Sociology 929 Reading Interrogations Session 10
Andrew Sayer on Moral Significance of Class
November 7, 2006

1. Michael Callaghan Pisapia

Sayer's book raises for me the difficult challenge of deciding whether the concept of class should be employed "abstractly," focusing on a particular aspect of the social world such as relations of production in order to explain economic exploitation, or "concretely," as one of many aspects of the social world overlapping with others in contingent ways that determine life chances, forms of life, and the experience of social goods (Sayer 2005: 73). It may be argued that a social theorist need not make this choice. But, I have trouble making sense of why economic exploitation matters except insofar as it determines the distribution and enjoyment of social goods and the way in which those goods are valued or not by members of different social groups. An abstract definition of economic class or an abstract definition of status are meaningful because they help make sense of the of forms of life of and social goods that autonomous yet dependent human beings come to value; but if the real concern is the handle on those goods, and there are multiple dimensions of social life that go into the lack of and desire for those goods, then any analysis that focuses on only one social dimension would seem to be incomplete as an explanation of social relations.

Sayer suggests throughout his book that if an abstract rather than concrete approach is taken, the moral significance of class – moral from the standpoint of laypersons who have a practical sense of class and a feel for the game of class relations; *not* only from the standpoint of social theorists, whose abstract account of social structure may inform their beliefs about social justice and injustice – may be overlooked. Why does Sayer argue that social theorists should take seriously the moral sentiments and emotions that emerge in the micro-interactions among individual members of the same class and of different classes because these sentiments and moralities? What is forfeited or lost if social theory overlooks the moral significance of class? Sayer seems motivated by a positive empirical aim of completely representing the terrain of social relations which is more than a competitive struggle for power *per se*; it also involves feelings of approval and disapproval about desserts. Since these lay moral sentiments are a feature of the social world of class relations, they need to be explained as well. Sayer also seems motivated by an extensively collaborative spirit; social scientists with their analytical obsessions may have something to learn – towards the end of improving their study of asymmetries in access to social goods – from the emotional intelligence of lay persons on the front lines of class experience. How should we understand the relationship between abstract sociological theories of class, and concrete moral expressions of the experience of being classed and classifying others, and of caring about goods that really do matter, and not only about things that are posh or common? Can an abstract theory of class reveal the moral significance of class or can it only reveal the interests that are expected to accrue to individuals as a function of their class location?

Jorge's comment on Michael

I think this choice between what Sayer terms an abstract or a concrete approach to class will mostly depend on the topic we want to explain. In my opinion, no analysis can be "complete". Our theories are much poorer than social reality. The question is how to simplify the latter through the former. I think Sayer's proposal is very interesting, but he should show how we can empirically study these topics. What is clear, nevertheless, is that people don't act guided by merely norms or interests. How we can link this complexity of social action with the maps of one "abstract" class concept? As I wrote last week, I think there is a kind of "theoretical asymmetry" since in the latter we use an *etic* approach based in an artificial construction (a class map based in ones interests defined by the sociologist) while in the former we use an *emic* approach closer to the motivations (be these interests, norms or ethical dispositions) of social actors. That it is difficult to link both levels doesn't amount to its being impossible. One option, for instance, it would be make the "class consciousness" concept broader to make room for "ethical dispositions", but I am not sure...

[Joe Ferrare comments]
My response will probably sound cliché, but I think that the decision to use an abstract concept of class versus a concrete concept of class (as Sayer defines the terms) entirely depends upon what you are trying to explain or understand. I came into this course rather naively in that I had it in my head that there would be one concept of class that would "win me over" and choose to use in my own research on class and education. However, and this speaks to your comment in the first paragraph, I do not believe such a decision is necessary. Selecting a class concept prior to deciding what aspect of class you are interested in investigating is similar to deciding that you want to use quantitative methods before developing a research question. It is fine for someone to do that, but ultimately your method will restrict the types of questions you can attempt to answer.

Now, to speak directly to your question, whether or not an abstract theory of class can reveal the moral significance of class depends upon what factors reveal moral dimensions. I think Sayer would argue that the moral dimensions of class require an analysis of the economic system as well as the cultural, social, and subsequently symbolic forms of capital. By (his) definition you could not do this with an abstract concept of class.

Ann's comments on Michael's interrogation:

I think you've identified Sayer's explanations for why studying the moral significance of class is important: (1) because beyond the abstract theories about status and exploitation, how people come to value goods and how they experience class emotionally is important, and (2) theories that do not attempt to account for morality in their explanations of the social world and social relations are

incomplete. However, to me, the choice about whether to use an abstract or concrete theory is related to the scope of the research question.

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2. Jorge Sola

Positive and normative approaches: Can we deal with both of them but by distinguishing them sharply?

I agree with Sayer's criticism of mainstream sociology to ignore normative topics. Nevertheless, he also states repeatedly that a sharp distinction between the positive and normative claims is not possible. I disagree; although perhaps I misunderstood him and both of us think the same. It is not possible to have an absolutely non-normative language in sociological analysis because much of the concepts we use are full of unavoidable normative sense, but we can distinguish in a theoretical discussion what is a normative judgment and what is a positive statement. Of course, the latter is not a naked fact, but we can separate his positive and normative sides by showing clearly what are the hidden ideas behind this. While I am in favor to link the sociological analysis with the normative questions, I think also to distinguish them sharply is better both for the positive research and the normative evaluations. Otherwise, we run the risk of confusing things, for example by camouflaging normative arguments with the costume of empirical evidence. (Another thing less important but related to Sayer's project: he is very brave in developing his proposal, but it seems to me he ignores much of the recent debates in political philosophy about social inequalities or the question of the good.)

What is the actual explanatory power of ethical dispositions?

I appreciate Sayer's stress on the important role of ethical dispositions in people's behaviors. But this doesn't mean that these ethical dispositions, or what he terms lay normativity, are essential to study and to explaining social processes. In order to persuade readers of the necessity to pay attention to this aspect of social action, Sayer asks them about their own lives. Despite his rhetorical force, it is not a reason insofar as there are a lot of very important things in our lives which don't explain too much. To these kinds of dispositions to be able to explain something, there need to be certain regularities and causal relations –for instance, variations in beliefs (e.g. the degree to which people consider unemployed people's situation deserved and fair) explain or help to explain the variations in economic policies. I actually think that these ethical dispositions, which make *habitus* concept richer, may be very interesting to explain variations in class formation or class struggle in different times and places, but I am sure neither in which degree nor how we can make these tools operative. To sum up: neither the normativity lay is essential to explain every subject related to class analysis (for instance, the fall of petty bourgeoisie) nor the fact that it is important in everyday life automatically amounts that normativity lay is central in sociological explanations.

Are his political proposal naive?

Finally, and just like a subjective note, while his criticisms of New Labor are daring and appropriate (especially if we regard the support that such politics have achieved among many famous sociologists), the last pages about how to make egalitarian politics (where he asks "what should we do about it?") seem to me quite naive.

Charity's Response: (Question 1) You raise an interesting and complex point. Initially, I agree with Sayer, that all positive statements are in some sense founded upon normative ones, so how can they be separated? Yet, you point out that there may be a danger in our inability to try to separate them. What exactly is that danger? Does camouflaging normative arguments with empirical (or theoretical!) evidence serve to discredit the value of lay normativity?

(Question 2) I think I disagree with you, although your argument is compelling. I think lay normativity does have some level of operative value, and you point to it in your interrogation. This may come in the evaluational elements of Sayer's framework; our evaluation of other individuals and ourselves influence the choices we make in regards to behaviours in class formation and solidarity and, therefore, it is useful in theoretical analyses . Perhaps the issue is that it is more useful in qualitative analyses and location/time specific conditions. Yet, I still think understanding how class formations take place requires the reflection of subjective motivations.

[Joe Ferrare comments]
I tend to agree with you, Jorge, that ethical dispositions are not *necessarily* essential to studying social processes. If you accept that social processes take place external to the individual and regardless of their knowledge of them, then an understanding of their ethical dispositions may not contribute much to your understanding of the causal mechanisms behind those relations. One instance I can think of in which it would be necessary to understand class actors' ethical dispositions is if those dispositions shaped the social relations under inquiry.

Ann's comments on Jorge's interrogation:

(1) Regarding positive and normative approaches, my understanding is that Sayer believes positive approaches to social phenomena, particularly the study of class, are incomplete (and can result in the misunderstanding of society, p. 214) because they fail to acknowledge the crucial role of normative values. I vaguely recall Sayer arguing positive and normative claims cannot be distinguished but I couldn't find that section of the text to re-read it and see if I could figure it out. Perhaps Sayer does not believe in positivism because every researcher/theorist brings his or her normativity to their research question?
(2) I did not get a clear understanding of the explanatory power of ethical disposition or how one would operationalize it from Sayer's book (both excellent questions). I think Sayer main argument is that that one's ethical disposition – or view of how one should treat others and be treated – can be

studied across social divisions because despite other group differences, moral behavior and evaluation can be consistent across groups, but I may have misunderstood even that.

(3) Regarding Sayer's political proposals, I think they are more idealistic than naiive. Sayer acknowledges that ethical arguments are not sufficient to bring about political change (p.231). I think he hopes his book will inspire people to think more deeply about their values (equality, re-frame self-interest as an interest in the greater good) and take political action toward them.

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3. Ann Pikus

Perhaps it's the upcoming election, but as I read Sayer's book, all I could think about was how Sayer's theories relate to U.S. politics. First, I was struck by how Sayer's theories are exemplified in Thomas Frank's book "What's the Matter with Kansas." Frank's book explores why Kansas' blue collar citizens seemingly vote against their economic interests in favor of Republicans who purport to be the moral party by crusading against abortion and same-sex marriage. If one buys into Frank's analysis, indeed, the Kansas citizens demonstrate how normative dispositions and beliefs may produce a resistance by the working class involving their moral superiority to at least some of those in the middle class and upper class who they may perceive as economically better off but morally bankrupt. It is interesting that Sayer's book concludes that it would be "...naïve to suppose that ethical arguments are ever sufficient to bring about political change..." (p. 231) yet that is precisely what Frank suggests, although rather than egalitarian elites mobilizing for policy changes that would lessen structures that perpetuate inequalities (i.e. progressive income tax, liveable minimum wage), working class people are mobilizing for social policy changes that affirm their moral values. Similarly, the moral boundary drawing and hostilities toward intellectuals (p. 183) seem to have political implications. Perhaps this is best exemplified by the framing of Kerry in the last presidential election as an intellectual who is aloof and more contemplative than practical and therefore, not sufficiently representative of the working class to merit their votes. I suppose my questions given these examples are (1) whether Sayer's hopes for "levelling up to the good" can be realized when the good is contested such that the good for those most adversely affected economically is moral progress and (2) are the middle class/upper class more difficult to mobilize around ethical issues simply out of a need to protect their economic status or are they in fact protecting their own moral beliefs? Has the U.S. gone from "It's the economy stupid" to "it's our morality stupid?'

Adam Slez

I think that your comparison between Sayer and Frank is interesting; I not certain, however, that their arguments are actually inconsistent with one another. More specifically, if I understand Sayer's argument correctly, I think that he is

trying to argue that it is misguided to try and understand class conflict independently from moral conflict. To the extent that class has moral foundations, it is inaccurate to speak of a shift from a politics of class or economics to a politics of morals. That being said, I think that the Frank example is a good, insofar as it raises issues about the *interaction* between normative and instrumental conflict. Insofar as it requires us to try and disentangle issues of self-interest from issues of morality, I think that your second question addresses this problem quite well.

Questions:

(1) Can "Sayer's hopes for of 'levelling up to the good'…be realized when the good is contested such that the good for those most adversely affected economically is moral progress"?
(2) "[A]re the middle/upper class more difficult to mobilize around ethical issues simply out of a need to protect their economic status or are they in fact protecting their own moral beliefs?"

Charity's Response: Wow, those are some interesting questions! I believe Sayer's book is valuable in that it gives us this foundation to investigate lay normativity, especially when it is seemingly in contradiction to their interests (economically, and I think in the end, morally as well). Your response highlights the importance and complexity of normative values in U.S. politics. Perhaps it is apt to say that it is "naïve to suppose that ethical arguments are ever sufficient to bring about political change," but how generalizable is that statement? Could it be true for some groups and not for others as you point out? And how does class determine/influence a person's susceptibility to ethical arguments? What does Sayer's piece tell us about the way in which people, of all classes, balance (or not) their subjective and objective interests? I know I responded to your questions with more questions… but your interrogation is thought provoking.

[Joe Ferrare comments]
You raise an interesting question as to the role of values and the economy in voter behavior/motivation. My unsatisfactory answer is that they both matter. The success of neo-liberal reforms was, in part, due to an ability to engulf the economic discourse with values rhetoric. Values such as choice, "free" markets, fairness, individual autonomy, and so on are all value-laden concepts but the Right uses them to describe not just economic policy, but virtually every policy arena (i.e. NCLB in education is loaded with values rhetoric).

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4. Joe Ferrare

Sayer's attempt to reconstruct Bourdieu's class analysis by examining the lay-person's experience of class is thought provoking, though at times I think he overstates his critiques and subsequent reconstructions of Bourdieu's work. In general, though, he successfully fills in gaps amidst Bourdieu's "Pascalian" and "Hobbesian" tendencies.

This interrogation will raise questions about Sayer's reconstruction of habitus via ethical dispositions and his claim that capitalism is identity-indifferent.

Before raising these questions I want to briefly re-visit something I raised in my interrogation last week with respect to social science research. Throughout the book Sayer speaks strongly against "sociological imperialism" and "intellectual elitism." In one of his stronger outbursts on the subject he claims that much of social science abstracts from what really matters to people (which he apparently knows), and goes on to say that these "theorists elevate themselves above the drone-like masses they study, and congratulate themselves on being able to see what the latter cannot, when in fact in some respects they can see less" (p51). Yet isn't that the point of social science, to make visible the invisible social relations that shape our lives in consequential ways? I realize he is trying to make lay interpretations of class salient, but isn't he then guilty of his own accusation by making visible what he claims others (social scientists) cannot see?

Sayer makes the claim that actors' ethical dispositions are not only contingent upon their location in social space, but that they also "cross-cut" divisions within this space. One of the reasons for this, he claims, is that it is more important to people how they treat one another than the aesthetic qualities of people and/or their possessions. At first it seems as though Sayer is furthering Bourdieu's use of habitus by suggesting it is more than just aesthetic tastes that matter to people, which I agree with. However, I'm not sure I would agree with his assertion that ethics are "more socially regulated and momentous than matters of aesthetic taste. For example, it matters little to me what you or your possessions look like; what is more important is how you treat me…and so on" (p47). Is he just making a normative claim here? Perhaps I have missed his point, but it seems to me he is downplaying the way social actors judge one another (and themselves) based upon aesthetic qualities. At the same time, I think he rightfully criticizes Bourdieu for downplaying the extent to which social actors judge one another based upon ethical considerations, I just would not go as far as to say that they are more socially regulated across all positions in social space.

Following a critique of Bourdieu's treatment of gender within his class framework, Sayer makes an interesting distinction between identity-sensitive and identity-indifferent mechanisms. His distinction paves the way to make the claim that capitalism, as an economic system, is identity-indifferent (p85-92). In other words, Sayer is arguing that while capitalism relies on cheap exploitable labor, it is indifferent to the class, gender, race, ethnicity, or age of such labor-power. I can accept that capitalism is indifferent to these classifications, but does that mean it can flourish without some form of *other-ing*? For example, the United States initially relied heavily on slave-labor to ignite the economy. Sayer would argue that capital did not care if the slaves were black or white, just so long as they could be exploited. Yet would it have been possible to exploit the slaves in such a way without constructing them as less-than-human despised others? Assuming the answer is no, then couldn't one conclude that capital's identity-indifference is indifferent only insofar as there is an "other" to exploit?

Adam Slez

Though I tend to agree with your point about the potential for hypocrisy in Sayer's argument, I think his basic argument is well taken: even if actors rarely

perceive the dynamics of the world around them, social science should not write off the way in which actors experience and understand this world. For example, emotions are not irrational, but rather, are a meaningful expression of the way in which a particular actor is experiencing the dynamics of social life. I think that this type of thing that Sayer would say the elitism of social science causes us to ignore. Also, you are correct that a system like slavery is not indifferent to identity. In fact, it has been argued that above all other things, slavery is characterized by the unique way in which it distinguishes subject from other (Patterson 1982). The problem is that while you are correct to note that slavery contributed to the development of American capitalism, slavery in and of itself is not capitalism. While I don't think your example supports your argument, I think there is validity to the claim that capitalism might require some form of other to function. More specifically, if we think about capitalism historically, what types of existing inequalities contributed to the increasing use of wage labor? This, however, is a historical question, not a theoretical one. That capitalism was built on existing inequalities (and continues to build on the types of inequalities that it creates) does not imply that capitalism is necessarily defined in terms of those inequalities. The problem is that we don't have a case to serve as a concrete counterfactual, and it is difficult to imagine a scenario in which some subset of otherwise equal actors would self-select themselves into capitalist wage labor.

Questions:

1) Is Sayer a hypocrite for first claiming that "'theorists elevate themselves above the drone-like masses they study, and congratulate themselves on being able to see what the latter cannot, when in fact in some respects they can see less' (p51)," and then proceeding to try and make visible what he claims others cannot see?
2) How valid is Sayer's claim that "ethics are 'more socially regulated and momentous than matters of aesthetic taste'"?
3) Is capitalism really identity-indifferent? Can it really survive without some form of other-ing?

Charity's Response: (paragraph 2). That's a valuable critique of Sayer, yet, I thing that his point is somehow reflected in your words: "Yet isn't that the point of social science, to make visible the invisible social relations that shape our lives in consequential ways?" While I think that is on some level true, I also think it is based on an assumption that much of social relations IS invisible to lay-persons. While I wouldn't make the statement that all is indeed visible, I would say that it is the purpose of social scientists to provide explanations for or a deeper understanding of such social relations.

(Paragraph 3) Your argument leads me to wonder if we could make the claim that varias class positions value ethical dispositions on differing levels. Although such a claim would be dangerous and would ignore individual morality, perhaps we can use Sayer's framework to understand why varying classes or groups are more or less likely to value ethical dispositions.

(paragraph 4). I think I am in total agreement with you on this point, and you articulated my concern extremely well! We can see throughout history how the interplay between racial/ethnic othering and patriarchal structures are inseperable. Because capitalism is based upon varying levels of dominance, it is impossible to explain such dominance without examining the ways in which social actors create and maintain it. This necessitates the understanding of social discrimination and identity-sensitive social processes.

Elizabeth response to Joe:

#1. I think you are right that there is a tension between Sayer's position as a social scientist and the emphasis he puts on lay reasoning. I am not sure, though, that it is entirely fair to fault him for this tension. I do think that he is right to point out that there is a real tension in *not* taking people's own account of their motivations and explanations seriously: you can view people's ideas about their own lives in a way that is quite different from how they themselves see it, but presumably you do not also look at your own life this way. So you need a way to account for this.

One way would be to say that people do tend to be systematically wrong (or, at least, misleading – missing the big picture, perhaps) about their own lives, and you are no exception, but that there's no way around this and the best you can do is comment on other people (or "people in general") without having the ability to apply this to yourself. Another way would be to say that there's something about you that's different, that gives you special ability to transcend your social position (or the psychological processes that limit people's understanding, or whatever) and come to a general understanding. An obvious problem with this is that it clearly can be quite elitist. (Actually, it reminds me of a Marx quote about "dividing society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.") Yet – as you point out – if we think that science can produce explanations than surpass lay explanations, then it seems that by definition we do think that some people can go beyond the explanations of others.

I tend to think that this problem is inherent to the position of social scientist as a minority within society commenting on social processes. If everyone were a social scientist (if everyone were involved in coming up with and debating theories about how society works), maybe it would be easier to comment on society without seeming to put yourself above it! i.e. Maybe we could have the process of science, finding systematic ways to interrogate our (collective) initial ideas, develop them further, test and revise them, etc., without social scientists either conceiving of themselves, or structurally being, cut off from what they study.

But given that that isn't the case, I don't know that the tension you point out is really his fault, or, more to the point, that there is necessarily a better solution for him. Would it be better to start by assuming that social scientists shouldn't take lay ideas seriously, since by definition we aim to go beyond them?

#2. About Sayer's point about moral judgments – I think you are right that this is an empirical question: how do people actually judge each other? Which kinds of factors are most salient compared to others? He doesn't really directly address this.

However, I think his discussions about the kinds of ethical judgments that people make were quite plausible and do suggest that ethical "dispositions" be taken seriously. One question might be how fully you can separate the ethical judgments he talks about from aesthetic matters. Are they fully separate dimensions, or can they be used as proxies for one another? I'm not sure about this.

#3. I like your point about capitalism and "other-ing." Maybe you could say that capitalism as an abstract structure is identity-indifferent, but that any particular capitalist system will not be? Actually, I think that's just another way of saying what you say in your last sentence.

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5. Charity Schmidt

[Professor Wright: I apologize for the fact that my questions/comments at this point are quite shallow. While I had planned to spend my weekend reading Sayer's book, my schedule was interrupted (Representatives from the Venezuelan Consulate in Chicago called me unexpectedly so I spent my weekend playing tour guide and connecting them with persons in the Madison community, how could I refuse?). I am disappointed as I am finding the piece fascinating thus far and would like to offer a thorough critique for Tuesday's agenda. I will have the book finished by class time so that I may participate fully in discussion.]

Here are my comments at this point:
*** Sayer discusses how contemporary politics has given attention to and made advances in forms of inequality other than class. While this recognition has been long overdue, it has served to downplay the role of class and thus initiatives to address class inequalities:

> "Thus egalitarianism has progressed on some new fronts while retreating on the class front, producing an apparent shift from traditional politics of distribution to a new politics of recognition (p. 13)."

Does Sayer's analysis of morality in class relations offer potential foundations for reinserting class into social and political discourse thereby increasing the likelihood of policy and action that address class inequalities?

*** He applies the moral evaluations made by people, as they relate to class, to inter-class interaction. How does his recognition of class antagonism and empathy between individuals of varying classes relate to other frameworks we have addressed during this course? Is this an original addition to the literature or can we find aspects of morality in inter-class relations within other analyses?

*** As a challenge to Bourdieu's proposal of compliance in the formation of habitus, Sayer points to the necessity of resistance. How does this effect the way in which we discuss contradictory class locations and inter-class interaction?

Adam Slez

1) I think that Sayer's book has a lot of potential in terms of its ability to legitimate demands for economic equality. I would be careful about making assumptions, however, about the declining salience of class. I think that Sayer is correct in noting that people react differently to different forms of inequality, but to suggest that class is somehow off of the table politically warrants empirical verification.

2) Though I wouldn't go so far as to say that the other authors that we have read ignore morality, they certainly have not theorized morality as such. For the most part, the authors that we have read have adopted an instrumental rather than a normative model of class. The real task is to figure out how the instrumental and normative dimensions of class interact to produce patterns of social action. It is a little difficult to say how the introduction of this of interaction term would modify various existing theories of class and inter-class interaction. My natural inclination is to suggest that we might simply attempt to understand the moral dimension of class in terms of a set of interests which potentially cross-cut the types of instrumental interests typically used to specify processes of class formation.

3) This is a very good point. First off, while Bourdieu does not mention the idea of contradictory class positions, the concept is clearly applicable to actors occupying an intermediate position in the social space. Occupying an ambiguous position of this might very well lead to a disposition towards resistance. Resistance in this formulation is a highly localized phenomenon, whereas in Sayer's model resistance is more global. Given Bourdieu's assumption about the complicity between habitus and field, the disposition to resist should only emerge when actors are located at a position equidistant from two dissimilar positions in the social space. By contrast, Sayer rejects this type of localism, arguing instead that actors are inherently able to consider positions other than their own, meaning that they are also able to evaluate and potentially resist the dynamics of the social field, regardless of their location within it. In contrast to the theories of Bourdieu and Sayer, both of which have arguments about the capacity for resistance and inter-class interaction built in to their framework, I think that the notion of contradictory class locations is neutral with respect to this issue. In other words, making an argument about the conceptual viability of contradictory class locations does not entail adopting a set of premises about resistance and inter-class interaction; it only requires that the interests associated with these positions be empirically specified. Depending on the relationship between this set of interests and the interests of actors in other locations in the class structure, resistance and inter-class interaction may be more or less likely.

Comment on Charity by Rodolfo Elbert

I think your first question raises a fundamental issue: what are the political implications of Sayer´s theoretical perspective? I don't think he really develops a

connection between the theoretical justification of the relevance of class in contemporary societies and the political agenda that results from this relevance. In particular, I think there is no clear connection between his theoretical framework and his denounces of the lack of class discourse among the New labour. Regarding your second question I believe that there was no place for morality in the different approaches we have analyzed so far. Maybe the connection of class with attitudes of antagonism and empathy could be related to Wright´s analysis of cross class friendship, don´t you think that? Finally it would be interesting to discuss in class the role of class resistance in the different approaches that we have analyzed so far. There is a clear role of resistance among Marxist perspective, but this role is not so clear in Bourdieu, not to mention Goldthorpe´s framework

Elizabeth response to Charity:

On your first question: I think this is definitely part of his intention. I'm not sure that I myself would see this as the main contribution of his book, however. I liked a lot of things about the book but I am a little uncertain as to what the practical or political implications of it are. (I tried to address this in my own interrogation, in probably a convoluted way.) What do you think would be the best way to use Sayer's analysis to further policy discussion addressing class inequality?

On your second question: I don't entirely know the answer to this. It seems to me that some of the theories we've looked at (most obviously Marx) heavily emphasize class antagonism and view it as springing necessarily from the classes themselves. Marx doesn't ordinarily put the question in terms of sentiments like empathy or individual-level antagonism, but he certainly thinks that classes have antagonistic interests, and I think he would probably consider antagonistic feelings toward the classes with whom one's interests conflict as being a mark of class consciousness. Weberian theories, I think, view classes as antagonistic to the extent that people with access to particular kinds of power want to use it to pursue their own ends, which might conflict with someone else's; but I don't think this is as central to his theory, which I expect allows for greater variety in the kinds of cross-class sentimental alliances that might spring up. You could also have empathy or antagonism based on social strata that would cross-cut class.

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6. Adam Slez

I think that one of Sayer's (2005) most insightful arguments can be found in his discussion of the distinction between use-value and exchange-value. Though my knowledge of the literature on Marxian class analysis is admittedly limited, my impression is that use-value tends to be used primarily as a conceptual foil for the notion of exchange-value and, as a result, is generally under-theorized as a concept in its own right. By contrast, Sayer uses the distinction between use-value and exchange-value to

interrogate the basic premises of Bourdieuean class analysis. One of Sayer's main critiques is that Bourdieu's model of the social field tends to only address struggles over exchange-value. Even cultural capital—arguably one of Bourdieu's most unique contributions to the study of class—is understood primarily in terms of exchange-value, in that it only matters to the extent that it can be converted into a positional advantage within the social field. Sayer argues that "[w]hile the insights produced by Bourdieu's use of the concept of capital are considerable, it shares with capitalist culture itself a tendency to prioritise exchange-value and to overlook how it differs from use-value" (Sayer 2005: 108).

Because of the way in which the concept of use-value is conventionally used, we usually only pay attention to the fact that, under a capitalist system of production, the exchange-value of a particular good is independent from its intrinsic (i.e. use-) value. While Sayer acknowledges the contingent nature of the relationship between use-value and exchange-value, he also goes to great lengths to point out that contestation over the intrinsic value of goods is as important in shaping the dynamics of the social field as conflicts over "the rates of exchange between the various forms of capital" (Sayer 2005: 107). According to Sayer, focusing solely on instrumental valuation (i.e. exchange-value) "ignores the influence of discourses which transcend particular habituses and the possibility of actors resisting and thinking beyond their own particular situation" (Sayer 2005: 105). This comment speaks to Sayer's argument that Bourdieu overstates the degree of complicity between the habitus and the social field (see Sayer 2005: 30-35). If there were in fact a perfect correspondence between habitus and field, there would be no impetus to reflect on—let alone justify or resist—one's own position in the social world.

The key point of Sayer's analysis is that actors do not experience class in the hyper-local manner suggested by Boudieu; if actors are generally unable to "see" the social space in its entirety, they nonetheless *experience* it as a whole. What is interesting is that if the problem with the Bourdieuean model was the assumption that the relationship between habitus and field is complicitous, then it should be able to be corrected by modifying *either* of the latter two concepts. Sayer, however, seems to be more concerned with corrective Bourdieu's conceptualization of the habitus. While Sayer goes to great lengths to demonstrate the importance of the distinction between use-value and exchange-value, it is not clear to me that he fully extends this line of thinking to address Bourdieu's model of the social field. In other words, why can't we simply use the distinction between use-value and exchange-value to redefine the dimensions of the social field? Given existing challenges to the efficacy of the concept of habitus (see Brubaker 1985), I am wary of efforts to save the Bourdieuean framework that essentially ask the idea of habitus to do even more work than it is already doing. The social field could be redefined in one of two ways—either by adding dimension(s) on to the existing Bourdieuean model that capture the relevant variation in use-values, or by imagining the distribution of positions vis-a-vis use-values in terms of independent field. Whereas the effect of the former strategy would be measured in terms of changes in the relative proximity of actors within the field, the latter would be measured in terms of the degree of structural correspondence (i.e. homology) across fields.

Comment on Adam by Rodolfo Elbert
I agree that an interesting issue that we can discuss is the relationship between the social field and the habitus in Bourdieu´s framework, and how Sayer´s critique would allow us (or not) to overcome the weaknesses of these concepts. You raise a fundamental question about the relation between these two concepts: is there a perfect correspondence between the position in the social field and the habitus in Bourdiue´s analysis? If there is a correspondence, is Sayer´s modification of the concept of habitus able to solve this conceptual problem? I don't have the answer but I think that it is a very interesting topic to discuss.

Adrienne Comment: I am not totally sure I understand I completely understand your question concerning the application of use-value and exchange-value to the social field, so please forgive me if my response to you is unsatisfactory! Here goes…perhaps Sayer decides to rework the concept of habitus rather than that of habitat (one of many positions in the 'field' of social relations) because he seems focused on the how the *individual* experiences his/her class (as you stated earlier in your interrogation) moving from the actor outwards rather than from social relations inwards. If one where to define the field of social relations with a distinction between use-value and exchange-value, it would seem to me that a variety of things could happen (all dependent on my (in)ability to understand your question: guess number #1—wouldn't relations between actors would be extremely limited to a particular value outcome because use-value and exchange-value would characterize relations at a macro level as opposed to a more micro level? To me, if 'value' was determined at the macro level, no one could break from or act against his/her own dispositions because there would be no wiggle room for what a good's worth, no room for negotiation. Of course, this means that I see these notions of value operating in an objective sense at the macro level and a subjective sense at the micro level; guess (and/or question) #2—whether you create a new field or add a dimension to account for use-value and exchange-value, how would you actually go about locating these? It seems to me that the use-value of a good is just as negotiated as its exchange-value and it might be easier to see it as such at the micro level (focusing on how the individual lives, values, etc.) rather than the macro level of society. I doubt this answers anything, but to clarify (to the degree possible) the above, I have to say that I understood Sayer's argument as saying that people do experience class in a 'hyper-local manner' as they encounter, experience and internalize the interactions they have in various habitats, hence its highly personal nature, hence the strong feelings of right and wrong.

Adam's question: Why are the concepts of use-value and exchange-value reworked and applied as they relate to the habitus and not the social field?

Elizabeth response to Adam:

I think that's an interesting point about the general under-theorization of use-value. Even while reading Sayer's critique of Bourdieu I hadn't thought about it in quite those terms.

I'm having some trouble figuring out how to think about your suggestion that rather than modify the concept of the habitus, Sayer (or someone) could modify the concept of the field. I find the idea of the 'value composition' (use vs. exchange) of one's goods being a dimension on the social field to be a very helpful way to think about Sayer's argument that sees this both as a crucial distinction, and as one whose boundaries are grounds for social struggles. I think my confusion is about how this would really amount to requiring less explanatory work of the habitus. We would still need some ideas about how one's dispositions related to that dimension of the field, and this would still involve ethical judgments, right? In other words, I'm not sure I understand the modification Sayer is making here to really be a modification of the habitus as opposed to the field; it seems to me that it might just as fruitfully be considered a modification to both (although I see your point that Sayer would then need something else to say to avoid the excessive assumption of habitus-field correspondence that he accuses Bourdieu of, and I'm not really sure what to think about that).

I have the feeling that I might be misunderstanding your point here; sorry about that. Maybe you can clarify in class?

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7. Elizabeth Wrigley-Field

The question I would like to pose is about the objectivity of "the good" in Sayer's book, and about how this question of objectivity relates to political strategies to combat inequality.

Sayer argues that resistance can mean attempts to change the distribution of goods you want, or the valuation of goods you have. I think that this is true, but by itself it raises a problem. It seems to me that in many (though importantly, not all) cases, resistance focused primarily on changing the valuation of what you have can be problematic because, as Sayer himself points out, the dominant groups (almost by definition) will have monopolized the better goods for themselves. Thus I think that in many cases, resistance focused mostly on changing the valuation of the goods one has will be resistance with very limited horizons, most likely arising out of pessimism about the possibility of successful resistance to redistribute the goods that the dominant class values and monopolizes and that you also want. The fact that aspirations are constrained or influenced by one's sense of possibility in this way seems to raise a question as to how "we" (observers – more on this below) can make a judgment about what is a fair social setup.

Sayer's way out of this is his emphasis on flourishing/suffering. This is what would allow for his idea of "'leveling up' to 'the good.'" We can have a more objective measure of what people ought to have based on what will maximize flourishing and minimize suffering, i.e. "level up" those who are denied the conditions for this "the good" (distinct from the "goods" above).

On the one hand, I think Sayer is right that we should not uncritically accept the existing lifestyles of the dominant class as being the standard of what a fair society would

make available to everyone. Sayer mentions some arguments for this in his conclusion (about the economic and ecological unsustainability of the lifestyles of the mega-rich and the diminishing returns on happiness for that level of wealth in any case); given his earlier analysis, I find the point about diminishing returns particularly salient. I think that his use of the distinctions between use value and exchange value, and internal and external goods, actually offers a potentially good explanation for the empirical observation of diminishing returns, in that it suggest that the very fact of their class position may influence the dominant class's members' valuations in ways that distort the relationship between what they want and what seems really "good" in some more objective (happiness-producing, "flourishing"-producing) sense.

On the other hand, I find this objective sense of the "good" to be somewhat problematic as well. I tried to think about this in terms of whether there's some counterfactual situation we can abstract to in which we don't have class location acting as a distortion and imagine what it seems like one would value then; but I don't know how helpful or possible that is. (Incidentally, I think Sayer finds this problematic too, and that's why it's "*qualified* ethical naturalism.")

I think part of what is making me uneasy about the argument is that I find what we might call the "meta-agency" of his theory to be problematic as well. Sayer's not just talking about people's use of normative concepts; he's making a normative argument himself about how society should be set up, but it's not clear who the agent of this normative argument is supposed to be: it's a kind of disembodied call to arrange society "better." But of course, any rearrangement of society (any actual social policy) would be carried out by actual people who have interests of their own. This – compounded by Sayer's belief that some form of class division and capitalism are necessary – makes the de-linking of what everyone is supposed to have access to from what the dominant people choose for themselves much more troublesome, in my opinion, because I think a fairly decent strategy for a class dominating some great resource is to try to convince the other classes that they should value something else instead. (In my undergrad intro to sociology class, we read this amazing speech from some incredibly rich CEO about how being poor was the greatest thing on Earth because of the joy industriousness and thrift bring you…)

Ultimately I think the only way out of this worry may be to return to the Marxist emphasis on the *self*-emancipation of the working class. Otherwise, it does not seem clear that the questions of "what is the good? What do people need to flourish? Who gets to decide?" will be as objective as it might seem.

Fabian's comments on Elizabeth's interrogation

Many interesting points -- let me select the following to comment on.
First, I agree with your statement that lower classes' resistance that focuses on changing the valuation of goods has very limited potential for remedying their suffering. I even believe that a Bourdieuian argumentation would suggest that such thing is basically impossible. Valued goods are not only possessed by the dominant group, as you note, - it is also the dominant group who holds the 'valuation monopoly'. The strange skill of duck carving we talked about last time does not confer substantial advantage in the social field because it is not the duck carvers who are the dominant group.

Second, your question about a counterfactual situation without class divisions sounds interesting. I believe that Sayer also attends to this at some points. Although I could not find the exact place where he talks about it I think he holds a somewhat resigned view of such counterfactual world. Evaluative distinctions might arise along different lines (gender, race) or perhaps even arbitrary groupings: "actors use moral and other evaluative distinctions […] because they can hardly fail to notice that they can be well or badly treated by members of any group […]." (p. 141). Finally, it is true that the utopian part of Sayer's analysis - i.e. where he tries to imagine feasible alternatives - remains pretty utopian. As you point out, he fails to specify a mechanism of transformation from 'bad' to 'good' society, especially by forgetting to identify actors of that transformation. If I am not over-reading important parts of his work, it seems to me that Sayer is even missing an antecedent point: how should such 'good society' exactly look like? By the way, Erik's current book manuscript which can be found on his homepage provides an example for how a complete account of the strive for a 'better society' should look like.

Comment on Elizabeth by Rodolfo

Your comment raises the same key issue as Charity's: what is the role (and perspective) of resistance in Sayers' framework? Is there a need of class-based resistance? What is the scope of this resistance? In addition to your skeptical view of his argument we could say that sometimes his emphasis on morality seems to forget that there is an "objective" hierarchy of class situations in the world. This is, from a Marxist perspective there is an exploitative mechanism that generate class divisions in capitalism. If this structural process is ignored, how can we develop an "objective" notion of what is *good*. This approach to class generating processes is also related to the class emancipation actions that you mention at the end of your comment. Summarizing, What is the relationship of Sayer´s argument to the Marxist definition of social classes and the subsequent theorization of class emancipation? Is it that this framework goes further than Marxism or it just ignores this perspective?

Adrienne Comment: I too found Sayer's concepts of distribution and recognition problematic (if I understand your comments about valuation and redistribution correctly). I am not sure I understand what you mean at the bottom of the second paragraph—I think you might be saying that dominated groups most likely engage in resistance (or struggle) concerning the recognition of the value of the goods the group possesses because they are pessimistic of their ability to redistribute society's goods instead? If so, then I think in this formulation the dominated classes seem to have less agency that Sayer might suppose they have. This assessment would also support your thought that dominant classes would benefit (do benefit) by shifting the focus from distribution to valuation of goods. It seems to me that you are suggesting that these issues of 'value' and its distribution are made all the more complex by a notion of 'worth'/'good' that are seemingly determined by someone or something that apparently has the power to confer that meaning onto goods, a way of life, etc. in an objective (read: interest-free) manner. I absolutely agree that this

is incredibly problematic because all human beings have interests above and beyond those that comprise the sentient nature of our being. How then can one (be it a person or a group) determine what a better society looks like without those interests somehow shaping the outcome?

Elizabeth's question: How does the framing of what is 'good' (along with its claims of objectivity) impact political strategies that might combat inequality?

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8. Rodolfo Elbert

The general objective of Sayer´s book is to analyze the moral dimension of the subjective experience of class. In theoretical terms, he affirms to do this by supplementing Bourdieu´s concept of habitus with the recognition of the close relationship between dispositions and conscious deliberation, the powers of agency and mundante reflexivity, and by addressing actor's normative orientations, emotions and commitments. I think that we can clearly see from his book that he adds a moral dimension to the notion of class habitus. However, it is not clear to me if adding this dimension implies in fact such a theoretical move as the author suggests to have done. This is: is Sayers' concept of habitus (and ethical dispositions) a concept so different to that of Bourdieu as to include human creative agency?

This conceptual question is related to the more abstract issue of the relationship between economic structure and human subjectivity in the generation of class processes. Sayer says that his book seeks to analyze "how class inequalities influence people's commitments and their valuation and pursuit of goods, their ethical dispositions and their treatment of others, and how these in turn influence the reproduction or transformation of those inequalities" (p.2). I think that Sayers' theoretical framework develops a clear understanding of the way in which class inequalities influence people's subjective experience. However, it is not clear to me how he theorizes the way in which this subjective experience in general and the moral sentiments in particular can modify the structure of class inequalities. Maybe the most influential concept about the relationship between class structure and class subjectivity is that of ideology: What is the relationship between Sayer´s idea of morality and the notion of ideology? In addition, I would like to discuss the following question: Is there a theory of subjective-based collective action or he thinks in different processes of structure-modification?

Finally, I would like to discuss the methodological implications of Sayer´s perspective. He says that people experience class in relation to others partly via moral and inmoral sentiment or emotions such as benevolence, respect, compassion, pride and envy, contempt and shame. The main focus of the theory is then the analysis of people's class-related feelings and experiences. Is this theoretical perspective coherent with the quantitative approached developed by Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction*? Or it should be analyzed trough qualitative strategies that allow us to comprehend the way in which people construct and express their feelings, experiences and emotions?

Fabian's comments on Rodolfo's interrogation

Your question about the difference between Sayer's and Bourdieu's concept of habitus regarding the subject of human agency is interesting. To start with, I think even after last week's discussion the exact role of human agency in Bourdieu's original framework is difficult to grasp. Nevertheless, the emphasis clearly lies on structural forces (habitus as "embodiment of social structure") while individual creativity in habitus formation only appears at a few points in his work and there it remains sketchy. In my opinion, Sayer takes a clearer position (and makes a braver claim) by stressing the importance of conscious deliberation and individual reflexivity for the modification of habitus. His theoretical justification for this position nevertheless remains weak (see three points on p. 47-48). Second, how can moral sentiments modify the structure of class inequality? I don't know if believes that they really can. In chapter 7 (responses to class), he concludes that (even the best-intended) moral sentiments towards inequality - egalitarianism, respect, class pride, and moral boundary drawing - "are all frustrated or turned back into reinforcing class" (p. 186). Regarding your question about collective action and other possible mechanisms of transformation, I also cannot find a well fleshed-out stance in his work (cf. also my response to Elizabeth on this point). Lastly, I also thought about the empirical agenda implied by Sayer's arguments (as a matter of fact, I had hoped for him to sustain his arguments empirically rather than a very review-like reference to moral philosophy). I basically think that both methods lend themselves to an empirical analysis of his propositions: psychological experiments (quantitative) and sociological ethnography (qualitative). We might want to discuss how such experiments and ethnographies could look like. I am sure they are already out there somewhere, which is why I was somewhat frustrated by Sayer's treatment of the subject.

Adrienne Comment: Rodolfo, you have a slew of very interesting questions so I will try to add something to all of them! Concerning your first question re: the payoff Sayer sees by adding a moral dimension to Bourdieu's framework—it seems to me that Sayer does provide quite a convincing argument that without this moral element, Bourdieu's conceptualization of class does seem to focus only on the interests side of the equation (that individual's act rationally-at least sometimes-to improve their class position by increasing the kinds of capital they possess, its volume, etc.) and such a focus then fails to account for instances when an individual does not act to improve his/her class position and may in fact act to the detriment of that position. I agree with your second question—I too am having difficulty pinpointing what the *mechanism* is that might alter/modify the structure of class inequalities as a result of moral sentiment. It seems to me that Sayer is suggesting that 'we' just know what is good/bad, that it is a universal understanding, etc. Concerning your last questions—I think you are right—the main focus of Sayer's theory is the analysis of individual feelings and experiences as they relate to class. As such, perhaps these are not coherent with the quantitative approach that Bourdieu used in Distinction; however, I do think that maybe Sayer gets around this

problem by focusing on another work, *The Weight of the World*, which does provide very vivid expressions of class feeling.

Rodolfo's question: Is there a theory of subjective-based collective action or does Sayer think that there are different processes at work that will effect structure-modification?

You-Geon's response Rodolfo Elbert

Q: Is there a theory of subjective-based collective action or he thinks in different processes of structure-modification?

You-Geon: I agree with your point that it is not clear how Sayer theorize the way in which the subjective experience and the moral sentiments can modify the structure of class inequalities. In my understanding, he does not seem to establish an explicit causal relationship between subjective experiences or moral sentiments and the class structure in terms of a 'deterministic' way. Rather, this relationship seems to be contingent on each other. As you already pointed out, the notion of ideology seems to play a role in structuring class inequalities through subjective experiences and moral sentiments.

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9. Adrienne Pagac

Building upon the groundwork laid by Pierre Bourdieu, Andrew Sayer aims to highlight what he sees as the overshadowed *moral* component of class with an "analysis of how class inequalities influence people's commitments and their valuation and pursuit of goods, their ethical dispositions and their treatment of others, and how these in turn influence the reproduction or transformation of those inequalities." Sayer 2. For Sayer, individual class experience encapsulates how one lives and what one struggles for above and beyond material dimensions (income, labor market position, etc.)—class influences what one cares about, how one value's oneself and others, whether one 'flourishes' or falters. With the use of Bourdieu's 'concrete concept' of class as his point of departure, Sayer refines (and reshapes) much of the original framework that I will not bother to recap (but this remodeling is done in order to further Sayer's claim that class as a lived experience does have a strong moral element).

I found many of the arguments and/or claims of this book to be provocative (probably because they *matter* to me—the huge theme of the book, because I see them as good/bad, problematic, etc.—exactly what I think (?) Sayer is trying to demonstrate. I suppose my biggest issue with the book and the argument regards this element and I wonder if anyone else is uncomfortable with his claim that social science should have as a goal the categorizing of some ways of living (of valuing life) should be considered 'better' than other ways of living—that social science should not be 'value-free' because, in our own lives, social scientists as human beings are not so…? I am extremely uncomfortable with his suggestion that social science should perhaps return to its 19th

century roots when it married normative and positivistic claims in its investigations. As we have seen, norms change, understandings of phenomena change and as a result, what would have once been considered moral is now just plain wrong (for example, the examination of Progress).

Totally unrelated—I found his discussion of recognition and distribution helpful (certainly more so that what seemed to me to be Bourdieu's lack of address of the ways in which economic capital affect the possession of other sorts of capital). As I understand, Sayer believes that class inequality is more than just the "distribution of income and material goods" but involves recognition also—belonging to a particular class should have worth as should the 'culture' that might characterize it. Sayer 52-3. But, wouldn't one not necessarily need or want recognition of this 'worth' were it possible for such economic disparities between classes to disappear (arguments against this would be that there will always be some sort of hierarchy I suppose, where possessing skills would take the place of possessing money)? It seems to me that to consider recognition as a focal point would suggest that there will always be classes/hierarchy, that this is somehow a 'natural' outcome. If this is true, isn't the whole point to change this?

Fabian's comments to Adrienne's interrogation

Regarding your first point, I am not sure whether Sayer would agree. When he criticizes "value-free" social science, I think, he mainly criticizes social science that forgets about emotions and morality. He argues that "there is a danger of a form of bland, sociological reductionism according to which moral sentiments and norms are nothing more than arbitrary social conventions" (p.12). Instead, moral sentiments should be seen as consciously hold *values* that interact with class and independently shape people's lives. "Value-free" social science, in this sense, means social science that is empty devoid of attention to such values / moral evaluations. Or probably, I am just confusing this word play myself.
I find your thoughts about recognition very interesting. You suggest that individual recognition is based on assessments of individual worth *relative* to others. Deference might be an example for positive recognition understood in this way. I agree with your inference that inequality / hierarchy then becomes a functional necessity for the construction of self. Only through distinction from others can positive or negative recognition shape us. However, I understood Sayers concept of recognition differently (which might be due to the fact that "recognition is too thin and unspecific a concept" [p.67] as Sayer himself notes). 'Reciprocal recognition' describes an interdependent relation between the recognizer and the recognized in which they alternate their roles. For Sayer, then, equality facilitates recognition (although inner-class recognition can partly function as a substitute) and inequality harms recognition (especially conditional recognition which has to be 'earned').

Assaf to Adrienne

You wrote: "I am extremely uncomfortable with his suggestion that social science should perhaps return to its 19th century roots when it married normative and

positivistic claims in its investigations. As we have seen, norms change, understandings of phenomena change and as a result, what would have once been considered moral is now just plain wrong (for example, the examination of Progress).”

I think that I understand you’re uncomfortableness, yet I’m not sure that that is what Sayer suggests. I think that he acknowledge that norms change; it does not prevent different classes from having different moral aspects (which will all change as time passes) and moral sentiments, at each given point in time, to “respond to people’s circumstances and how they are treated” (p. 3). Is the fact that this level exists is what makes it, as you mentioned, something that is *matter* to you?

With regard to recognition and distribution, I agree with you and have found it helpful as well. I think that one of the important points that Sayer wants to add relates to his discussion of the differences between the micro and macro-politics of class, where recognition does not always mean more material goods (of course, as he expresses it, the poor are not clamoring for poverty to be recognized=legitimized, but to abolish it). This is not the case with, say, gender or queer discourses that strive for recognition by changing the discourse in use, not only a new distribution of goods.

Agenda question:
Should social science have as a goal the categorizing of some ways of living (of valuing life) as ‘better’ than other ways of living? Should social science not be ‘value-free’?

You-Geon’s response Adrienne Pagac

Q: Wouldn’t one not necessarily need or want recognition of this ‘worth’ were it possible for such economic disparities between classes to disappear (arguments against this would be that there will always be some sort of hierarchy I suppose, where possessing skills would take the place of possessing money)?

You-Geon: I also think that recognition would suggest a hierarchy. Sayer (63) says that “criteria of recognition are also culturally variable, insofar as different goods may be differently valued.” Because conditional recognition is itself always related to the kinds of qualities being evaluated, a hierarch seems inevitable even without economic inequalities (note: Sayer (104) used the term ‘goods’ in a very broad sense to include not only consumption goods but all those things which are valued.)

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10. Fabian Pfeffer

I am in general appreciative of Sayer’s attention to emotional and moral dispositions. I think he convincingly argues that they take on an important role in individual lives which social science has retreated from acknowledging. Reading his

book as a call to attend to emotional and moral sentiments again, I think its lecture is valuable. Also, his proposal to include those sentiments in an extended concept of habitus seems to be an important addition to social theory as well as appropriate. The concept of habitus - as discussed last week - provides much leeway between objectivist and subjectivist notions of individual behavior. It, for instance, allows Sayer's judgment that the relationship between social position / class and moral sentiments is contingent (oddly enough, I also always had the slight suspicion that the rich might not always be the good).

The most interesting and at the same time most dissatisfying point of the book is the section about individual moral 'reactions' to inequality itself (rather than the relationship between moral positions and social position). In chapter 6, for instance, Sayer's review of moral philosophy provides a laundry list of moral sentiments that stand in direct relation to social inequality. To pick out only the most interesting, think of shame: "The shaming of those who fail is a structurally generate effect" (p.154), but at the same time "shame is not merely a product of external disapproval but usually involves the internalization of and commitment to standards according to which we have failed" (p. 212). Thus, 'emotional incorporation' of structural inequality might be understood by psychological processes and linked back to the perpetuation of unequal structures. The sociological canon does comprise theoretical pieces that could be linked to Sayer's ideas (think of Merton's concept of relative deprivation) and it also used to produce lucid examples for it (e.g. Stouffer's American Solider).

Sayer's central call for more attention to moral dispositions is thus accepted. I doubt, however, whether his book provides much guidance in following up on this broad agenda. In this regard, it is especially surprising that his call for "post-disciplinary" ends with the consideration of some basic philosophical arguments. At the risk of criticizing a book that the author never set out to write, I would at least like to note that I would have expected him to borrow more from psychology than moral philosophy. How exactly can we understand how these moral sentiments come about, what are the mechanisms of their construction that is somehow tied to social structure? Empirical evidence (whose necessity he himself acknowledges, p.211) might be too much to ask for in this book, but at least Sayer could have provide references from psychology, anthropology, or sociological ethnography for that matter. We would then also see that sociology might not necessarily have been 'eclectic' rather than 'imperialistic' (p.57). Without attending to emotions, causal mechanisms might be obscured - but not necessarily misspecified (p.124).

Finally, a brief not regarding the emancipatory agenda of this book. Conferring a role to emotions and moral sentiments for human flourishing is interesting and has face-value (which is also why I am not sure how novel this is in the field of moral philosophy). But my question is whether his book provides any concrete implications for how to establish equal access to human flourishing? Does it help us conceive of alternatives?

[Michael's comments: In response to the last set of questions, perhaps Sayer would respond by saying that attention to lay normativity could itself reveal what the goods of human flourishing are. These goods are revealed not simply through a

sociological class analysis of the class structure and positions. Instead they are uncovered through a study of the moral dimensions of class, as these are intelligently embodied in the emotions of lay actors. The turn of Sayer the sociologist to moral philosophy reflects his concern with conceptions of the good as the good actually matters and gets defined in the ethical living of lay actors. An analysis of shame and compassion for example may reveal more about human flourishing and suffering than an objective structural analysis of class, so social scientists, even class analysts, should turn their attention to the moral significance of class and away from the structural positions of class structure. Here I thought Martha Nussbaum's work did seem quite useful for the way in which it defines the body as intelligent and emotions as being a kind of intelligence that knows things about the social world that reason may feel to catch on to. I agree that more psychology would have been helpful, and also more sociological theory. George Herbert Mead came to mind.

Question for discussion: Does Sayer's book provide any concrete implications for how to establish equal access to human flourishing?]

Assaf to Fabian

Like you, I have similar appreciation for Sayer's work, and indeed, I think that you express well one of the missing points: "the relationship between moral positions and social position".

<u>You wrote</u>: "I would at least like to note that I would have expected him to borrow more from psychology than moral philosophy. How exactly can we understand how these moral sentiments come about, what are the mechanisms of their construction that is somehow tied to social structure?"

I have not enough knowledge about the field of psychology, so I might be wrong on this, but in my opinion, many times psychology is a field that lacks moral regard. It is hard for me to articulate my discomfort with the claim of "scientific" aspects to psychology and hence, what would disqualify it, at least in my opinion, from providing an explanatory mechanism for the relationship between moral positions and social position. Yet, I do understand what you are looking for, and do agree that Sayer uses abstract philosophical understandings in order to bring in "lay normativity". It is somehow related to your previous point.

<u>Agenda question</u>:
Does the book provide any concrete implications for how to establish equal access to human flourishing? Does it help us conceive of alternatives?

You-Geon's response Fabian Pfeffer

Q: How exactly can we understand how these moral sentiments come about, what are the mechanisms of their construction that is somehow tied to social structure?

You-Geon: I agree with your point that 'emotional incorporation' of structural inequality might be understood by psychological processes and linked back to the perpetuation of unequal structures. Like the concept of 'shame', the exact distinction between psychology and moral philosophy seems vague in his framework. Sayer did not seem to pay attention to this distinction because his primary interest was, partly, on criticizing sociological reductionism and its deterministic and instrumental logic. While I also think that psychological processes may be helpful for explaining for the mechanisms of constructing moral sentiments tied to social structure, I'm not sure whether it can really cover all the aspects of moral sentiments.

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11. You-Geon Lee

While criticizing Bourdieu's theory in terms of his exclusive emphasis on instrumental aspects of social actions and his underestimation of agents' reflexivity and rationality, Sayer (2005) retains and extends Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, class, and social field. Among his diverse points, the conceptual distinction between use value and exchange value (p.106) or between internal and external goods (p.111) is interesting, but still confused to me. In a capitalist economy where exchange-value and external goods depend on competition and markets, education that is achieved by all is ultimately devalued by the market and furthermore fine distinctions are made to demonstrate superior merit regardless of its use-value –i.e. an Oxbridge MA over a BA (p.110). Sayer seems to argue that these identity-neutral mechanisms create the illusion and mask the advantages of class (Wallis, p.2). Furthermore, according to Sayer (2005, pp.109-111), exchange-value not only is or should be a reasonable measure of different use-values (i.e. BMW), but also can vary independently of use-values (i.e. Oxbridge MA). Thus its relation is contingent. These distinction and contingent relation make sense to me. However, I still confused that why the distinction and contingent relation between exchange-value and use-value are really important in his framework? What's the role of this conceptual distinction and characteristic in his theoretical framework?

Jorge's comment on You-Geon Lee

I think the distinction between use-value and exchange-value is quite important within his framework for at least two reasons: first, to understand people's behaviors and the goods they pursue we have to regard these as not just instrumental (which would be related with their exchange value) since sometimes both behaviors or goods may have value in themselves (which would be related with their use-value). One example is that people don't study just to get a job, but for the intrinsic value of the education. While I think this distinction is important and interesting, I disagree with Sayer when he criticizes Bourdieu by claiming that "he shares with capitalist culture itself a tendency to prioritise exchange-value". Since the society we study is a capitalist society, it is normal that we prioritize the exchange-value insofar as this form of value is the most central in social life. The

second reason is that we will be able to better understand the subordinate class' struggles by recognizing this distinction, since the contingent relation between one and the other allows people to have different evaluations of the same good. For instance, working class people are able to bring "dominant culture" into question by valuing goods with less "exchange-value" but more "use-value" according to their judgment. In my opinion it is appropriate to contest the one-side vision of Bourdieu, which denies the subordinate people's chances to develop their own alternative culture against the hegemonic culture.

[Michael's comments: These points confused me as well, but I gathered that they flowed from an understanding of how the practice and employment of goods in particular local practices are somehow more ethically important than the exchange of goods that are somehow incommensurable, but what are made commensurate in markets and other fields of capital exchange. The emphasis on internal and use-values is connected, I think, to Sayer's attempt to provide a standard or criteria that actors in the relational field use to distinguish the posh from the good and the common from the bad. In contrast to the Hobbesian power struggle of Bourdieu's analysis in which all actors are fighting competitively according to their habituses in fields whose meanings are determined primarily by the dominant classes or as distinctive responses to dominant class valuations, Sayer wants to say that actors are not merely brainwashed or responsive to dominant valuations – instead, there are critical foundations upon which actors may reflexively distance themselves from the dominant distinctions of what counts as "good" (which may merely be posh) and "bad" (which may actually be quite commonly useful and valued by all) and actually get a hold on goods that really matter to most human beings, even if the rich dismiss those goods as bad.

Assaf to You-Geon

I think that you point to one of Sayer's more important contributions. Yet, I did not quite understand whether or not you accept the distinction between use-value and exchange-value – I am not sure what confused you, the distinction or its contribution? To put it simply, Sayer shows that use-value is a qualitative measure based on the standards, criteria, of the users, whereas exchange-value is the measure of what can be received in exchange for the item being valued and is insensitive to qualitative differences. As for the importance of this distinction see Adam Slez's interrogation. I think that he elaborates on this distinction really well and on its Bourdieuean context.

<u>Agenda question</u>:
What is the importance of the distinction and contingent relation between exchange-value and use-value in his framework? What is the role of this conceptual distinction and characteristic in his theoretical framework?

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12. Assaf Meshulam

I feel that this week, more than an interrogation I have some of comments. In the event that it will be hard for my commentators to find a summary line, this first, preceding, one is one option.

The first part of Sayers' book was very promising. The way he tries to expand on Bourdieu's notion of habitus with emotions, sentiments, and moral does present a new aspect that was missing in both Bourdieu's theory and the other theories we read that ignored the psychological-emotional aspects of the individual agent or the level that Sayer presents as moral. "The idea of 'listening to our emotions' is not mere psycho-babble but acknowledges the fact that emotions are about something, and that by taking them seriously we might be able to appreciate hitherto unnoticed things and assess what they tell us about was is happening to us and others" (p. 37). Together with some nice developments, as *internal* and *external* goods, Sayer tries to "bring into view the respects in which the inequalities and struggles of the social field go beyond the pursuit of interest and power" (p. 95).

Though I have a lot of sympathy for Sayers' efforts, I had an inexplicable uncomfortable feeling about how he conceives emotions (and he is not alone in this understanding). It seems as though in order to be able to address emotions as a legitimate component of academic analysis, they have to be first and foremost brought into the scope of reason. In this type of analysis, emotions can be legitimized only by giving them a cognitive (and hence valuable) aspect. Do we not have also pure emotions, unexplained, and is there no room for or value to such an experience, if it cannot be linked to some cognitive process? In the same vein, it was hard to follow the distinction between emotions and sentiments (with the latter, he agrees that they "range[] from spontaneous, unexamined, unarticulated feelings" (p. 139)). Sayer seems to be moving from one definition to the other without making enough distinctions or sometimes using them interchangeably.

I also have points of disagreement with two comments he makes: "In the case of the product markets, the need of sellers to get buyers' money makes it against their interest to discriminate against customers on any grounds other than ability to pay" (p. 89). Although there is obvious truth in this statement, some kinds of products (like luxurious BMWs) are deliberately given a high price tag in order to create a clear distinction between buyers. Furthermore, when it comes to certain luxurious products, sometimes the reputation of the product is dependent not only on the customers' ability to pay for it, but also on the ability to exclude others from gaining it by not having the "membership card" one need to enter the "club" (for example, if someone won a huge sum of money and wanted to buy a Ferrari, he would not be able to do so, even though he has the money to pay, since the company policy is that a Ferrari can only be bought by a Ferrari owner). Somewhat related, Sayer argues that "in the case of labour markets, competitive pressures encourage firms to employ whoever will do the job best, regardless of matters of identity, such as gender or 'race'", and hence employees are exploited "not because of their cultural identity but because of their economic exploitability" (p. 89). As flows from this, the market is not blind and it is sometimes willing to sacrifice money in one place in order to make other money elsewhere. Moreover, an employer does not blindly look at

the willingness of a worker to do the job and the money he/she will have to pay the worker; he also tries to assess and identify their exploitability in a wider sense, one that cannot be divorced/separated from race, gender, etc., stigmatization. Thus the employer will hire those he *identifies* as least problematic, those he *believes* to be most cost effective, not only those who are *neutrally and equally* willing to do the job. It is true that all this might seem reducible to economic viability and "consequences", but I believe this is too narrow an understanding of exploitability: I do not think it is possible to remove race and gender and (perhaps) ethnicity or nationhood from as structural causes of exploitability, as weighty factors in who is found at the bottom, in the identity of the exploited and economically excluded.

In sum, Sayer was not fully coherent for me. In terms of class analysis, I found that what he tries to do is important (expand the horizon of the definition of class, partly by looking at lay moralities), but I failed to see how he truly expanded our understanding of class. One final thing that comes to mind in this respect: his attempt to provide some understandings of the concepts of class in Chapter 4 "left the ground too clear", empty of some important view of class.

Jorge's comment on Assaf

First, I don't know much on the subject of emotions, but perhaps you are right in pointing out that Sayer only pays attention to *cognitive* emotions and doesn't distinguish enough between sentiments and emotions. Nevertheless, he could reply to you by saying that what you term "pure and unexplained" emotions are neither easy to study from a sociological point of view nor important for explaining social processes. Second, I agree with Sayer's stance on market mechanisms: although they can take advantage of race and gender features, they work thanks to identity-neutral mechanisms. Markets are blind to these differences, but capitalists may not be (nevertheless, the latter is a contingent circumstance). Third, I absolutely agree that Sayer left the class ground too clear; I think he tries to do a lot of things at the same time...

[Michael's comments: Great comments, and I do not have much to add. I do not quite understand the distinction between emotions and sentiments either, but I do think that Sayer successfully bring emotions to bear on questions of class in a way that doesn't make them simply cognitive or within the scope of reason. Emotions, he suggests, are intelligent response to the environment, but intelligence does not mean reasonable. Emotions are not, for example, analytical, even though they do process information about the environment. Processing information from the environment, however, need not only be understood in cognitive terms. When an middle class person feels embarrassed about giving a working class person home in a fancy car, she is processing information about the nature of their social relationship, even though she is not doing it analytically, or through the brain. The information is not held so much in the mind, as in the body's sense of discomfort. But that discomfort is about something. I also agree that at the level of employment practices and the way in which hiring works, gender and race (I found it annoying

that he put race in quotes but not gender; I don't think either needs to be in quotes because they both involve realities and not simply constructions, but if he means to highlight the constructed nature of race, he may as well do the same for gender) are not easily separable from the equation of class analysis. Is it possible, for example, to be okay with processes of exploitation without something like race and gender operating? As a logical matter it is certainly correct that class may be distinguished from race and gender, but in practice, isn't some type of non-economic misrecognition always in play in exploitative relations (even if it something like merited/demerited, smart/dumb)?

Question for discussion: What does a study of emotions add to the study of class, which tends to be interest-based, and rational actor-centered? What is the whole business of differentiating between identity-neutral and identity-sensitive mechanisms?]

Ann's comments on Assaf's interrogation:

(1) I'm not sure Sayer is arguing emotions can't be valuable in and of themselves generally but for them to have explanatory power within his theory, they should be understood as the result of a cognitive/evaluative process that reveals what goods (in Sayer's very broad use of the term) people or cultures value.

(2) Despite his comment about it not being in sellers' interests to discriminate, Sayer does acknowledge that "the dominant" are likely to restrict access to their capital to avoid devaluation (p. 102). Perhaps by agreeing to pay high prices consumers are effectively restricting the capital (perpetuating a market for Ferraris, for example) and naturally, sellers would rather sell for more than less to maximize their profits. Sayer's argument seems to be there is no inherent interest for sellers in luxury goods other than by marketing them as such they are able to create a market than brings in higher profits.

(3) Regarding workers and exploitability, I think Sayer's argument is that there is nothing inherent in exploitation that ties it race and gender. Exploitation is strictly about maximizing profits. However, I think he would agree that because people are marginalized by race and gender in society generally, those factors make some people more likely candidates for exploitation than others.

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13. Rahul Mahajan

Sayer's book is interesting to me primarily in terms of how it suggests critiques and refinements of Bourdieu's basic notions. In particular, his concept of habitat emphasizes the non-unitary nature of habitus, he brings in a moral/normative dimension to habitus, he emphasizes resistance to habitus as some totalizing system, and he suggests that the use-value/exchange-value distinction is important. There are probably others that I missed.

It's very hard to disagree with him or his general approach, although at several points I found his treatment of normative questions and his formulation of the use-value/exchange-value distinction to be philosophically naïve or undeveloped. He says he's a moral realist – well and good. But he doesn't really deal with the obvious potential philosophical pitfalls thereof. If you wish to believe in this in your own gut, fine, but it's awfully hard to argue for it and thus to convince someone else.

In a society where very little is produced is for immediate sustenance of the body, I don't think the UV/EV distinction is at all clear-cut or obvious. He talks about the unambiguous use-value of education, separate from exchange-value considerations, but this is predicated on his lack of philosophical complication of the questions relating to basic moral and aesthetic values.

Questions regarding Bourdieu's framework:

1. How do morality and resistance play into habitus? They seem perhaps in their day-to-day operation to be the analogue for cultural capital of worker slowdowns (like the famous self-policing of piece-rate workers who know that if productivity goes up the rates will go down).

2. Does the UV/EV distinction help us to understand anything about cultural capital, symbolic violence, etc.? This wasn't clear to me from the book.

3. Are different forms of cultural capital (in different habitats) commensurable only through conversion into economic capital or is there something else going on? This relates to the question of how Bourdieu goes beyond Weberian social closure of status groups to put a hierarchy on those status groups, something which he does in a pretty obvious way with regard to e to educational capital but not with regard to other aspects of cultural capital.

Response by Sarbani to Rahul's reflection

(For Q1) Sayer provides a brief introduction to resistance in pages 30-35. There he says that human beings are not just shaped but also "flourish and suffer" (p.34). Then he goes on to talk about tensions between expectation and possibilities and the power of unfulfilled longing. But I do not think Sayer specifies well as to the relationship between morality and resistance. My arguments would be threefold:

a) **I could argue that it is because of moral dispositions, that resistance may not be possible, as to resist may go against the moral norm of "complicity" out of 'respect' (established through symbolic violence of status driven culture for example).**
b) **There probably needs to be a distinction drawn between individual and collective morality and I think Sayer, somewhere in the book hints towards it (I do not remember where). By collective morality, *within* a specific group especially, I mean the possibility of moral "commitment" of each individual towards others within that group to help each of them "flourish". This**

collective form may encourage resistances, localized or macro. But this one for all and all for one ideal, which according to Sayer (noted in p. 222), remains only that – an ideal due to local contingencies. But he does not expand on the idea that how individual morality and collective morality may differ in their possible legitimization of resistance. While at the individual level, morality may stem resistance; collective morality on the other hand may necessitate resistance at some points.

c) **Because of his tendency to keep discourse in the periphery, Sayer overlooks the possibility that habitus and the discursive practices within may make resistance unthinkable. It is peculiar for a scholar who talks about lay normativity to overlook this aspect of unthinkability (of resistance). I think it is easier to argue for possibility of recognition of dissonances within discourses, and hence action (that Sayer does) than to make a persuasive argument for a possibility of unimagination or unthinkability. That could be because when Sayer is talking about "lay normativity", it seemed to me that he assumed himself to be out of it and hence some of the possible fallacies.**

(For Q2) Use-value and exchange value, in my opinion could be used to understand cultural capital and symbolic violence. Two examples are coming to mind immediately.

Education and religion. In p. 128, Sayer talks about insightful research by Lareau, Reay, Walkerdine and others and which seem to be helpful to understand the relation. The policy measures can be conceptualized as a form of symbolic violence, which when supposedly promoting multiculturalism and pluralism are implicitly signaling towards the promotion of "concerted cultivation", a reserve of cultivated capital, which is filled with the language of middle/upper-classes. This seems to be inevitable because those who are formulating the policies without much of 'ground up' deliberations, in all probabilities belong to middle/upper classes. Their class positions therefore make it unthinkable for them to understand issues, which may look different from different angles. Policies encourage a form of capital, which seems to be promoting cultivation primarily for exchange-value and not with use-value in mind. For if it was about use-value, the questions asked would be different and the implementation of policy programmes would look very different. There are various programmes in the US dealing with parental education, where 'they' (needlessly to mention who these parents are) are practically taught how to discipline their kids, teach their kids, what to do for them to succeed etc etc etc for them to build their cultural capital. At the same time however, the schools 'they' send their children to are always impoverished in every possible ways. But that illusion of future exchange-value is maintained.

With respect to the use-value of education, my reference point would be India. What needs to be pointed out is that things depend on their contexts. The most half-hearted, 'poor' quality literacy programmes in India may still be perceived as useful by students in its most mundane forms and can be valued in itself. For example, while writing a paper sometime back on India's education system, I came across reports of rural communities saying that they are happy with the 'education' their children are getting (remember though that their comparison scale is very very

limited). One example struck me. An adolescent girl said that because she goes to school (we are not talking about grade-specific learning etc that we talk about in the US) she can now read the bus numbers and can travel from one place to another without repeatedly asking people the numbers of the buses. This seems important in terms of the use-value of literacy in possibly enhancing her reserve of cultural capital. She can be assumed to travel more frequently and the sense of independence that she said she felt through her literacy (which 'we' might call 'basic') may assist her in building networks. But while I am talking about this example, it seems to me that discussion of 'capital' cannot really include intrinsic worth as such but may always be associated with exchange-value, as when I am discussing about cultural capital. But the next example seems different. This example is that of a residential boarding school for tribal girls in rural India. There, even though most of the girls would get married off after their seven-month stay in the school (at the age of 12 or so) they enjoyed being the school because of their one and only chance to 'see' life differently. It is a telling tale of what complexities we are dealing with here. This can be understood as a form of capital that has use-value and exchange-value through an accumulation of cultural capital. But I think I need to read more about use and exchange value.

Johannes comment to Rahul

As I understand it, Sayer see all forms of goods, like cultural capital and symbolic capital, as having two different values (UV and EV). Cultural capital or a particular life-style can be valued for being a means to the end of receiving a rent or simply because it provides the quality of sharing a certain life with others.

Education is not just cultural capital (as a means to receive power or a rent), Sayer emphasises that practices and goods are giving rise to the forms of capital, but education can also be for its own sake.

Cultural capital can more or less be converted in all kinds of other capital. Depending on if the market allows the exchange. If this is possible, I think Bourdieu allows a lot of social mobility. At least rich people can easily go to the university and educated can convert their qualifications into income at the labor market therefore you change your position in social space. I do not understand what you mean with making cultural capital commensurable. There should be infinite forms of cultural capital as are different life-styles. Each describes a different position in social space. I do not think that there is a common unit to make them commensurable. Maybe words like the amount of prestige or honour could help to measure it.

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14. **Sarbani Chakrabarty**

> Sayer says, "[…] the struggles of the social field are often not intended by actors to assert or dispute symbolic symbolic domination. They are in part about the pursuit of things and ways of life which actors value regardless of their effect on the reproduction of life which actors value

> regardless of their effect on the reproduction of inequality and sumbolic domination, though inadvertently their actions may confirm, accentuate or weaken these" (p. 124)

How do we address the problem of 'intention' while retaining the importance of "commitment" (to which Sayer refers to in p. 127)? For example, can 'upper-classes' 'intend' to 'see' inequalities erased or reduced, while committing themselves to erase possible exploitative relations, which may be necessary for maintaining their status as an upper class in the first place? Also, when upper classes (I mean middle income group as well) do intend to erase/reduce inequalities, do we need to analyze why they have that intent because that may contain very strong moral judgments within it? For example, upper classes while fully and 'safely' geographically segregated from the 'lower classes' in many parts of the US, might want to reduce inequalities in the distribution of income only because they might feel that otherwise there would be an increase in criminal activities that might encroach their safety zones. Here, I guess I am asking whether we examine the 'motive', the 'self-interest' behind the reduction of inequality of distribution of income. I am also assuming that that motive may to some degree relate to their levels and forms of commitment for reduction of inequality of income for example. This self-interested motive may also relate to whether upper classes are talking in terms of a relatively better distribution of income or are upper classes are also talking in terms of access to the resources but access might mean an 'encroachment' by the 'lower classes' in their fields of operation, like housing for instance.

How do we understand the concept of social mobility – as vertically? The question seems to be important especially because of Sayer's repeated arguments in the book that discourse is not the only thing that is important. I think that Sayer has brought out this very crucial aspect of discourse but I argue that we must remain very focused to various discourses in order to understand actions. Actions, I think, are not separate from discourses within which we find ourselves in, which Sayer tends to disagree.
Sayer states, "This conservatism is understandable, since working class culture is a source of support and there are risks involved in deserting it, as upwardly mobile individuals appreciate. As many have noted, moving up involves moving out, and seeming to betray the values of one's class (Lawler, 1999)" (p. 173).
When social mobility implies implicitly and explicitly as moving "up" and "down", we can make an assumption that social mobility is about hierarchical movement to valued positions, so from here it also seems to be that, in the discourse of social mobility, what is aimed for is the possibility of the movement of a working class off-spring to a say managerial class (as that is more valued than a working class status?). What the discourse of social mobility seems to be hiding is the fact that, in the name of equality of opportunity and life-chances, it never challenges the status of managerial class or whatever else is valued temporally but instead creates an illusion of the possibility for escape from the current position. Coupled with this, the social mobility discourse through its recognition of social stratification does not seem to mention explicitly the need for collaborative arrangements to recognize and struggle for dominations existing within a so-called working class and the reasons for the de-valued status of working class. Instead it talks about 'moving up'. This sends a message that there is something wrong in being a working class person. On the other hand social mobility and stratification discourses often show the imperatives of the economy, where there seems to be a need for a working class or a service class depending on the economic context. Therefore, it is precisely the

discourses that we need to focus on. Within the discourse itself, the inherent contradictions do lie! At one moment there is a talk of equality of opportunity but *for what*? To move 'up'? To escape? Or to value one's life in a way which the person has 'reason' to value, not in terms of moving 'up' always but also to have access to knowledge bases which make people aware of their exploitative worlds? Social mobility does not talk about: situations where farmers need not have to get out of farming 'profession' in order to become socially mobile but 'should' have access to knowledge and goods that would enable them to decide whether they want to opt out or not. The focus is needed on discourse because the talk of equality within a discourse may also contain mechanisms that stop or manipulate actions for equality and also because the questions on equality may themselves be 'distorted'.

One last point. How can an author like Sayer, who seems to be so sensitive in his approach to the social world, make statements like "Education is worthwhile in itself because it enriches our capacities to flourish, regardless of whether it brings us exchange-value" (in extension of Paul Willis's idea - p. 124) *without* a more nuanced analysis? Amartya Sen whose ideas seem to have heavily influenced Sayer, says the same thing but then he makes a more thorough analysis of this issue, with all its impending limitations. When Sayer says "education", his point of reference seems to be a relatively "good" middle/upper class education. I would want to know more as to how an "education" in a school, which is guarded with metal detectors, infested with drug-selling activities, located in poverty-stricken neighbourhoods where death of youngsters is common, has 'intrinsic' value? Why students in that situation would not protest, even though their resistances are within the dominant discourses of resistances?

Rahul Comment

1. On intention and commitment: Sayer rightly distinguishes between preferences and commitments, very usefully disarticulating elements that are jammed together in the Bourdieuvian *habitus*. Commitments in Sayer's sense are deep normative preferences. In your example of the upper class, you are talking about a *structural* commitment to maintaining their elite status. I wouldn't necessarily fault Sayer for not exploring this kind of idea, since he is not trying to replace Bourdieu but to remedy his deficiencies. I agree that Sayer doesn't help us much on the interaction of structural, habitual, and normative commitments.

2. On social mobility: I think Sayer here is dealing with the phenomenon of social mobility as it actually presents itself, which is almost always a manner of an individual or family abandoning their class position for a "better" one rather than changing society's class structure. He is writing about the "moral significance of class" in capitalism, not in all social systems. I do think he talks usefully about the valuation of working class vs. other classes and the reasons for lower valuation of the former.

3. On education: I agree with you. I noted myself the inadequacy (or outright lack) of his defense of moral realism and the philosophically naïve stances this puts him in

regarding, for example, the abstract "use value" of education, absent any reference to social hierarchy or exchange-value considerations. You also raise the important point of certain kinds of "education" as negative goods. It is not just the difficult educational environment the poor often face but the fact that for many of them education is education in sitting still and doing as you are told, preparing them to be quiet data-entry clerks for $7 an hour. Sayer doesn't mention this (I think), although he would certainly agree with this and amend his statement to say that only various kinds of elite educations are unambiguous goods in terms of use-value alone.

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15. Johannes Glaeser

I find Sayers distinction between use-value and exchange-value very interesting. An university degree has an associated exchange-value on the market, therefore it is valued for the advantage it has for the competition on the labor market. At the same time the degree has an intrinsic value, such as the skills thought.
I think Bourdieus contribution was to show that the value of goods or practices can be created and increased by attaching certain symbols to it, by limiting the access to the good or monopolizing capital and making it seem more valuable. Therefore to influence the exchange-value, while the use-value is not necessary changing.

I think Sayer critique that Bourdieu evades judgements of the use-value or intrinsic value of goods has to be discussed. As I understand Bourdieu capital, goods and practices are operating in a market and what is important is what value they get attributed to the position on the market. Like in the economic market, what gives goods and capital value and power is the possibility to exchange it. The university degree has maybe the use-value of making a person smart, but its power as a good on a market (exchanging it against other capitals) is expressed through the exchange-value. University degrees, life-styles and so on are created because they are evaluated in the market as having a high value. What counts is if the subjects in the market are judging or recognising the degree and life-style. The intrinsic quality is only important if it threatens this recognition.

I do not understand why Sayer emphasises we should distinguish between deserved and undeserved recognition or misrecognition. The question should be what is recognized. Why do we need to know if something is objectively deserved? When we talk about struggles in the social field, we should look how things are valuated subjectively. What does it matter when the Oxbridge MA is bogus (not having intrinsic value), when people continue to acknowledge the exchange-value of it.

And how should we measure the quality or goods or the use-value?

Response by Sarbani to Johannes's interrogation

Johannes, I am struggling with this whole idea of use and exchange-value, an issue raised by Rahul as well. Under Marxian framework, if I understood correctly, use and exchange values cannot be discussed without discussing commodities, labour embodied in commodities and the utility of commodities. Probably also abstraction of labour, but which at this point I am not competent to talk about. A commodity by its properties satisfies wants. For a commodity to *be* a commodity, there has to be an exchange of products in order for it to function as use-value. Here it seems that commodification requires social relations where the use-value must not be restricted to one person but to others by virtue of an exchange. A commodity seems to have both use-value and exchange value. But in the case of Bourdieu's analysis of life-chances, where education is important, I think the main contention would be to determine whether education is a commodity or not. It can be argued that education, with its utility and also embodiment of human labour, is not a commodity. But I am wondering *whether* education when understood within a realm of capital, human or cultural can be devoid of exchange-value. Even though the capital as a reserve may need to be activated, the *necessity of that capital to be recognized as a capital* requires education to have an exchange-value, and thereby making education as a commodity. There seems to be some problem with my argument here but I cannot figure it out right away!

Rahul Comment.

My interrogation is very similar, so we have several points of strong agreement. The "genuine" use-value an Oxbridge MA would have if it were a real degree is not a clear or unambiguous concept – it refers to at best a sense of "use" (learning more, working hard on something, becoming smarter, whatever) not shared by most people. For most people, the use-value of most degrees is as a credential, and thus difficult to distinguish from its exchange-value.

I do think that Sayer's introduction of use-value into Bourdieu can be potentially useful, I just think it takes harder work than he has done here.

On the question of measuring use-value, this is always the problem with use-value, even in the purely economic and material sphere. It's even the problem with Marx's conception of value. In the end, quantitative work is done with exchange values.

Potential agenda items: 1. Interaction of structural and normative commitments in habitus.
2. Problematizing use-value and its place in Sayer's analysis, both philosophically and because of the class structuration of use-values (is a working-class education a good thing, does the better performance of a BMW as opposed to a Hyundai mean anything to a peasant farmer in India, etc.).
3. The moral significance of education.