



From “period eye” to “schemes of perception”: Bourdieu’s implicit theory of perception

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Abstract

In the 1960’s, Pierre Bourdieu tries to develop a sociology of perception. At this time, he is then influenced by neo-kantian and analytic philosophers who claim that perception is not a pure given, but always implies conceptuality. He then claims for a symbolic definition of perception as an operation of “decoding”. In the 1990’s, however, influenced by Michael Baxandall’s theory of a “period eye”, Bourdieu turns to a non-symbolic definition of perception, based on the concept of “schemes of perception”. This article tries to underline both the interests and the limits of this concept. We finally claim for a four-dimensional theory of perception {categorization – attention – sensorimotor anticipations – sense of reality}, compatible with both Bourdieu’s intuitions and contemporary psychological data.

Keywords: Pierre Bourdieu, Michael Baxandall, Schemes of Perception, Conceptual content of perception, Skilled vision, History of art.

Introduction

There is quite an explicit connection between the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and a part of analytic philosophy: namely John Langshaw Austin and Wittgenstein, philosophers who pay particular attention to the social context in their theories and that Pierre Bourdieu refers to extensively. And these philosophers are mostly used and quoted by Bourdieu explicitly against philosophers or intellectuals of the European tradition. Wittgenstein, for instance, is quoted against Lévi-Strauss at the beginning of *Practical Reason*¹; and the concept of “the scholastic point of view”, developed by John L. Austin, is commonly used by Bourdieu against continental philosophers². However, very little has been written about the links between Bourdieu and analytic theory of perception – while the theory of perception, and esthetics in general, is perhaps the core of Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology. So this is the very point I would like to address by reviewing the references of Pierre Bourdieu to analytic philosophers. I will try to demonstrate that these references are quite important for Bourdieu in the 1960’s because they allow him to develop what he calls a “semiotic” or a “symbolic” theory of perception – that is a theory considering art as something you have to understand and not only feel intuitively. Although, in the early 1990’s, Bourdieu discovers the book

¹On this topic, among other articles, we can quote: J. Bouveresse, « Règles, dispositions et habitus », *Critique*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, n° 579-580, Août-Septembre 1995, pp. 573-594.

²P. Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1997, p. 22.

of the historian of art, Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, published in 1972, and translated in French a decade later³. In this essay, Michael Baxandall develops, not a symbolic, but a cognitive theory of art: according to Baxandall, the eye is not “innocent” and each period of history has particular “visual skills” or, in other words, specific ways to look and to pay attention to certain aspects of a painting or a landscape for instance⁴. So, when Bourdieu discovers this perceptual theory of art, he then reconsiders his early writings and claims for a “sociology of perception”, able to analyze a succession of different “period eyes” (in Baxandall’s words) or different “schemes of perception” (as Bourdieu says)⁵.

However, it seems that this concept of “scheme of perception” is quite under-determined: Bourdieu refers to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and kantian transcendentalism, but never defines what “scheme” or “perception” means in this paradigm⁶. My purpose is therefore to clarify what “scheme of perception” means in Bourdieu’s theory, and I will try to locate this model in the contemporary debates in philosophy of perception. In order to do so, I will first review the explicit or implicit references to analytic esthetics in Bourdieu’s writings. Then, I will underline the differences that Baxandall’s concept of “period eye” introduces in Bourdieu’s theory of perception. And finally, I will try to explain what “period eye” or “scheme of perception” could mean in the contemporary debates about perception.

1. Perception as an operation of decoding

Analytic philosophers are often introduced by Bourdieu as an explicit alternative to Kant’s esthetics. I will briefly summarize Bourdieu’s critic of Kant’s esthetics, before I introduce his interest in analytic philosophy.

Empirical conditions of experience

The last chapter of *The Distinction* is entirely dedicated to a critic of Kant’s esthetics and, more precisely, to the second aspect of the definition of a judgment of taste – the aspect that deals with *quantity*⁷. Kant argues that the judgment of taste claims “universal validity”, or that in a judgment of taste, we demand or require the agreement of others which is not the case in our judgment about the taste of Canary-wine, for instance, which is just a question of individual preferences⁸. Bourdieu regularly mentions and criticizes the legitimacy of this claim, arguing that the tendency to claim or to require universal agreement is not equally distributed in the social world, especially when we are faced with works of art. According to him, cultural dominants of a society are much more likely to require this agreement: Bourdieu develops therefore a political critic, quite close to the Marxist critic of ideology – if we define ideology as the tendency to forget or to minimize the empirical conditions of a particular thought or a particular experience⁹. This is why Bourdieu emphasizes the empirical and

³M. Baxandall, *L’œil du Quattrocento*, Paris, Gallimard, (1972) 1985.

⁴E. Panofsky, *La Perspective comme forme symbolique*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1975, pp. 187-188 : « Au sens propre, l’œil est l’organe qui permet à l’homme de recevoir une réalité [...]. Le théoricien qui prendrait pour base de sa réflexion ce concept de la vision, physiologiquement objectif, pourrait effectivement affirmer à bon droit que la vision appartient à une sphère "inférieure" située en deçà de toute possibilité d’expression [...] Mais ce théoricien devrait alors reconnaître que la vision, entendue en ce sens, ne joue aucun rôle dans la formation du style ».

⁵P. Bourdieu et Y. Delsaut, « Pour une sociologie de la perception », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 40, n° 1, 1981, pp. 3-9.

⁶About the links between Bourdieu, German ethology and French phenomenology, we refer to: E. Bimbenet, « Sens pratique et pratiques réflexives. Quelques développements sociologiques de l’ontologie merleau-pontienne », *Archives de Philosophie*, vol. 69, n° 1, 2006, pp. 57-78.

⁷P. Bourdieu, « Post-scriptum. Eléments pour une critique "vulgaire" des critiques "pures" », in *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*, II, Paris, Editions Cérès, (1972) 1996, p. 719. For an alternative critic, see: J. Derrida, « Parergon », in *De la vérité en peinture*, Paris, Flammarion, 1978, pp. 80-81.

⁸E. Kant, *Critique de la faculté de juger*, § 7, trad. A. Philonenko, Paris, Vrin, (1790) 1993, pp. 74-75.

⁹L. Gayot, « L’idéologie chez Marx : concept politique ou thème polémique », *Actuel Marx*, n° 32, 2007, disponible sur : <http://actuelmarx.u-paris10.fr/alp0032.htm>

social conditions of a particular judgment of taste, and then claims for an “empirical transcendentalism”. This claim is quite common in the French philosophy of the 1960’s and 1970’s: many intellectuals try to articulate the Kantian tradition in one hand, and the *data* of the social sciences on the other hand. Jean-Michel Salanskis outlined that the deleuzian paradigm of “Transcendental empiricism”, the foucauldian concept of “*historical a priori*”, or the different levels of cultural “*a priori*” in Mikel Dufrenne’s philosophy can be analyzed as different philosophical definitions of culture¹⁰. In this sense, the bourdieusian socialization of Kantian transcendentalism can be seen as a particular attempt in a more general dynamics. However, the specificity of early bourdieusian analysis is to emphasize the importance of the “code” you have to know in order to “decode” the meaning of a work of art. The reason why Bourdieu turns to analytic esthetics is that he considers these philosophers have developed a theory of art based on signification.

Bourdieu and analytic esthetics

Bourdieu quotes analytic philosophers to emphasize his theory of perception as “decoding”. He then refers to Nelson Goodman and, more specifically, the theory of *world making*¹¹. His references remain quite vague and imprecise. But he argues that the symbolical approach is correct because it raises the good question – that is “When is Art?” and not “What are the characteristics of a work of art?” nor “What is the specificity of an esthetic experience?” It is the good question because it is neither subjective nor objective but focused on the way you interpret a work of art. In Bourdieu’s view, such a symbolic approach is relevant because it underlines that “every artistic perception implies a conscious or unconscious operation of decoding”¹². One could rightly argue that what Bourdieu calls

“code” is mostly a process of categorization that is not so important in Goodman’s paradigm. On this specific topic, Bourdieu is probably not a fair commentator. He just tries to underline that the experience and the sensibility is derived from the symbolic interpretation of the meaning of a work of art – or that “the encounter with a work of art [...] presupposes an act of cognition, a decoding operation, which implies the implementation of a cognitive acquirement, a cultural code.”¹³

Bourdieu also refers to Arthur Danto – even though he only quotes the article “The Art World”, and the example of the “Brillo Boxes” by Andy Warhol. Bourdieu explicitly borrows the concept of “transfiguration” proposed by Danto – even though he sometimes renames it “transmutation”¹⁴. But the idea is the same: an object is “transfigured” or “transmuted” as a work of art when you interpret it by applying specifically artistic concepts, and when you refer to the history of art. For instance, Bourdieu stresses the importance of an artistic culture to understand the novelty of the “free verse” in poetry or “cubism” in painting. In this way, the artistic value of Andy Warhol’s “Brillo Boxes” is to be compared with the value of clothes signed by a famous fashion designer, or the magic power of fetish-objects¹⁵. But, according to Bourdieu, if Danto highlights how a particular object becomes a work of art through an artistic analysis, he can’t explain how a specifically artistic analysis became historically possible i.e., since the fifteenth century.

¹⁰J.-M. Salanskis, *Philosophie française et philosophie analytique au XX^e siècle*, Paris, PUF, 2016, pp. 40-41.

¹¹P. Bourdieu, « Espace social et pouvoir symbolique », in *Choses dites*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1987, p. 163 : « il y a toujours, dans une société, des conflits entre des pouvoirs symboliques qui visent à imposer la vision des divisions légitimes, c’est-à-dire à construire des groupes. Le pouvoir symbolique, en ce sens, est un pouvoir de *worldmaking*. »

¹²P. Bourdieu, « Pour une théorie sociologique de la perception artistique », *Revue internationale des sciences sociales*, vol. XX, n° 4, 1968, p. 640.

¹³P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, (1979) 1984, p. 3.

¹⁴P. Bourdieu, *Les règles de l’art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Paris, Seuil, 1992, p. 402 : « ...*transfiguration* or, what we can also call *transmutation*... »

¹⁵P. Bourdieu et Y. Delsaut, « Le couturier et sa griffe : contribution à une théorie de la magie », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 1, n° 1, janvier 1975, pp. 7-36.

Finally, Bourdieu's theory is closer to Dickie's paradigm, because he emphasizes that artistic judgments of people depend on institutional judgments, issued by famous Salons, Academies, Art galleries¹⁶, etc. This point refers to the quite famous misunderstanding between Danto and Dickie regarding the concept of "Art World". I follow here the argument of Laure Bordonaba, who argues that Bourdieu usually lumps Danto and Dickie together and considers them as representatives of the "institutional theory of art"¹⁷. Indeed, while Danto explains the symbolic process of an interpretation of a work of art, Dickie purports that these interpretations are allowed by (or influenced by) a few social institutions. And this articulation is precisely what Bourdieu tries to do in his late lessons on Manet¹⁸.

Conclusion

To conclude on this first part, for Bourdieu, mostly in the 1960's and in the 1970's, mentioning analytic philosophers is a way to distance himself from the European esthetics and more specifically from the Kantian tradition. And the core of this argument is that a work of art is mainly symbolical and needs people to possess the right code to decode it, and to understand its novelty or its meaning.

2. The "period eye": perceptual skills in Michael Baxandall's history of art

But, in the 1990's, the concept of "period eye" developed by Baxandall, introduces quite an important transformation in Bourdieu's theory: from a "symbolic" theory of art, he turns to a "cognitive" one. I will first expose Baxandall's concept of "period eye"; and then demonstrate its influence on Bourdieu's work.

Skilled vision and "period eye"

Michael Baxandall analyses the evolution of visual art in Italy, from 1410 to 1490¹⁹. According to him, during the Quattrocento, a distinct field of art appears, becoming progressively independent from purely religious needs or artisanal procedures. The economic structures of the market of art changed; an autonomous domain of art critics emerged; and the subjects of paintings were not specifically religious anymore. Socially, economically and theoretically, art became an autonomous domain with its own criteria to discriminate between interesting and non-interesting works. The specificity of Baxandall's theory is to add that this history necessarily implies a visual and cognitive transformation: the evolutions of the social status of painters and the emergence of a group of art critics imply a transformation of "visual skills" and the constitution of what Baxandall calls a "period eye" or "the eye of Quattrocento". These "visual skills" imply five main cognitive dimensions. First, they determine what the spectator is paying attention to, in a painting. For instance, Baxandall demonstrates that, in the Quattrocento, people were very sensitive to the shades of blue, because blue pigments were extracted from lapis lazuli, a very expensive rock imported from Afghanistan. On the contrary, contemporary spectators wouldn't pay attention to these specific shades, because they do not mean anything to them. Secondly, they attribute global significations to colors, gestures or physical characteristics. For instance, physiognomy is a kind of visual convention that associates facial specificities to personality traits, and that can be very important to understand certain portraits. Thirdly, visual skills also imply artistic conventions, including conventions about 3-dimensionnal perspective. For instance, Baxandall analyses the evolution of the linear perspective and the convention consisting in interpreting something small as something distant. Fourthly, visual

¹⁶P. Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Paris, Seuil, 1992, p. 404.

¹⁷L. Bordonaba, « Danto vs Dickie, une "bataille œdipienne" », *Cahiers philosophiques*, n° 144, 2016/1, pp. 117-122.

¹⁸P. Bourdieu, *Manet. Une révolution symbolique*, Paris, Seuil, 2013.

¹⁹M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in 15th century Italy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1972.

perception is structured by specifically artistic categories: Michael Baxandall lists the main artistic categories that emerge and spread out during the fifteenth century – such as “purity, facility, graceful, adorned”, etc. Since Diderot or Schiller, art critics aim to educate the esthetic judgments of spectators by developing artistic concepts, or artistic analyses, that help enjoying and understanding the works of art. Fifthly and lastly, visual skills are integrated in a global attitude towards paintings: Baxandall explains that, at the beginning of the century, religious paintings are not only seen, but are used by preachers to illustrate episodes of the Bible, and by tutors as mediums for the prayers. According to Baxandall, these five cognitive dimensions of visual perception change dramatically during the fifteenth century in Italy: and these five dimensions constitute what he calls “visual skills”, “visual habits” or “period eye”, and that characterizes his “socio-cognitive” analysis of the history of art²⁰. This analysis is now quite well known, because it has been employed by historians – such as Adrian Randolph²¹ – or anthropologists – such as Clifford Geertz²² – and more generally by all the Visual Studies. But it also influenced Bourdieu’s practical sociology.

Pierre Bourdieu and schemes of perception

To what extent did Baxandall influence Bourdieu? As we said, from the 1960’s to the 1990’s, progressively, Bourdieu endeavored to abandon a purely structuralist method to develop an anthropology based on practice, on “body training or body dressage” as Nietzsche puts it or based on “techniques of the body” as Marcel Mauss says. So he tried to transpose his structuralist background into a naturalist epistemology that gives a great importance to the body, to the incorporation of habits and to the orientation of perception. The underlying idea is that we usually confer too much importance to the conscious thoughts or to the rational decisions. Bourdieu therefore calls for an analysis of “embodied cognition”, of what you “tend” to do without any specific will, of what you are used to do and incorporate as a habit or a disposition. So, he finally has to acknowledge that this cannot be properly described or analyzed in terms of “codes”, “categories” or “signification” because these concepts refer to abstract or theoretical dimensions, whereas he tries to describe bodily or incorporated habits. That leads him to admit that his early works were too influenced by a symbolic approach of signification, and need to be completed by an analysis of attention or perception. And this is the reason why Bourdieu turns from a theory of “signification” to a theory of “perception” based on Baxandall’s analysis. He dedicated a long article to Baxandall, explicitly called “For a sociology of perception”, and also a whole chapter of his important book *The Rules of Art*. In both papers, there is the same acknowledgment:

“When I tried to describe how people understand a work of art, I used the concept “decryption”: I used to say a work of art needs an artistic code to be decoded, and I meant by “code” a system of classifications historically determined. [...] But, it was very difficult for me to break with this intellectualist conception of the artistic experience. [...] Michael Baxandall’s book encouraged me to accomplish a transfer to the domain of perception.”²³

He now considers that Danto’s theory, for instance, as a “scholastic point of view” because he focuses on abstract or theoretical dimensions of the experience. Taking over the analyses of “visual skills” or “visual habits”, Bourdieu then tries to give full accounts of notions such as “the invention of a pure look”, or that “the eye of the painting lover has been produced by history” – that is to underline it as a matter of perception, and not only of codification. To sum up, he turns from a “symbolic constructivism” to “perceptive constructivism” – or to what anthropologists, nowadays, would

²⁰M. Baxandall, *L’œil du Quattrocento. L’usage de la peinture dans l’Italie de la Renaissance*, Paris, Gallimard, (1972) 1985, p. 48.

²¹A. W. B. Randolph, « Gendering the Period Eye: Deschi Da Parto and Renaissance Visual Culture », *Art History*, vol. 27, n° 4, 2004, pp. 538-562.

²²C. Geertz, « Art as Cultural System », *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 91, n° 6, 1976, p. 1488.

²³P. Bourdieu, *Les règles de l’art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Paris, Seuil, 1992, pp. 432-433.

probably call “perspectivism”²⁴. One could argue that Bourdieu was looking for a new epistemological background – and obviously a naturalist one, as he quotes Jean-Pierre Changeux or Francisco Varela²⁵.

Conclusion

The problem is that Bourdieu did not really develop this perspective, and only named it “schemes of perception”. So that, if we want to understand what the “perceptive constructivism” means in Bourdieu’s analysis, we have to pay a great attention to the notion of “scheme of perception” and to question whether expressions such as “the invention of a new eye” or “the eye of the Quattrocento” are purely metaphorical or not.

3. The skilled vision theory and the philosophy of perception

This problem leads to wonder what kind of theory of perception does Bourdieu imply when he refers to the concept of “scheme of perception” or the “invention of a new eye”. It is neither clear nor explicit in Bourdieu’s texts. But the hypothesis I would like to put forth is that, in the article “Pour une sociologie de la perception”, we can distinguish four dimensions of what “scheme” means and elaborate a 4-dimensional model of Bourdieu implicit theory of perception²⁶.

Four dimensional model of perception

The first dimension is that concepts or categories people use to describe what they see lead them to detect specific aspects of the painting they would not see if they did not know the corresponding concepts. The influence of categories on perception is quite an old theme in Bourdieu’s work²⁷. And Bourdieu follows Baxandall when the latter argues for an influence of lexical categories on cognitive categories, and on perceptive categories²⁸ on perceptive categories. To my knowledge, Bourdieu never refers to empirical works tackling this issue, whereas there is a major debate between psychologists and anthropologists to determine if cultural differences about words and concepts (of colors, for instance) lead to differences in the perception (of colors). For thirty years, this idea has been clearly marginalized as a secondary version of the “Sapir-Whorf hypothesis”²⁹, directly criticized by the influential book by Brent Berlin and Paul Kay³⁰. But, new psychological evidences seem to show a clear influence of categorization on perception³¹; and the influence of high level knowledge (including semantics) on perceptual categorization³². According to these new *data*, the program of sociology of (categorization of) perception is to be discussed again.

²⁴E. Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics*, Minneapolis, Univocal Publishing, (2009) 2014.

²⁵P. Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, Paris, Seuil, 1997, p. 163. See also: J.-P. Changeux et P. Ricoeur, *La Nature et la règle*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 1998, p. 181 : « La notion d’habitus, telle que nous la propose Bourdieu, fait partie selon moi des "concepts-passerelle" potentiellement utiles dans les diverses disciplines qu’il réunit. Le concept lie la notion d’apprentissage à celle d’empreinte de l’environnement social et culturel. »

²⁶P. Bourdieu et Y. Delsaut, « Pour une sociologie de la perception », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 40, n° 1, 1981, pp. 3-9. On this point, our proposal is influenced by Robert Goldstone : R. L. Goldstone, « Perceptual Learning », *Annual Review of Psychology*, n° 49, 1998, pp. 585-612.

²⁷P. Bourdieu et M. de Saint Martin, « Les catégories de l’entendement professoral », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 1, n° 3, 1975, pp. 68-93.

²⁸M. Baxandall, *L’œil du Quattrocento. L’usage de la peinture dans l’Italie de la Renaissance*, Paris, Gallimard, (1972) 1985, pp. 64-65 : « Ce qui varie, ce sont les catégories à l’aide desquelles l’homme classe ses stimuli visuels, la connaissance qu’il utilise pour compléter ce qui lui est immédiatement donné, et l’attitude qu’il adopte à l’égard du type d’objet artificiel qu’il voit. »

²⁹J. Joseph, « The sources of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis », in J. Joseph, *From Whitney to Chomsky. Essays in the History of American Linguistics*, Amsterdam / Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2002, pp. 71-105.

³⁰B. Berlin et P. Kay, *Basic Color Terms. Their Universality and Evolution*, CSLI Publications, (1969) 1999.

³¹R. L. Goldstone, « Influences of categorization on perceptual discrimination », *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, vol. 13, n° 2, 1994, pp. 178-200.

³²E. Özgen et I. R. L. Davies, « Acquisition of Categorical Color Perception: A Perceptual Learning Approach to the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis », *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, vol. 131, n° 4, 2002, pp. 477-493.

The second idea, or dimension, deals with the capture of attention. Bourdieu argues that the attention people pay to certain aspects of a painting, for instance, is also oriented by their practical habits, so that they will notice, or pay attention to a few aspects of the visual domain only. This idea is nowadays quite common, for it has been developed in the « chunking » paradigm, proposed by William Chase and Herbert Simon, to explain the holistic vision of chess professionals³³. The different experiences of “change blindness” Kevin O’ Regan recently developed underpin this paradigm of attention – even though the cultural dimension is generally not central³⁴.

The third idea concerns the anticipation of sensori-motor contingencies, and the spatial conventions – for instance, in the perception of depth. The idea is that perception of depth is based on a few visual clues – such as occlusion, convergence of parallels, relative height, etc. Bourdieu often mentions in the same sentence “schemes of perception and action”; and he follows Michael Baxandall when he argues that, in a modern painting, spectators have to transform 3-dimensionnal clues to fit in a 2-dimensional surface. This very transformation is organized by cultural conventions you have to assimilate in order to understand the spatial connexions between the different objects you see. This idea has been a matter of great importance for American anthropologists who tried to prove the influence of cultural differences in the perception of depth: William Hudson, for instance, underlined difficulties non-occidental people used to face to understand depth clues in a painting³⁵; and Melville Herskovits – quoted by Bourdieu – tried to demonstrate that « the cultural differences are so deep that they influence perceptive tendencies »³⁶. Are these theories still relevant nowadays? The epistemological background of these studies must undoubtedly be updated – but the global intuition is still appropriate. Alain Berthoz discovered social differences in the orientation in space³⁷; Stephen Levinson underlined the linguistic determinations of spatial references³⁸; and Catherine Reed the role of high level knowledge on movement anticipations³⁹.

The fourth and final dimension Bourdieu underlines in this article is that, looking at a painting or a picture, you are more or less involved in what you see, so that you are more or less aware that it is not real. Only a very few social scientists seem to have been interested in this topic: we can quote the ancient study of William Rivers about the cultural variations in the Müller-Lyer illusion⁴⁰, recently updated by Catherine Howe and Dale Purves⁴¹. But few recent studies concerning the “sense of reality” could be useful to develop this intuition: scientists indeed showed that this problem is quite important for social sciences, concerning the role of hallucination in religious culture⁴², the confidence in sensory data in UFO experiences⁴³, or the categorization of a phenomenon as “illusion” in the professional learning of aeronautic pilots⁴⁴ or medical surgeons⁴⁵.

³³W. Chase and H. Simon, « Perception in Chess », *Cognitive Psychology*, n° 4, 1973, pp. 55-81

³⁴K. O’ Regan and A. Noë, « A Sensorimotor account of vision and visual consciousness », *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, vol. 24, n° 5, 2001, pp. 939-973.

³⁵W. Hudson, « The Study of the Problem of Pictorial Perception Among Unacculturated Groups », *International Journal of Psychology*, vol. 2, n° 2, 1967, p. 89.

³⁶M. H. Segall, D. T. Campbell et M. J. Herskovitz, *The Influence of Culture on Visual Perception*, Indianapolis et New York, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966, p. vi.

³⁷S. Lambrey et A. Berthoz, « Gender differences in the use of external landmarks versus spatial representations updated by self-motion », *Journal of Integrative Neuroscience*, vol. 6, n° 3, 2007, pp. 523-534.

³⁸S. C. Levinson, S. Kita, D. B. M. Haun et B. H. Rasch, « Returning the tables: language affects spatial reasoning », *Cognition*, n° 84, 2002, pp. 155-188.

³⁹C. L. Reed et N. G. Vinson, « Conceptual effects on representational momentum », *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, vol. 22, n° 4, 1996, pp. 839-850.

⁴⁰W. H. R. Rivers, « The measurement of visual illusion », *Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*, 1901, p. 818.

⁴¹C. Q. Howe et D. Purves, « The Müller-Lyer illusion explained by the statistics of image-source relationships », *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, vol. 102, n° 4, Janvier 2005, pp. 1234-1239.

⁴²T. M. Luhrmann, « “Lord, Teach Us to Pray”: Prayer Practice Affects Cognitive Processing », *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 2013, pp. 159-177.

⁴³A. Esquerre, *Théorie des événements extraterrestres. Essai sur le récit fantastique*, Paris, Fayard, 2016, p. 57.

⁴⁴T. B. Hugh, « New strategies to prevent laparoscopic bileduct injury: surgeons can learn from pilots », *Surgery*, n° 132, 2002, pp. 826-835.

⁴⁵P. Sockeel, E. Chatemain, M.-P. Massoure, P. David, X. Chapellier and S. Buffat, « Les chirurgiens peuvent apprendre des pilotes : place du facteur humain en chirurgie », *Journal de Chirurgie*, vol. 146, n° 3, 2009, pp. 250-255.

Schemes of perception	
Categorization	Attention
Sense of reality	Sensorimotor anticipation

Fig. 1: four dimensional theory of perception

Finally, it occurs that this 4-dimensional system can be understood as Bourdieu's implicit theory of perception – and that it is still relevant nowadays if we update a few dimensions with contemporary psychological *data*.

A conceptualist notion of perception?

In this last part, I would like to emphasize what is at stake in this model as far as the philosophy of perception is concerned. It seems that Bourdieu progressively abandoned a purely conceptualist theory of perception. The “conceptualist theory of perception” I am talking about is more the neokantian idea that perception implies categorization⁴⁶, than the analytic debate about (non)conceptual domains as a potential source for knowledge⁴⁷. Even though Bourdieu has perhaps never quoted the famous Kantian sentence according to which “intuitions without concepts are blind”⁴⁸, his early works are clearly close to Nelson Goodman's views on this topic. The latter writes indeed:

« The overwhelming case against perception without conception, the pure given... has been so fully and frequently set forth – by Berkeley, Kant, Cassirer, Gombrich, Bruner, and many others – as to need no restatement. The talk imposes structure, conceptualizes, ascribes properties. Although conception without perception is merely empty, perception without conception is blind... We can have words without a world but no world without words or other symbols. »⁴⁹

This sentence seems to assert that every intuition is linked to a concept, so that what we perceive is always a mix of intuition and conceptualization. The bourdieusian idea that there is no such thing as a direct perception or a direct sensibility, but that every perception and affects are based on a prior code, seems very close to Goodman's sentence. So, to some extent, we can say that Bourdieu agrees with this really particular formulation of the conceptualist theory of perception, according to which the content of perception is determined by conceptualization and the concepts we're using are partially determined by linguistics. This would be a kind of rather traditional “constructivism” based on “linguistic plurality”. However, as I tried to show it, this conceptualist approach would rather be true in the 1960's or in the 1970's. But the specific movement of Bourdieu's thought, on this point, is quite the opposite because he progressively tries to integrate aspects that are not precisely “conceptual”, such as attention, spatial conventions and sense of reality. The question of whether it is still a conceptualist paradigm or not then depends on what we call a “concept”.

Bourdieu explicitly uses the word “scheme” – and not “category”. Is this distinction relevant? In a way, it is not because a part of what Bourdieu calls “scheme”, as we noticed, precisely concerns categorization problems. But the other domains – attention, sensorimotor anticipation and sense of reality – cannot be called “conceptual” without losing the Kantian background of the analysis. My third hypothesis is that Bourdieu would probably follow the approach of someone like Christopher Peacocke who claims that spatial orientation, for instance, depends on “scenarios” that have nothing in common with what we usually call “concepts”⁵⁰. Indeed, according to Bourdieu, the main interest

⁴⁶E. Cassirer, *Philosophie des formes symboliques*, vol. III, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1972, p. 229.

⁴⁷W. Sellars, *Empirisme et philosophie de l'esprit*, section 18, Combas, Editions de l'Eclat, 1992, p. 43 : « il est clair que l'expérience de voir que quelque chose est vert n'est pas seulement l'apparition de l'assertion propositionnelle “Ceci est vert” ».

⁴⁸E. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A51-B75.

⁴⁹N. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, Hackett Publishing Company, 1978 (1988), p. 6

⁵⁰C. Peacocke, « Scenarios, concepts, and perception », in T. Crane (ed.), *The Contents of Experience*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 105-135.

of Baxandall is to analyze in terms of “attention” what many theorists used to analyze in terms of “signification”. So the main interest of Baxandall is to propose a pluralist approach of perception that is not restricted to a conceptualist one – and that can be called an “embodied pluralism” of perception. In this view, what Bourdieu calls “scheme of perception”, without defining it precisely, is a cultural organization of perception that cannot, strictly speaking, be called “conceptualist”, and is more precisely described in the 4-dimensionnal model mentioned above.

Conclusion

To conclude, we underlined that Bourdieu turned from a symbolic definition of perception as an operation of “decoding”, to a 4-dimensional theory of “schemes of perception” that includes {categorization – attention – sensorimotor anticipations – sense of reality}. We tried to show that this implicit model is compatible with contemporary psychological data; quite useful to articulate philosophical, psychological and sociological information; and could be relevant in contemporary philosophical problems – especially in analytic theory of perception.