

Religion and Cultural Politics.

Islam and Bourdieu.

I want to concentrate on Bourdieu's first book – *Sociologie de l'Algérie*, published in 1958 – and to explore two related aspects, firstly, the nature of his treatment of or discussion of Islam in this text, and, secondly, the methodological or philosophical tension in his work as he tried to balance the implications of the legacy of both Durkheimian and Weberian social science. The common theme is the question: how far did Bourdieu's developing conceptual framework enable him to understand or appreciate the significance of Islam in Algerian social organisation and in Algerian politics? There will not be time to carry through the implications of this question to the present, but, clearly, I am wanting to see this examination as a case-study for considering the capacity of the positivist tradition of social science to understand the influence of religion in contemporary politics.

I shall be looking closely at the text of *Sociologie de l'Algérie* and so I need to remind you at once of some textual details. *Sociologie de l'Algérie* was first published in 1958 as No. 802 in the "Que sais-je?" series of the Presses Universitaires de France. A new edition – 'entirely reviewed and corrected' – was published in 1961 in the same series and by the same publishers. This second edition went through to an 8th edition, published in 2001, when, I think, it was superseded by a new text in the series with the same title by another author. It was this second edition which was translated by Alan C.M. Ross and published, in 1962, as *The Algerians*, by Beacon Press, Boston, with a preface by Raymond Aron, and simultaneously published in Canada. I shall be working from the 1958 text. Where I quote passages which are retained in the English translation, I shall use that translation. Where passages are not retained or are altered, I shall make my own translation and, where necessary, I shall hope to draw attention to any significance that there might be in the nature of the changes.

The 1958 text starts with a one-page Introduction of two paragraphs. The first paragraph is consigned to a footnote on the first page of the new Introduction of the second edition, while the second paragraph is dropped altogether. Both paragraphs are important in announcing Bourdieu's intentions and in indicating his sensitivity to methodological issues. The first paragraph reads:

"It is obvious that Algeria, when considered in isolation from the rest of the Maghreb, does not constitute a true cultural unit. However, I have limited my investigation to Algeria for a definite reason. Algeria is specifically the object of this study because the clash between the indigenous and the European civilizations has made itself felt here with the greatest force. Thus the problem under investigation has determined the choice of subject. This study, which is a conceptual outline of more extensive analyses, includes a description of the *original* social and economic structures (chap. I to VI) which, although not the main purpose of the book, is indispensable for an understanding of the breakdown of the social structures caused by the colonial situation and the influx of European civilization." (Bourdieu, 1958, 5; 1961, 5; 1962, xi)

This is completely explicit. Bourdieu was wanting to give an account of the *status quo ante* of Algerian social and economic structures in order to analyse the effects of the colonial situation and the process of acculturation, even though he was aware that Algeria was in the process of constituting itself as an independent state and, therefore, in the status quo ante, had not existed as such, either as a political state or, as he says, a true cultural unit. Implicitly, there is a recognition that the coincidence between political states and cultural units is itself theoretically

problematic. The important point is that the substance of the 1958 text was an attempt to provide an account of the 'original' social and economic structures of a relatively indeterminate cultural unit. For someone who had not been trained at all as a sociologist, this was a first attempt to offer a 'sociology' of a phenomenon which was not yet either a coherent society or a coherent political state.

The paragraph which was not retained reads:

“Any other intention than that of revealing the process which has led to the current state of affairs would in no way benefit the disinterest and impartiality which must inspire these researches. Objective and temperate representation is neither evasion nor resignation when it provokes us into becoming aware of facts which, because they are human facts, contain within themselves their own meaning and value.” (Bourdieu, 1958, 5).

This comment is indicative of the position which Bourdieu was to elaborate in his methodological introduction to Part I of *Travail et Travailleurs en Algérie*, called “Statistiques et sociologie”, in which he insisted that the attempt to describe a situation scientifically or objectively was not an evasion of engagement but, instead, a contribution to cross-cultural understanding because, in the social sciences, this relies on common, shared human values. There is a trace here, not only of Bourdieu's distrust of Sartrean ideological engagement, but also of some unarticulated commitment to the assumptions underlying Raymond Aron's interpretation of Weber's historical and hermeneutic philosophy of social scientific explanation.

The main point about Bourdieu's original introduction is that, as someone who had been trained in philosophy rather than as a sociologist, he was wrestling with the conceptual difficulties of trying to describe the complexity of any given society. The first chapter of the 1958 text was entitled: “Continuité et contrastes”. This title is dropped in the 1961 edition, but the text is retained with almost no change as the Introduction to the new edition. Bourdieu begins by highlighting the diversity of the Maghreb, whilst wanting to pose the question whether the diversity conceals an underlying, prevalent unity. This is Bourdieu's summary of the diversity:

“There are so many criteria, so many lines of cleavage that rarely coincide, so many cultural areas that overlap. For example, according to climate and topography, there is contrast between the Tell coastal region and the 'Sahara,' between mountain dwellers and the inhabitants of the plains and hills. According to the way of life, contrast exists between nomads and sedentary peoples, but with varying intermediate degrees of semi-nomads and semi-sedentary peoples. According to the type of habitation, there is opposition between those who live in different types of dwellings: terraced houses in the Saharan Aurès and Mzab, houses with tiled roofs in Kabylia, Moorish houses in the cities, but again with a series of transitional types, of which one of the most common is the humble earthen *gourbi*; opposition between the grouped dwelling places of the people that have only recently become sedentary. According to the anthropological criterion, one finds antithesis between the local stock and the additions from the east (but a checkered history has brought about such a great intermingling that one can rarely and with difficulty distinguish any perfectly pure types). According to language and culture, opposition exists between Berber-speaking and Arabic-speaking peoples, but among the latter are a great many Arabicized Berbers. According to different culture traits, such as women's rights of inheritance, there is antithesis between Berber and Moslem law, but on both sides a system of counteracting balances which tends to abolish these differences. According to the degree of legislative power of the group, there is a similar

opposition, but with transitions of varying degree. According to artistic techniques, you discover contrast between the bold, rectilinear ornamentation of Berber art and the fine, flowing lines of Arab decoration. One could go on in this way contrasting the sharecroppers and the wage earners, the varying relationship of man to the soil, the magic-religious nature of the oath, the judicial system, the degree of penetration of Islam. All these lines traced on a map would form an almost inextricable maze, since no two marked areas would overlap exactly ..." (Bourdieu, 1958, 7-8; 1961, 5-6; 1962, xi-xii).

I want to make a few points from this passage. The first is that Bourdieu's uncertainty arises from an unwillingness to decide about the relative status of different kinds of distinction, particularly the relative status of what we might call social and anthropological distinction and the status of cultural distinction. To put this differently, Bourdieu comes across as uncertain about the boundaries or demarcations between distinctions which can be said to be objective and those which can be said to be socially constructed. There seems to be an underlying disposition to regard physical geography or topography as the strongest determinant of social and cultural differences, influencing the differences between sedentary and nomadic tribes, but these are reinforced by social constructs which have varying degrees of objective immutability – differences of habitation, of urban or non-urban existence, of art forms and, specifically for our attention today, of religion. This brings me to my second main point which relates to the brief references in this passage to Islam. Bourdieu makes nervous category distinctions. At one point, he comments on the ethnic variety of the population. This is a differentiation which can be made, as he puts it, 'according to the anthropological criterion'. He follows this by saying that 'according to language and culture', there is opposition between Berber and Arab speaking peoples and then specifies to say that 'according to different culture traits' there is antithesis between Berber and Moslem law. The example of this antithesis is the difference in attitude towards 'women's right of inheritance'. Bourdieu's philosophical sympathy with phenomenology **which I talked about at the UEL seminar meant**, I think, that he was inclined to resist the pursuit of causal explanation, but there remained the problem of the relative weight that he should assign to physical geography, ethnic diversity, law, political and social organisation, and religion in seeking to understand the behaviour of the inhabitants of the land mass that was labelled Algeria.

If a differentiation between Berber and Moslem law was one aspect of diversity within Algeria, Bourdieu also argued in this introductory chapter, that Islam could also be regarded as one of the unifying forces. He listed factors which countered the tendency towards social particularity in different parts of the country. These were:

"... the intense movement that animates the whole territory, the migration of shepherds, the cycle of markets which are the occasion for cultural and judicial exchanges (the role of the *meddah* comes to mind in this connection); the far-reaching influence of the cities which are centers of religious orthodoxy and Eastern civilization; the unity of faith; the fact that the many dialects use the one sacred language of the Koran as an implicit reference." (Bourdieu, 1958, 9-10; 1961, 7-8; 1962, xiii)

Even here, the unificatory function of Islam is presented as having three distinct characteristics. There is the double imposition of unity achieved institutionally by the domination of the cities and by their cultural allegiance to a religious orthodoxy derived from subordination to Eastern civilization. There is the unity achieved in the population by the general sharing of religious faith, and, finally, there is the unification which is achieved by the general reference to a common language text. Bourdieu does not appear to be prepared to comment on the relative

status of what might be called these institutional, spiritual and cultural forms of religious influence.

Obviously, I don't have time to go into detail in analysing the whole of Bourdieu's *Sociologie de l'Algérie*. I simply want to highlight those points in his account where reference to Islam seems to have most significance. The second chapter of the 1958 text, which was to become the first chapter of the 1961 edition, was entitled, in 1958, 'La culture Kabyle' and, in 1961, 'Les Kabyles' – a significant shift from an account of a 'culture' to an account of 'people' which was reflected in the adoption of *The Algerians* as the title of the English translation, rather than 'Sociology of Algeria'. Bourdieu describes, first, the physical geography of Kabylia and the spatial organisation of its villages. Writing in the present tense, he next describes the social structures of Kabylia, citing Lowie, Masquéray, and Berque. The third section is devoted to the 'juridical system'. There Bourdieu makes it clear, as he puts it, that 'Kabyle law is one of the centres of dialogue between arabs and berbers' (Bourdieu, 1958, 16, my translation). There is a short discussion of the way in which Berber law defines itself in opposition to the language and spirit of the Koran. In this discussion, Bourdieu cites G. Marcy and he also discusses theoretically the distinction between the two competing legal systems. For this theoretical discussion, Bourdieu has recourse to distinctions articulated by Max Weber. Bourdieu wrote:

“We think of the distinction made by Max Weber between ‘material justice’ (Kadi Justiz), ‘which, directly applied to particular cases, operates in conformity with the sentiment of justice but is devoted to the arbitrary’ and ‘formal legality’ which judges according to norms, or again, between the ‘magic formalism’ of the judgement of the ancient Germans and the ‘rational formalism’ of Roman law.’ Although kabyle justice has some of the traits of a ‘constituted’ juridical system, such as reasoned cohesion and sometimes written codification, it appears rather as a justice of sentiment (honour, equity, etc.)” (Bourdieu, 1958, 20-21, my translation)

This whole section is dropped from the 1961 text. Instead, the new edition goes straight to the next section of the 1958 text which was devoted to ‘domestic organisation’ where Bourdieu discussed in detail the status of women as an indicator of the differences between Berber and Islamic law. Bourdieu wrote:

“The principal originality of the Kabyle system concerns the status of women. Unlike Moslem law, which grants a woman the right to inherit, *ab intestat*, a third of the legal share, Berber law disinherits women by virtue of the agnatic principle, according to which the successional choice depends primarily on the degree of kinship in the male line and exists to the exclusive profit of the male heirs.” (Bourdieu, 1958, 22-3; 1961, 14; 1962, 5)

The Kabyles had in 1748 refused to obey Koranic law and had returned to their custom of disinheriting women, but Bourdieu points out that the apparent barbarity of male/female relations has to be understood in the context of the ‘absolute primacy of the family group, or, more precisely, of the agnatic group’ (Bourdieu, 1958, 23; 1961, 14; 1962, 7) and this contention is supported by a quotation from Bourdieu's chief source about the Kabyles, Hanoteau and Letourneux, who had written in 1873 that

“all the Kabyle institutions (political, administrative, civil ...) converge on this single goal: to maintain and develop the solidarity between the members of the same community, to give to the ‘group’ the greatest possible strength.” (cited in Bourdieu, 1958, 23; 1961, 15; 1962, 8).

Bourdieu goes on to argue that it is this sense of group solidarity amongst the Kabyles which enables them to retain their identity when they emigrate elsewhere. He wrote:

“The superior role of the group also appears clearly in the matter of emigration. Indeed, if in North Africa those who emigrate for temporary periods are for the most part sedentary Berbers and particularly Kabyles, it is because the strong cohesion and the solidarity of the agnatic group guarantees to the emigrant that the family he has left behind on the communal property – which provides subsistence for each member of the group – will be protected in his absence by those of his male relatives who have remained on the land. It is the thought of the family that sustains him during his exile, that inspires him to work desperately hard and save his money. Finally, it has been noted that when they are joined together in France to form communities which are patterned on the family structure and which recreate that system of solidarity and mutual support which animates Kabyle life, the emigrants will undergo severe privation in order to send back to their families the greater part of their earnings.” (Bourdieu, 1958, 26; 1961, 17; 1962, 11)

The final section of the chapter on the Kabyles in the 1958 text is devoted to ‘lived’ democracy and ‘constituted’ democracy’ which pursues, in relation to politics, the same argument as Bourdieu had advanced in relation to Kabyle law. The 1961 text added more to this section, just as it had added more to the account of domestic organisation, but rather than pursue these detailed differences any further, I want to summarise the argument I am trying to make.

I have distributed for you the bibliography which Bourdieu added at the end of the 1958 text. This was reproduced in the 1961 text and the English translation added a few details of available English translations of texts about Algeria whilst removing most of the methodological works cited by Bourdieu. What I am wanting to show is that Bourdieu’s account of Algerian tribes and of Islam was methodologically experimental in that, as a non-sociologist, he tried to deploy the conceptualisations of canonical sociologists either directly or indirectly by using secondary sources in which conceptual orientations were incorporated. This is why I have tried to be meticulous in mentioning Bourdieu’s citations or quotations. The main examples of what I am talking about are, of course, Bourdieu’s direct use of Weber. You will see that the bibliography includes Weber’s *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. This is Weber’s three-volume collection on the sociology of religion which was published in 1920 shortly after his death, the first volume of which contains the famous article on “The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism”, and the second and third volumes of which contain, respectively, Weber’s sociological analyses of Buddhism and Hinduism in Volume II, and of Confucianism in volume III. I shall come on to this in more detail in a moment, but the point is that Bourdieu was deploying Weber’s work in order to try to understand Algerian social organisation and the role of Islam at a time when Weber’s work was little known in France. Raymond Aron had been one of the earliest and most influential advocates of Weber’s work, introducing it in his *La sociologie allemande contemporaine*, which was first published in 1935 and re-issued in 1950 and 1966. In that text, Aron had been intent on explaining Weber’s methodology in opposition to the legacy in the French tradition of Comtist positivism and Durkheimianism, introducing Weber’s use of ‘ideal-types’ as instruments for understanding social historical reality in opposition to the positivist attempt to treat social phenomena as facts and to generate a system of abstract causal explanation of human behaviour. For me, the interest of Bourdieu’s *Sociologie de l’Algérie* is that he was strategically deploying the opposed traditions of social science. Notably, for example, as we have just seen, Bourdieu’s account of Kabyle customary law is heavily dependent on orientations which were contained in Hanoteau and Letourneux and were fully articulated by Durkheim in his *De la division du travail social*, first published in 1893. The relevant section of chapter 6 in Durkheim’s text, entitled “Progressive preponderance of organic solidarity”, deserves to be quoted in full. As the title of the chapter implies, Durkheim argued

that the original form of mechanical solidarity was that which he characterized as the ‘horde’ which then took progressively different forms. He wrote:

“We give the name *clan* to the horde which has ceased to be independent by becoming an element in a more extensive group, and that of *segmental societies with a clan-base* to peoples who are constituted through an association of clans. We say of these societies that they are segmental in order to indicate their formation by the repetition of like aggregates in them, analogous to the rings of an earthworm, and we say of this elementary aggregate that it is a clan, because this word well expresses its mixed nature, at once familial and political.” (Durkheim, 2004, 150; 1933, 175).

Durkheim went on to claim that there was nothing hypothetical about this classification. He continued:

“Not only is there nothing hypothetical about this social type, but it is almost the most common among lower societies, and we know that they are the most numerous. We have already seen that it was general in America and in Australia. Post shows that it is very frequent among the African negroes. The Hebrews remained in it to a late date, and the Kabyles never passed beyond it.” (Durkheim, 2004, 152; 1933, 177)

As evidence for this last comment, Durkheim cited: “Hanoteau and Letourneux, *La Kabylie et les Coutumes kabyles*, II, and Masquéray, *Formation des cités chez les populations sédentaires de l’Algérie*, ch. V.” – precisely two of the texts cited in Bourdieu’s bibliography. Bourdieu does not mention Durkheim in *Sociologie de l’Algérie*, but my point is that his interpretation of Kabyle social organization is derived substantially from texts which had pre-dated Durkheim and had given Durkheim the raw material for constructing his conceptualisation of the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity. Durkheim’s conception of mechanical solidarity paid no attention at all in *The Division of Labour in Society* to the social function of organized religious belief and Bourdieu followed this orientation in his account of the Kabyles, but I want to turn now to a chapter in which Bourdieu attempted to confront directly the phenomenon of Islam.

The fourth chapter of Bourdieu’s 1958 text, entitled ‘La Culture Mozabite’, **which** became, as chapter III, simply ‘Les Mozabites’ in the 1961 text and its translation. Bourdieu added one new page to the 1961 edition and, characteristically, in other places altered the balance between passages in large and small font, but, otherwise, the texts are identical. The chapter begins with a description of the physical geography of the region, of the torrid climate which supports only ‘a precarious mode of existence, dependent on the torrential rains that cause the wadi to overflow every two or three years, requiring endless toil to wrest the water from the ground.’ (Bourdieu, 1958, 43; 1961, 35; 1962, 37). This climatic precariousness stimulates social cohesion. In other words, Bourdieu takes from human geographers the suggestion that there is a causal link between topography and form of social organization. He writes:

“Adaptation to the natural surroundings demands an extremely strong social cohesion, and one of the reasons why such a cohesion is required is to ensure the functioning of the marvelously clever system of irrigation and water supply: ...” (Bourdieu, 1958, 44; 1961, 36; 1962, 37)

The use of the word ‘adaptation’ with biological connotations is supplemented here with the suggestion that the rational organisation of industry and commerce associated with the production and distribution of water is the means by which adaptation occurs. Importantly, the English translation loses the force of the word used by Bourdieu in this context: ‘marvelously

clever system of irrigation' is a translation of 'l'organisation merveilleusement rationnelle du système d'irrigation'. The translation loses the Weberian connotation of 'rational organisation'. Bourdieu immediately points out, however, that the yield from the labour barely covers the costs of its production, and he quotes from Gautier (No. 21 on the bibliographic list) who wrote that 'The oases ... could not long exist on their own resources. The oases system is a vicious circle, a financial paradox, or, more accurately, a millionaire's whim' (Gautier, *Moeurs et cout. Des Musulm.*, 56, cited in Bourdieu, 1958, 44; 1961, 36; 1962, 38). This quotation gave Bourdieu his cue for the problem that he wanted to discuss, one might even say for the theoretical problem of which the consideration of the Mozabites was an exploration. Bourdieu followed the quotation with the comment that

“We shall now attempt to explain the how and the why of this paradox.”

The paradox to which Bourdieu refers is, in effect, that the socially cohesive exploitation of oases is not the consequence of a natural equilibrium of labour and productivity but of capitalist intervention possessing its own motivations. The how and the why that Bourdieu wanted to explore was the how and the why of Mozabite capitalism. For his explanation, Bourdieu clearly had recourse here to Weber's 'The Protestant ethic and the 'spirit' of capitalism'. Bourdieu immediately offered an account of the 'why' of the paradox which he had highlighted:

“The Mozabites are Kharedjite Abadhites (a sect of Islam), who owe their name to the fact that they formed a dissident group against Ali, the fourth caliph, son-in-law of the Prophet, in the name of two principles that they derived from a strict interpretation of the Koran, considered as the unique law to which nothing can be added or taken away, namely, that all believers are equal and that every action is either good or bad, arbitration as to the rightness or wrongness of these acts being allowed only in exceptional circumstances. Thus these equalitarian rigorists, according to whom religion must be vivified not only by faith but also by works and purity of conscience, who attach great value to pious intention, who reject the worship of saints, who watch over the purity of morals with extreme severity, could be called the Protestants and Puritans of Islam.” (Bourdieu, 1958, 44-5; 1961, 36-7; 1962, 38).

Weber's 'The Protestant Ethic and the 'spirit' of capitalism' had originally been published as an article in 1905. The version included in volume 1 of the *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, which Bourdieu cites, was modified to some extent but, more importantly, that first volume began with a 'Vorbemerkung' (Prefatory Remarks) in which Weber discussed the development of his sociology of religion from its beginnings in the analysis of Protestantism to the subsequent analyses of world religions. In the first paragraph of these Prefatory remarks Weber wrote:

“The child of modern European civilization [*Kulturwelt*] will inevitably and justifiably approach problems of universal history from the standpoint of the following problematic [*Fragestellung*]: What chain of circumstances led to the appearance in the West, and only in the West, of cultural phenomena which – or so at least we like to think – came to have *universal* significance and validity?” (Weber, 2002, 356)

The most significant of these specifically Western cultural phenomena was, of course, capitalism. In tracing the development of his thinking, Weber made it clear that the purpose of the two older essays included at the beginning of the three volume collection was different from the final purpose of the collection as it emerged over time. The first two essays, one of which is 'The Protestant ethic and the 'spirit' of capitalism', attempt, according to Weber

“... to approach, through *one* important individual point, the aspect of the problem which is usually most difficult to grasp: the extent to which the emergence of an ‘economic disposition,’ the ‘ethos’ of an economic form, was determined by certain religious beliefs. This will be demonstrated by reference to the example of the links between the modern economic ethos and the rational ethic of ascetic Protestantism. Here we shall only pursue *one* side of the causal relationship. The later essays on the ‘Economic Ethic of the World Religions’ attempt, in an overview of the relationships of the most important religions of civilization [*Kulturreligionen*] to the economy and social stratification of their environment, to pursue *both* causal relationships as far as it is necessary to find points of *comparison* with the development in the West, which we shall be exploring further. Only thus is it possible to set about *identifying* more or less unambiguously the causal elements of the western religious economic ethic that, as distinct from others, are peculiar to it.” (Weber, 2002, 366-7).

Put simply, Weber was saying in 1919 that his early work had been an attempt to analyse the effects of Protestant Christian beliefs on the emergence of Western capitalism, whereas his later work had become more interested in the social conditions of production of differing religious beliefs and then in the consequentially different forms of economic behaviour.

I mention this in detail because I am suggesting that Bourdieu’s account of the Mozabites as heretical Islamists simply took over Weber’s analysis of the effects of christian protestantism without paying attention to the specificities of Islamic fundamentalism. Weber, for instance, had devoted meticulous attention to the different consequences of Lutheran and Calvinist beliefs, the one emphasizing faith and the other works, whereas Bourdieu writes of the Kharedjite Abadhites without comparable discrimination, stating that for them ‘religion must be vivified not only by faith but also by works and purity of conscience’. At the same time, Bourdieu made no attempt to analyse the local forms of Islam in the way that Weber had attempted in his later, comparative religious studies. Bourdieu mentions that one of the characteristics of Mozabite society is that the survival of their cities is dependent on the temporary emigration of workers and entrepreneurs, and this then causes him to pose his ‘how’ question. He does so in the following passage by asking typically Weberian questions:

“... how has the cohesiveness of the whole been maintained against all the forces of dispersion? How, moreover, have these rigorous Puritans been able to become financiers, specialists in big business and high finance, without disavowing their devout heterodoxy in any way? How can a keen understanding of capitalist techniques be united in the same persons with the most intense forms of a piety that penetrates and dominates their whole life? How is it that this religious society – tightly closed upon itself, anxious to assert itself as being different – has been able to participate in a completely modern economic system without letting itself be affected or impaired in any way and, at the same time, preserve its own originality intact? (Bourdieu, 1958, 45-6; 1961, 37-8; 1962, 39)

In trying to answer this question, Bourdieu touches on the influence of the city which reflects Weber’s interest in the extent to which the ethos of capitalism was reinforced by urban development as much as directly by belief systems. Bourdieu follows this with a section which he actually calls ‘Puritanisme et capitalisme’ in which he comments that all the forces of dispersion inherent in Mozabite society are countered by

“... the extremely vigorous pressure that the group exercises over all its members through the intermediary of its religious doctrine, through the cohesion caused by its

intensely active religious life, through the constant presence of religious law in every act of life and in the hearts of all men, a religious law which is felt both as a rule of life imposed from without and as an inner guide to conduct.” (Bourdieu, 1958, 51; 1961, 43; 1962, 45).

Tacitly, the contrast which really interested Bourdieu was between the so-called ‘gentilial democracy’ of the Kabyles in which social relations were organised on the basis of domestic or familial relations without reference to any constituted law of conduct, and the social organisation of the Mozabites in which cohesion seemed to be achieved on the basis of religious conviction and subordination to religious commandments.

My main point today, therefore, is to suggest that Bourdieu’s account of Islam in his first book was not primarily a response to his observations of Islamic practices so much as an attempt to use and, perhaps, evaluate the opposing conceptualisations of Durkheim and Weber. In brief, the rest of my argument would run in the following way.

Many of the secondary texts which Bourdieu used in writing *Sociologie de l’Algérie* can be shown to be what Edward Said would call ‘orientalist’ texts. Perhaps the work of both Durkheim and Weber could also be said to be orientalist. I have argued many times that Bourdieu’s fieldwork in Algeria was stimulated by an essentially philosophical problematic concerning affective relations and processes of acculturation, and that, on returning to France, he spent the 1960s consolidating his reputation in Aron’s Centre de Sociologie Européenne as a sociologist pioneering his own version of the Western European sociological tradition. It was only in the early 1970s when he had gained personal control over the Centre de Sociologie Européenne that he was able to reactivate his earlier phenomenological orientation to pose the question of the relationship between the non-reflecting, primary experience of people and the systems of objective explanation of these experiences offered by Western social scientists. During the 1970s, he revisited his Algerian work and, as early as *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique* (1972), was emphasizing the methodological necessity to carry out a second epistemological break which would entail a sociological analysis of the conditions of production of objectivist science. Significantly, Bourdieu gave a paper entitled “Les conditions sociales de la production sociologique: sociologie coloniale et décolonisation de la sociologie” in June, 1975 at a colloque on “Ethnologie et politique au Maghreb”. The re-writing of the ‘translation’ of *Esquisse* as *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, published in 1977; the publication of *Algérie 60, structures économiques et structures temporelles* in 1977; and the publication of *Le sens pratique* in 1980 were all different attempts to re-visit the work of the late 1950s which would exorcise the Western sociological gaze that I have tried to expose as present in *Sociologie de l’Algérie*. Most of this was happening before the publication of Said’s book of 1978: *Orientalism. Western conceptions of the Orient*. In the Preface to *Le sens pratique*, Bourdieu went out of his way to discuss his intentions and the influences on those intentions when he first began to study Algerian tribes. The whole Preface deserves close attention and, from our current point of view, not least because Bourdieu comments that it was the rediscovery of some of his own photographs which reminded him of how he had felt about the incongruity of attempting to analyse ritual practices during conditions of war. Bourdieu argues, without using the word ‘orientalism’, that he had at first resisted analysing ritual because of the orientalist orientation of this kind of study, but he had become persuaded

“... to try to retrieve it from the false solicitude of primitivism and to challenge the racist contempt which, through the self-contempt it induces in its victims, helps to deny them knowledge and recognition of their own tradition.” (Bourdieu, 1990, 3).

In other words, Bourdieu's initial response to orientalist interpretations of ritual was to attempt to analyse Algerian experiences materialistically. Hence the analysis contained in *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* of 1963 was on the one hand statistical and, on the other, based upon interviews which attempted to gauge cultural change solely in terms of changing experiences of work. In my view, *Algérie 60* perpetuates this approach in that Bourdieu sought to align his earlier work with arguments emerging in Development Economics and Development Studies. It was essentially in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* that Bourdieu tried to retrieve indigenous experience in a sense that was much wider than in terms of labour. However, my contention is that Bourdieu did not then have the raw material to allow for the possible expression of Islamic attitudes. His derivative sociology of religion had been so objectivist in the late 1950s that he had never asked fieldwork questions about the consequences for social action of different forms of Islam amongst, for instance, the Kabyles or the Mozabites. The retrieval of a materialist, non-orientalist ethnography had no evidence to use to do justice to indigenous religious experience and in relation to our current world situation, this perhaps should be regarded a serious deficiency in Bourdieu's early work and his incapacity to rescue that earlier work from the inadequacies of which he was aware. Having said that, I would nevertheless want to end by arguing that Bourdieu would not have allowed himself to be trapped into the kind of dualism which underlies Said's analysis of orientalism. Bourdieu's second epistemological break does not negate the achievements of objectivism. It relativises them by encouraging reflexivity. Amartya Sen has recently made this comment in relation to Said's work:

[Sen: The Argumentative Indian.]

I think Bourdieu's methodology is one which can be deployed to understand situations pluralistically and, not least, to understand contemporary international religious and political relations. The methodology which he developed had the capacity to enable cross-cultural understanding of religious convictions, but his earlier fieldwork preceded the development of this methodology such that he did not have the transcripts of interviews and conversations which would have made possible an analysis of the part played by Islam in indigenous Algerian culture. In part, this is why it is so interesting that we do, nevertheless, have the photographic record of his visual perceptions at the time.

Derek Robbins.