beyond the people already mentioned, I would like to name—in the order of appearance, so to say—Axel Stockmeier, Elena Rambaks, Stephanie Zantvoort, Hannah Schulz, Anna-Lena Friebe, and Nora Schrimpf for technical support during the years of work on this project. A special mention I would like to make of Sebastian Schlerka, who accompanied the last year with extremely competent technical support and who read through the text more than once with a keen eye not only on style but also on content. Teresa Castro and Michael Pätzold corrected our English with great skill.¹⁸ For any kind of flaws a reader may find, only the author can be held responsible.

Finally yet importantly, we thank the German Research Foundation, the Stockmeier Foundation, the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, Mexico, the Center for Interdisciplinary Research at Bielefeld University, and the presidency of the Bielefeld University for financial support of the diverse endeavors that contributed to our praxeological reflections on epistemology and language.

18 If there are some flaws left in style or semantics, this has to be due to my interpolating some sentences after finishing the English copy-editing.

Introduction

Remembering the indigenous peasant mentioned in the preface, we also recall that he was talking to an official of the Guatemalan army. Such a situation is by no means an inter-subjective face-to-face encounter between “alter” and “ego” that develops its specific dynamics exclusively from itself. Instead, the peasant is a member of a Pentecostal church and not of a resistant Catholic base community. Moreover, the officer is a quite high-ranking member of an army widely known for its cruel massacres of civilians, “disappearances” of people, and a strong determination to extinguish any mobilization against the interests of the upper classes. Both peasant and officer are “not alone,” so to say. Both are doubly restrained by circumstances largely beyond their control. On the one hand, both are guided and limited by schemes of perceiving, classifying, and judging the world, and of acting in it, which each of them has embodied during his whole life and according to his socialization. To name simply some of the most visible traits: the peasant is reluctant, silent, and subservient; the officer is space-taking, loud, and dominant. Each of them also perceives the world according to the religious beliefs he has embodied as dispositions of religious perception, judgment, and action during the course of their lives and according to their social living conditions, whether economic, educational, ethnic, or religious. The peasant’s conviction that the last days are dawning and the return of Christ is drawing near makes him identify the officer with the evil powers of the last days so that he becomes careful and skeptical but finally obedient to the military man. In turn, the officer’s Neo-Pentecostal conviction—that he is called to cast out demons using the power conferred on him by the Holy Spirit—gives him even more self-confidence and mistrust of “the Indians.” Additionally, both of them are oriented and limited by their objective possibilities: the peasant has no power whatsoever to contradict the soldier; the military man, within the chain of command, would have almost no power to contradict an order to execute the peasant. Moreover, both are constrained by the place they occupy in Guatemalan

society with its corresponding restrictions and opportunities. Social inequality, difference, and distinction guide and limit the actors externally and internally.

If we approach this scene from Bourdieu's theory, the relations between external and internal conditions of action are of major interest. The external conditions can be conceived, first, as the fields of praxis in which actors act—in the case of the peasant and the officer, especially the military and the religious fields. Second, external conditions can be modeled as the overall distribution of capital in society (the structure of the social space). The internal conditions can be conceived as the dispositions of the actors' *habitus*, i.e., the embodied results of the widest circumstances of their socialization. However, neither the military officer nor the peasant are conceived in the theory as mechanically following programs (a kind of "determination" whether by social class or by utility maximization). Instead, perception, classification, judgment, action, reaction, and the effects of things, institutions, and social processes—in short, social praxis—should rather be understood as a highly complex network of objective and embodied relations. Relations are not simply thought of as intersubjective relationships. Rather, the term refers to any kind of mutual effects that can be reconstructed sociologically between any *relata*. While *relationship* refers to the subjective aspect of a relation between actors, *relation* refers to a wide range of objective effects. These extend from the objective aspect of intersubjective relations to the fact that different positions in a model, such as social space, are defined by being mutually external and thus exert objective effects by the very difference of position. The theory assumes that, oriented and limited by a huge variety of relations, actors generate creatively their specific way of agency in whichever field of praxis they are active. Hence, we conclude that the best way to take the beliefs and practices of officer and peasant seriously in a sociological sense is to give equal consideration to three aspects of praxis: the relations people embody (their dispositions); the objective relations they are put in by society (their positions); and the practical logic that governs the relations between positions, dispositions and the wider social processes. Bourdieu's praxeology is an excellent instrument for such a procedure.

Our main interest is to understand the relations of religious beliefs and practices with the wider social structure.¹⁹ We understand that just like any other beliefs, religious beliefs are, in principle, dispositions or convictions albeit with one specific difference: They refer to a transcendent power.²⁰ This transcendent power is

19 Social structure conceived as the "relatively continuous social network of mutual effects in a given society." (Fürstenberg 1966, 441, trans. HWS)

20 See Schäfer 2004a; 2009; 2015; Schäfer et al. 2015. Our definition of religion is quite similar to the one of Riesebrodt (2010, 71ff.).

not semantically empty. The believers of most religions imagine such powers as divine beings that influence worldly matters. *For the believers*, these beings are as real as their influence on the world is taken to be real. In consequence, the believers can refer to the transcendent powers in order to ascribe meaning to their worldly experiences. However, giving sense and meaning to experience is not exclusively the business of religion. Any belief does this. We therefore have to steer our theory and method towards the relation between beliefs in general and social structure. If one considers the many possible transmutations of this relation—such as spirit and matter, idea and object, signs and things—one realizes that our interest is far from new. It is almost as old as humanity, or at least as old as philosophy. Much more recent is the scientific framework within which we want to pursue our interest. As we will see later on, sociology presupposes a specific frame for the treatment of issues like spirit and matter, or body and soul: the observation of relations. The relations between belief and social structure are the central issue of the sociology of religion. They have been addressed prominently and quite differently by Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and, taken with a pinch of salt, Karl Marx. These scholars have offered diverse clues to social differentiation, domination, knowledge, and practices in general, which are also highly relevant for the understanding of religious praxis. The difference between their clues is due to the differential weight that the three authors ascribe to factors like the interest of actors, moral consent, class-consciousness, division of labor, bureaucracies, or the conditions of economic production—in other words, to factors that in common-sense and spontaneous approaches to sociology²¹ are ascribed to either matter or spirit.²²

If one distinguishes trends in the social sciences according to the (certainly under-complex) opposition of social structure (matter) and culture (spirit) over the last, say, thirty years, one can notice an increasing trend towards culture that has been apostrophized as the “cultural turn.” In fact, there is not just one, but rather a number of turns. In the late sixties and early seventies, the names of Paul Ricoeur and Richard Rorty were associated with the “linguistic turn” and that of Clifford Geertz with the “symbolic turn” in cultural anthropology. Both currents in the humanities took the decisive step of defining culture *as* text and ascribing the crucial role of guiding social processes to the cultural (i.e. mental) orientations of actors. This trend was fostered by postmodern philosophy, and it entailed a strong focus on cultural work in post-colonial thinking, in the so-called iconic turn, and even in the spatial turn. The new attention to culture emerged, not least,

21 See Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1991a, 20ff., G: 1991b, 24.

22 Bourdieu’s approach to these authors in the context of religion, see in Bourdieu 1991, G: 2011b.

from a critical reassessment of the Eurocentric (or rather “North-Atlantic-centric”) social sciences and technocratic tendencies in structural functionalism. In this sense, the cultural turn, especially with the writing-culture debate, gave rise to considerable hermeneutical advances in the social sciences and the humanities in general. Nevertheless, while the subjectivist orientation of the new culturalism was certainly strong—as, e.g., in the radical constructivism of Siegfried Schmidt—the concentration on culture does not necessarily boil down to subjectivistic mentalism. In the wider tradition of Saussure, symbolic systems also have been conceived as objective realities. Clifford Geertz related them, as socially shared beliefs, to the organization of human society.²³ Other approaches in the objectivistic vein propagate more objectivistic designs of semiotic systems, such as intertextuality, “spacialities” according to the spatial turn, or—very different—networks of material and semiotic “actors.”²⁴ Hence, under the influence of the wider postmodern philosophy on the social sciences, what was discussed under new, culturalistic premises was not only the relation between things and signs but also the relation between subject and object, individual and society, actor and system/structure.

As time went by, the culturalistic trend became noticeable in almost all the humanities, including history²⁵. Hard facts of social structure, such as the conditions of economic production, became of minor importance for the explanation of human practices and social processes. The vestments of a new idealism seemed to become increasingly fashionable among the humanities and social sciences: a triumph of spirit over matter—or merely fashionable thinking within the major trends of the neo-liberal “economy of information?”²⁶ In any case, with regard to a perceived alternative between structure and culture, things and signs, the decisive weight

23 The objectivistic reading of Geertz is not the only alternative (see Reckwitz 2006, 445ff., esp. 474ff.).

24 For a critical view of this trend in textual and social sciences see Sokal and Bricmont 1998. Given the highly “innovative”, universalistic, transdisciplinary etc. features of the postmodern debates, our proposal will seem somewhat conservative, down-to-earth.

25 ...not least by a counter-tendency to an alleged structural objectivism of the Bielefeld school of Social History, represented most visibly by Hans-Ulrich Wehler.

26 This trend was by no means restricted to the scientific field. A new (almost magical) idealism has been propagated by the prophets of the after-cold-war electronic financial capitalism, hailed as “economy of the spirit” (George Gelder, Ronald Reagan) and useful for the neoliberal restructuring of the labor market by the technocrats of wishful thinking (see Byrne 2006; Ehrenreich 2010). Zygmunt Bauman, in his early assessment of postmodernism, finds the traces of this social condition reflected by postmodern sociology as well: “I suggest that postmodern sociology can be best understood as a mimetic representation of the postmodern condition.” (Bauman 1992, 42).

is widely given to “spirit”²⁷—with different results regarding the subject-object problem, since there are inclinations to both the subjective and objective spirit.

With regard to our interest in understanding religious beliefs, the new appreciation of culture in preference to structure appears to be of great benefit. However, the illusion of benefit bursts at the very moment that the real situations that one tries to understand do not reasonably allow a culturalistic interpretation. In my view, this occurs, for example, when one listens to an indigenous peasant and a military officer talk about religious beliefs in the context of the Counter-insurgency war in Guatemala; or when one observes an Israeli military officer at a checkpoint into East Jerusalem interviewing a Palestinian college youth about religious beliefs. The point is, beliefs are important but they do not operate in isolation from the social structure—and vice versa. Realistically assessing the flaws of both culturalistic and functionalist one-sidedness, the protagonists of another trend in the social sciences began to think differently about things as early as in the late sixties and seventies. Theories of praxis intended to bridge the gap between structure and culture that had been opened by an “either-or” logic. A “both-and” logic was proposed by theorists like Marshall Sahlins, Anthony Giddens, and Theodore Schatzki²⁸—three outstanding proponents of this current.

Bourdieu is another, indeed the most influential, exponent of the praxeological current in the humanities. In our view, his concept of habitus turns his brand of praxeology into the most useful one for the study of religion, especially for religious meaning. This is due to Bourdieu’s specific transformation of continental, more specifically French, relationist thinking through ordinary language philosophy and a bit of pragmatist influence. Hereby Bourdieu facilitates linking the study of social structures (classes, positions) with the study of the cognitive and practical operations of social actors (classifications, dispositions) and thus offers a genuine

27 This whole, more or less postmodern, trend is nicely documented in Bachmann-Medick 2009. Zygmunt Bauman sees one of the roots of the sociological trend to focus almost exclusively on signs and meaning in ethnomethodology. “Postmodern sociology received its original boost from Garfinkel’s techniques conceived to expose the endemic fragility and brittleness of social reality, its ‘merely’ conversational and conventional groundings, its negotiability, perpetual use and irreparable under determination.” (Bauman 1992, 40) While postmodern thinkers often were critical towards the power centers of society, they limited their critique mainly to the meaning systems associated with power. On the early passing away of postmodern thought see the “obituary” by Müller (1998).

28 Giddens 1984; 1991; Sahlins 2000; Schatzki 1996. See also the reviews by Sherry Ortner (1984); Reckwitz (2003; 2006; 2002) and Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina and Savigny (2001). For the turn to praxis and against “text-only,” see Vásquez (2011, 211ff.): “What a practice-centered approach demands, rather, is that we always place texts in their contexts of production, circulation, and consumption.”

way to analyze language and culture in their relation to social structure. We will develop this point of view with regard to theory and method in our proposal for *HabitusAnalysis*. In this attempt, we are challenged first and foremost by the vast and somewhat inconsistent nature of Bourdieu's work itself. In consequence, important issues of the epistemological preconditions and the sociological framing of our method remain quite unclear if they are no more than occasional references to particular works of Bourdieu. For this reason, we do not only publish a volume on method (vol. 3) but also discuss the general architecture of Bourdieu's praxeological theory (vol. 2) as well as his epistemology and approach to language (vol. 1). We will primarily focus on re-reading the original works and will respond to the secondary literature²⁹ either when we are concerned with issues that are crucial for developing

29 We suppose that it is obvious to our readers that we can neither discuss the overall reception of Bourdieu's work nor give an overview of his theory at large. Introduction and overviews are offered by handbooks and collections of articles on Bourdieu's work, most of which prove to be very useful and knowledgeable. Two special recommendations at the beginning of the list: Fröhlich/Rehbein (2009) is a very comprehensive and systematic introduction to the whole scientific work of Bourdieu. Loic Wacquant offers an excellent introduction to Bourdieu's theory as well as to objections against it, in his introduction to Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992. In the same book, he interviews Bourdieu forcing him to be clear about the central issues of his theory. The following suggestions of more introductory literature are in alphabetical order. Bennett et al. 2009; Bittlingmayer et al. 2002; Brown and Szeman 2000; Calhoun, LiPuma, and Postone 1993; Eder 1989; Fowler 2000; Fuchs-Heinritz and König 2005; Grenfell 2010; on interdisciplinary perspectives: Hillebrand and Bourdieu 2006; Jenkins 1992; Kraus and Gebauer 2002; Lahire 2011 with an interesting dispositional theory of habitus; Müller 1992; Müller 2014; Rehbein 2006; Rehbein, Saalman, and Schwengel 2003; Robbins 2000a; 2000b; 2000c; 2000d; Schultheis 2007; Shusterman 1999a; Swartz 1997; Swartz 2003; Susen and Turner 2011 with some chapters on philosophy. — In the last decades, Bourdieu has been debated also among Spanish and Portuguese speaking scholars. Here a short selection of introductions: A. B. Gutiérrez 2002, an introduction with special attention to the systematic coherence of praxeology; Marqués 2006, critical towards too much structuralism in Bourdieu; A. T. Martínez 2007, the Argentinian sociologist gives an introduction to Bourdieu's thought pivoting around the concept of habitus; Rodríguez López 2002; Vázquez García 2002 — On the scientific legacy of Bourdieu: D. G. Gutiérrez 2002; Institut für Sozialforschung 2002; Swartz and Zolberg 2004; Suárez 2009; Xavier de Brito 2002 — More specifically on habitus: Alonso 2002; Bennett et al. 2009; Bongaerts 2009; Lenger, Schneickert, and Schumacher 2013; Ramos and Januário 2008, a comparison of Bourdieu and Giddens with regard to reflexivity. — On fields and social space Blasius and Winkler 1989a; 1989b; Höher 1989; Lamont 1992. — We will refer repeatedly to criticisms of Bourdieu's theory. Therefore, here we would like to mention some of Bourdieu's objections to the objections: Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, G: 1996; Bourdieu 1990b, G: 1989; 1998a, G: 1998b; 2000, G: 2001. "In other words, once again, the charge of reductionism thrown at me is based on a reductionist

our own praxeological strategy to deal with the practical (religious and non-religious) semantics of ordinary language, or in the context of social differentiation and domination. While our primary approach to language is through the transformation of the concept of habitus, habitus alone is not sufficient for a comprehensive analysis without the models of fields and social space, i.e. the social context in which actors live. What is crucial to our work is the relation between dispositions and positions. For this reason, “HabitusAnalysis,” the name of our method, refers metonymically to habitus and social sense, to fields and social space *together*. In terms of method, we propose therefore to triangulate different models (vol. 3).

As indicated in the preface, HabitusAnalysis emerged from empirical research on religious and social movements. This research interest has obviously left its mark on our methodological and theoretical approaches. Our focus is on the meso-level rather than the macro or micro ones; collective mobilization and organization take preference over the analysis of established institutional structures or highly personalized contexts such as families. These conditions limit our approach. Even so, the meso level poses interesting challenges to an actor-oriented approach. Research has to concentrate on the relations of the collective actors to both the macro level of social structures and the micro level of human attitudes and practices. In an appendix (Appendix: Religion and social movements, p. 353), we will sketch our fields of empirical research, religion and social movements. At this point, it may suffice to render our initial research interests transparent by listing central desiderata that research on religious movements poses to praxeological theory and methodology.

We should be able to theoretically grasp and methodologically model the following aspects of human praxis:

- the practical relations that link human thought, language, and action to the structures and processes of societies;
- the transformation by interpretation of experience into judgment and strategic projections and action (more specifically, the cognitive processes involved in the experience and interpretation of grievances and opportunities);
- the specific role of language in these processes;
- the emergence of identities and strategies from the cognitive transformation of experience;
- the structural conditions of action in two regards:

reading of my analyses.” (Bourdieu 1990b, 113) . Or with Brubaker’s words (Brubaker 1985, 771, quoted in Wacquant 1993, 241) one can state that “the reception of Bourdieu’s work has largely been determined by the same ‘false frontiers’ and ‘artificial divisions’ that his work has repeatedly challenged”.

- functional differentiation, modeled with Bourdieu as different fields of power-driven human (inter-) action, such as religious, political or artistic fields, and
- distribution of social power, modeled with Bourdieu as a stratified social space of differentially distributed sorts of capital and, therefore, of life chances.
- Finally, when called for, specificities of religious praxis should be accounted for under the premise of each one of the aforementioned aspects of praxis.

In this introduction, we briefly sketch the concept of praxis that inspires our understanding of praxeology (p. 32). Although we devote this volume to epistemology and language, praxeological terminology will be present everywhere. For this reason, we also will give a brief idea of some central terms in the praxeological vocabulary for those readers who are not familiar with Bourdieu (p. 35). Next, we concentrate on the issues treated in the present volume. Under the headings of “Meaning” (p. 44) and “Relations” (p. 47) we sketch the scientific context in which relational praxeology has developed along with often disputed concepts and operations such as reality, individual, subject, abstraction, and so forth. We end this introduction with the usual short preview of the contents of this book (p. 63).

Praxis

Based upon empirical research, Bourdieu developed a decidedly relational sociology. A philosopher by training, he paid close attention to the epistemological premises of his sociology, especially of Kantian and Neo-Kantian origin.³⁰ An important root of praxeology in continental philosophy is Ernst Cassirer’s book *Substance and Function*, a thorough critique of substantialism combined with the development of a relational epistemology. For us it is also significant that, over time, Bourdieu became more and more interested in Wittgenstein’s ordinary language philosophy and in pragmatism. Cassirer and Wittgenstein especially have deeply influenced Bourdieu’s approach to meaning and symbolic practices, and we will therefore refer to them in our argument. Interestingly, Bourdieu’s roots in continental philosophy combined with his openness to Anglo-Saxon thought shifts his thought constantly

30 These are by no means the only philosophical and sociological influences on Bourdieu. See the chapter “Einflüsse” in Fröhlich/Rehbein (2009, 1ff.) on the most important ones. On Cassirer see Bickel (2003); on Bourdieu’s historization of Cassirer’s “symbolic forms” see Christine Magerski (2005). On the relation to Wittgenstein see Gunter Gebauer (2005); Schatzki (1997). See also García Canclini (1984).