

Why do we like the stuff that we like?

It is a query that we never ask ourselves. We typically only take our preferences for granted in our daily lives and perform on them without too much thought. You don't ask yourself when you're starving, "Gee, why do I like ratatouille very much?" You just let your predilection for old French food help you decide what to prepare for dinner.

It's not all food, though. In almost every decision we make about how we allocate our time and money here on Earth, we have preferences that direct us - from the clothing we wear to the novels we read and about everything in between.

You say it, you certainly have those preferences for it. Hairstyles, home decor, interests, sports, media, music, film, art, and even the personality characteristics of the friends and partners we search for. And if all of your preferences were added up, you would be able to explain a great deal of who you are as an individual: what you do, what you possess, what you desire, with whom you interact, and how you show yourself to the world.

## Chapter 1 - With numerous social classes, we connect distinct tastes.

In outdoor sports, consider two persons with very distinct tastes. The first person wants to attend classical music concerts and visit art museums, while the second tends to go to theme parks and watch boxing matches.

Now if you had to assume, what kind of social class would you claim any person probably corresponds to?

Odds are you would say the first person belongs to a class that is far better than the second. And it's because both of us have taste intuitions that are deeply bound up with our class theories.

Broadly speaking, along with a range that goes from poor to high, we appear to separate all tastes and classes. There are the "popular" preferences of the working class at the bottom of the scale. First up, the preferences of the working class are "middle-brow". Then there are the "bourgeois" preferences of the upper class at the top end, along with what sociologists term the intellectual elite's "legitimate" tastes.

The artistic elite comprises the more "sophisticated" members of the upper class, but also scholars and musicians who are thought-leaders and taste-makers. They may not be wealthy, but they have a lot of cultural cachets, so there is a lot of weight to their preferences.

Now from culture to culture, the specifics of all these tastes differ. From one age to the next, they often change. Over the same period, they may also vary within the same community depending on considerations outside class, such as race, gender, age, and where they reside. For example, inhabitants in trendy and interesting towns, even though they are members of the same class, seem to have more "fashionable" preferences than individuals in remote, quiet cities.

Hence it is difficult here to provide any everlasting, fundamental instances. The ones on which writer Pierre Bourdieu focuses are taken from France in the 1960s, so many of them will now seem to us obsolete or culturally unique. "The Blue Danube, for instance, was an instance of popular French interest in music back then while "Hungarian Rhapsody" was middle-brow, and "Left Hand Concerto" was "legitimate." Most people would not even be knowledgeable about any of these songs today.

But we are encouraged by Bourdieu to relate his theories to our cultural backgrounds, so let's take him for a minute on that invitation. What would you consider mainstream, middle-brow, and legitimate musical tastes in your culture today?

We don't want to insult others by naming their favorite musician "middle-brow", but here you fill in the gaps.

## Chapter 2 - To grasp the preferences of people scientifically, we should take into consideration their normal ways of thinking about them.

Common sense presents us with a point of departure for taste testing, but it is just that: a point of departure. There is certainly, as we'll see, an identifiable association between taste and class because it takes us on the right path. Yet common sense is not a logically rigorous framework for a hypothesis to be based on. Bourdieu decided to undertake a more intellectually advanced, empirically established investigation as a sociologist.

What do we do, then? Set our common sense down and decide to start from scratch? Not exactly, and that's because of one of the strange ways of researching a taste-like social experience.

See why you visualize yourself in Paris in the 1960s, and you want to invite representatives of the French elite to a circus. "Sacré bleu!" they may say, with a look of horror on their faces. As top members, they will presumably see going to a circus as a "mundane" and "blunt way of wasting one's free time. It's "below" them, from their viewpoint.

And why? Well partly since it's the kind of activity working-class people do in their eyes.

OK, now consider welcoming them to the opera for an afternoon. "Ah," they may have said. "We're talking now!" From their point of view, that's the type of "sophisticated" cultural practice that fits privileged members, such as themselves. It's on the stage for them so to speak.

Now, take care of what's going on here. The attraction of the wealthy to one behavior and aversion to the other depends on how they think of themselves in terms of class and such behaviors. Their disdain for the circus is in part, a dislike for things they identify with the middle class, and it demonstrates their perception of themselves as representatives of the elite people who are above the working class and the things they are drawn to. In the meantime, their devotion to the opera is in part, an attachment to something that they equate with being elite class members.

And if you replicated the same study with some French people in the working class, you would get the contrary effects. An afternoon at the circus? "Certainly!" Maybe they'll react. To the opera? "Main no!" That's for fancy folk, not someone like us.

This is only one case, but it highlights a more general argument, which is that our common-sense principles are already built into our tastes regarding the relationship between taste and class. Therefore while researching it we have to consider those ideas to grasp taste. They are a crucial component, after all of the very phenomena that we are trying to explain!

## Chapter 3 - In defining the dynamics of taste and class, people's perceptions about taste and class take an integral part.

Okay, perhaps the preferences of individuals are shaped by the way they think about the relationship between taste and class. Putting in terms is a bit wordy, but the concept itself is pretty clear. Then why's it so crucial?

Well, with our perception of not only taste but also class, this notion has some big implications. Now, the taste may sound like a fairly limited matter of interest, however, along with certain significant schools of thought in other social sciences, like Marxist economics and history, the class is one of the core notions of sociology. That makes it important for someone who wants to grasp culture to have the next concept we're going to look at.

Let's go back to our earlier instance to grasp this. Note, because they see it as an elite event, the French elite is drawn to the opera, and they have a dislike for the circus because they see it as a working-class activity.

Now with these details in mind, how can the elite spend their spare time? Well, by, among other things, going to the opera and skipping the circus. And the same would be true of those in the middle class. While skipping the opera, they'll head to the circus.

Thus the intuitions of the two classes regarding taste and class transform into prophecies that satisfy themselves. Since they view it as an elite experience, going to the opera simply becomes an elite activity, something that the elite normally does and the working class refuses. And the exact scenario occurs in reverse for the circus. It simply becomes an occupation of the middle class, due to the interpretations of it by the two classes.

Then a feedback cycle emerges. The more people of the middle class choose to go to circus acts and elite people to operas, the more the idea that which class performs the behavior is intensified. Not just that, but some of the distinguishing characteristics of the two groups in question are also the two practices. Who are the rich and the middle class? Well, they're the ones who prefer to go to circuses and operas, respectively, with many other things.

Therefore, our taste and class presuppositions are not just simple opinions. They begin to form the very realities of taste and class themselves, by shaping our actions. And this highlights a much greater point: as human beings, the social world surrounding us is not only unconsciously perceived by us. Instead through our behavior and the thoughts that drive them, we consciously build the universe ourselves.

## Chapter 4 - Bourdieu put forward a theory that draws on our intuitions about the connection between taste and class and modifies them.

Well, then our common-sense views about taste and class are certainly important, but if we want to achieve a better understanding of the connection between the two items, we also need to go beyond them. We'll need some observational evidence to research for that. Back in the 1960s, Bourdieu noticed that so he began a couple of detailed, in-depth studies.

Today, the answers you get are strongly contingent on the questions you ask when you run a survey. There's an endless number of questions you can ask your participants, after all. And you'll get two completely different sets of responses if you ask two completely different series of questions.

But how are you going to know the questions to ask? Well, you need some kind of tentative, informed guess about what you need to learn about your subject. You require, in other terms, a theory.

Note, through a scale from low to high, we normally separate tastes and grades. To sum up: there exist the “popular” tastes of the working class, the “middle-brow” tastes of the middle class, and the “bourgeois” and “legitimate” tastes of the upper-class and cultural elite.

Now, these last two combinations in taste and class intersect, but they're separate from each other, too. Many, but not yet, upper-class members belong to the aristocracy of society and have "legitimate taste." An instance here will be a wealthy person who loves 'sophisticated' painting. Yet some upper-class persons only have "bourgeois" preferences for items like luxury products. Think about a rich businessman who only wastes his time and money on stuff like yachts and luxury cars.

In the meantime, academics and writers have "legitimate" preferences for things such as film and literature. They are members of the intellectual elite, but they are not inherently upper class; all of them have salary ranges in the working or middle class.

Now, question yourself: who and what, on the general scale of class and taste, is greater? The intellectual elite and the "legitimate" taste of them? Or the upper class and their taste for the 'bourgeois'?

The solution is not evident - and this lack of certainty offered a hint to Bourdieu as to how to continue. He found that there is something to our intuitions, but they are a little confusing and need to be explained.

But hang on a minute, how can they be mistaken but still be self-fulfilling prophecies that simultaneously form reality? During the next part, we'll focus on that.

## Chapter 5 - Our conceptions of taste and class reflect a type of functional awareness "misrecognized."

Pop quiz: if you drop a bowling ball from the roof and a feather, which one hits the ground first? Of course, the bowling ball. And why? Many individuals would say, "because it's bulkier."

Then if you know your science, you know that's not right, and that it's not an issue of weight, but wind resistance. But it wouldn't deter you from making the right decision, even though you have a mistaken view of why things fall the way they do on Earth. In other sentences, you would have practical experience of falling object science, but to use one of the terms of Bourdieu, when attempting to clarify it you would misrecognize that understanding, misinterpreting the distinction in speeds to mass when you should attribute it to wind resistance.

With our ideas about taste and class, a similar event occurs.

In a certain way, every one of us understands how the world works around us, and this knowledge both impacts and represents our perspectives of that world. We don't grasp why we understand the universe the way we do, however, and this is a significant "however". In reality, our very own interpretation of it is vulnerable to confusion!

To understand why you imagine you're an elite participant, and you want to protect your prestige with your elite peers. Part of that includes proving that "good taste" is yours. For example, you ought to be able to go to an art gallery, look at numerous artwork, and distinguish the "good and bad" ones. A basic painting of a nice sunset? Banal. An abstract tangled mess of colors and shapes? A remarkable discovery of visual shapes!

Now, you ought to have a realistic understanding of art and of how other members of the elite usually transfer their opinions on it to do this kind of stuff. You will make the decisions yourself that way. We'll go through this in more detail later, but for now, the idea is this: What you need is a realistic experience. As long as the opinions on art in the minds of other members of the establishment are "appropriate," that's all that counts. You don't need an in-depth sociological hypothesis of how and why these decisions are made, guided by evidence.

But that suggests that if you were attempting to describe how and why you and your coworkers judge art the way you do you would focus on some form of basic and flawed folk theory. In other words, you'd be like the guy who feels that because it's bigger, the bowling ball falls further than the feather.

## Chapter 6 - The three aspects of taste and class are capital length, capital structure, and social trajectory.

So what is our unnecessarily superficial folk philosophy of taste and class? Ok, we're putting out a one-dimensional hierarchy by separating the two items on a scale that goes from low to high. The scale is a vertical line, and a position on the line is defined by each kind of taste and class. If you have ever spoken of individuals ascending or slipping down the socio-economic "ladder," while learning about age, you have used this paradigm yourself.

Today, the ladder performs its function for daily discourse, but we need to go beyond it if we want to build a more objectively accurate definition of class and taste. And this takes one to the theory of Bourdieu, which is that in terms of a three-dimensional space instead of a one-dimensional line, we can grasp class and taste.

The underlying premise here is that everyone has a specific amount of money, which is some sort of wealth that helps you in your society to gain power, resources, prestige, or growth. Bourdieu reflects on two main types of capital in his philosophy of taste. The first is the capital of the economy. This involves capital, but it may be inventory, inventories, or some other economic

commodity as well. The second is cultural capital, which is every non-economic commodity in the minds of other people that gives you stature.

Cultural capital could entail everything for the rich, from the ability to play a musical instrument, to speak or dress in a "proper" way, to the appreciation of the most "respectable" types of painting, literature, and cinema. It also requires having the "right" type of degree. This brings you educational capital, which in contemporary culture is one of the most significant sub-varieties of cultural capital. After all, a "good" degree from a "good" university will help you get a good career. A "bad" degree from a "bad" college - not that much.

In the eyes of the beholder, of course, "good" and "bad" are, and that's exactly the point. Your diploma's meaning is not intrinsic to the sheet of paper; it relies on the interpretation of it by other individuals, which depends on societal perceptions of worth. For instance, our contemporary technical culture places a particularly high priority on scientific education.

Add up all of your economic and cultural capital, and you've got your capital volume. This can be high, low, or anywhere in between, as opposed to the average. But how is your capital volume split between the two categories? And how did it evolve? Your capital formation and your social trajectory, which we will look at during the next two sections, are the answers to these questions.

## Chapter 7 - Our social status represents our economic and cultural capital, and one form of capital may be translated into the other.

The words "composition of capital" and "social trajectory" sound technical, but the concepts themselves are quite simple. However, if things were straightforward, this would not be French philosophy, so there's another complexity to bring to the mix. It has an even more technical-sounding name: a technique for capital reconversion. The concept itself, however, is not that challenging, so hang with us!

To untangle this, let's begin with our capital composition. Recall, this is how two primary buckets divide your overall capital: economic capital and cultural capital. Four essential possibilities remain. You may have similarly high or equally low levels of both economic and cultural resources for the first two. For instance, an upper-class member of the cultural elite, among other economic and cultural riches, may be filled with cash and have a respectable university degree. In the meantime, in both kinds of capital, a working-class person has a shortfall, not much money, a low-value degree, or no degree at all.

Conversely, you may have more than one source of capital than the other, which gives two more choices. If you're a higher education instructor, you might have a lot of cultural capital, but

not a lot of economic capital, such as an outstanding degree, but not a lot of earnings. And you might have the opposite composition of money if you're a businessman. You may have a lot of money, but in "higher culture" you don't put much stock - you choose to invest your time and money on luxury cars instead of the opera.

Now, assume that you are this industrialist's son. The great news here? Born into money, you are. The terrible news here? You will not acquire a family company. You'll need to get a nice job to preserve your social status, maybe a high-ranking executive role in a private company. You may have some personal contacts, of course, that can help you out with this. Although you would still also need a reasonable amount of cultural capital enough that the people recruiting you would look "respectable" to you.

There are several potential ways to accumulate intellectual capital: to get a "good" degree, to become informed about art and literature, to attend cultural activities in "high society," and so on. But most of them share at least one similar thing: to acquire them, you need money. Luckily, you've got that in great abundance, so you just need to reinvest some sort of cultural capital with the economic capital of your inherited money. This will be an instance of a technique of reconversion: a way to turn one source of capital into another.

Outcome at the end? A shift in your capital composition. And as we'll notice over the next section, your overall volume of capital and thus, your social trajectory could also be affected.

## Chapter 8 - Through transferring economic capital and cultural capital into one another, people preserve and enhance their social status.

For several reasons, a person's social trajectory can shift. The outcome of personal bad fortune, like someone blowing their savings on an unsuccessful business deal, could be a decrease.

But often a shift in the total volume of the capital of a person is linked with the rises and falls of the economy and society overall. Such larger tidal powers attempt, so to speak, to elevate or negatively impact entire groups of people who are in comparable socio-economic ships. Here's where methods for capital reorientation often come to the surface.

When we categorize individuals in terms of classifications such as the "working class" and the "middle class," with a rather wide stroke, we paint huge sections of the population. These groups group together millions of people in a country like France who have a very wide variety of capital volumes and compositions. For starters, the middle class involves everyone from primary school teachers to shopkeepers. Educators tend to have higher levels of cultural capital and lower amounts of financial capital, whereas shopkeepers tend to have the same.

We ought to differentiate class fractions within each class to paint a more densely concentrated image of the community. A class fraction is essentially a collection of persons within the total three-dimensional space of society that holds a common class role. That implies they have identical amounts and compositions of capital and as a function of greater forces in society, their capital tends to travel in the same path.

Based on their job groups, such as teachers and local producers, people often gather around a class role. Now, assume that you're one of those farmers' children. For several years, your family has been growing, and things have been going all good for some time. But now farming is shrinking, and the total fraction of your class is on a downward socioeconomic course.

What're you doing?

Ok, maybe you're looking to transition into a different line of work. And, if you could finance it with whatever cash your family has available, you'd definitely be trying to get a college degree to improve your odds of success. You'd be turning the economic capital into cultural capital in that scenario. You dream that by moving into another fraction, maybe administrative work or manufacturing, you can avoid the economic winds that drag down your class fraction. This way, by moving horizontally, so to say, you can maintain your vertical position within the social hierarchy. If you're fortunate, maybe you might both wake up at the same time.

## Chapter 9 - The preferences of people within the three-dimensional space of the social structure are linked to their class roles.

So what does taste have to do with all of this? Don't fret; we will get there. We have steadily built up the principles we need to comprehend to understand the theory of Bourdieu. We're close to the big show now, finally.

Ready? Let's go!

Society is a multifaceted, multidimensional, and complex position in Bourdieu's view. To summarize, the working class, the middle class, the upper class, and the intellectual elite are the four primary classes. There are numerous class fractions within each class of varying volumes and compositions of capital. In essence, these quantities and combinations are continually changing over time, as the social trajectories of individuals evolve and as they implement various methods of reconversion to turn one form of capital into another. Eventually, in reaction to broader social and economic factors, such as the loss of an industrial community within the overall economy, these trajectories and policies take place.

However, the result is reasonably simple if we take a freeze-frame of this total moving image at any given moment. Imagine an X-Y graph with a vertical line and across forming a horizontal line. The vertical line depicts the number of resources of entities. The high volumes on the line are high; the low volumes are low.

The horizontal line, in turn, reflects the distribution of capital among citizens. We have persons with comparatively large levels of economic capital and low levels of cultural capital on the right side of the line. We have citizens with the reverse composition of wealth on the left side: not a lot of resources or other economic properties, but a very significant amount of cultural cachet.

With this illustration in mind in terms of possessing a position or region on the graph, we can now define any person, class division, or overall class. The basic theory of Bourdieu is that within every quadrant of the line, distinct taste clusters lead to separate clusters of individuals. For starters, college professors and musicians, somewhere in the lower portion of the top-left quadrant, will fall remarkably close to each other. There is a relatively small amount of higher-than-average total volume of capital in both classes and is made up of much more cultural capital than economic capital. Their preferences can be very equal to each other.

In the top-right quadrant, whereas, lower-level executives and shopkeepers will be relatively next to each other. The amount of capital is still moderately high, but it has the reverse composition: higher economic capital, lower cultural capital. Their preferences can also be somewhat close to each other but also greatly different from those of the professors and musicians. Therefore even though they have very different professions, we will distinguish members of the same class faction from their common tastes.

## Chapter 10 - It is possible to further explain the associations between taste and class by adjusting for social trajectory.

So far so good? Nice, because we're going to have to apply a few details to the illustration now. But don't fret, it won't get a lot more complex.

Here's the issue: a two-dimensional model of society is simply the X-Y graph we studied in the earlier section. It just stands for the amount of wealth of citizens and capital composition. But note, a third component is also there: the social trajectory. We need to bring this element into the mix to round out our picture.

On the X-Y scale, imagine two middle-class men who hold identical occupations. Let's name them Bruno and Pierre. In a private-sector workplace setting, both men are low-level employees. They both have a moderately high amount of capital, consisting of capital that is more economic than cultural. They'd have reasonably high wages, for example, and they'd definitely both have respectable degrees, giving them certain cultural capital. But they have not spent too much in other aspects of cultural capital relative to, say, college professors, such as

being informed about the forms of sculpture, literature, and cinema that the elite feel most deserving of knowledge.

Therefore, Pierre and Bruno belong to the same fraction of the class, so we would anticipate them to have identical tastes. But here is the issue: Pierre is an upper-class family's downward mobile child, while Bruno is a working-class family's upward mobile child. The two men could maintain some of the tastes from the class origins of their parents from their childhood experiences. As a consequence, their preferences may be very distinct from one another. For instance, Pierre might still have a taste for his childhood home's elegant old furniture, while Bruno might still prefer the simplistic functional furniture with which he grew up.

That's only one way that the social trajectory will shape the preferences of people. Another position where it will play a significant part is where a whole fraction of the class is exposed to a social direction that is downward or upward. When a division is increasing, for instance, it appears to strive to embrace the preferences of the fractions and class above it, whose classes they aim to reach. That is why upwardly mobile middle-class individuals frequently attempt to imitate upper-class preferences by participating in obvious consumption, purchasing expensive items that reveal their money.

## Chapter 11 - Study findings by Pierre Bourdieu supported his theory.

Okay, so that was the theory that Bourdieu had in mind when his studies were made. If he's correct, the preferences of citizens should conform to their capital amount, capital structure, and social trajectory.

Then the major question came: now was the conclusion accurate? Did it carry the polls out?

The quick response is yes.

Both of Bourdieu's studies were focused on the same questions, which posed questions about the preferences and class backgrounds of French men and women living in Paris, the medium-sized city of Lille, and an unidentified "small provincial city." He wanted to replicate it in 1967 and 1968 after undertaking an initial survey in 1963 to expand his sample group, which ended up containing 1,217 people.

The participants came from a variety of professions: manual employees, household servants, shopkeepers, assistants, instructors, nurses, surgeons, musicians, office workers, administrators, and even business leaders. A set of more than 40 questions to answer was given to any participant.

Any of the questions had to do with their class backgrounds: themselves, their relatives, and their paternal grandfathers' professions, income levels, and levels of education. Bourdieu was able to quantify both the amount and distribution of wealth for her and her relatives by using income and education levels as indices of economic and cultural capital. This in turn helped him to calculate their social trajectory since he was able to equate the capital in which the participants were born with the capital they presently own. A lack of capital would imply, for instance, a declining social trajectory.

The other questions were about the preferences of the participants, calculated by the goods they possessed, the items they desired, the behaviors they enjoyed, and the views they shared. Bourdieu's interviewers asked questions like: What kinds of decor, songs, movies, radio shows, and activities did participants like? What have they been saying about contemporary art?

On top of that, the interviewers were instructed to make remarks on the clothes, hairstyles, home furnishings, speech patterns, and other characteristics of the participants.

Outcome? A reasonably detailed image of a wide cross-section of French society's tastes and class histories. And it revealed that Bourdieu was correct: in the way he expected, people's preferences and class roles seemed to the group. Those on his X-Y graph in identical places appeared to have equivalent taste sets, as long as they had similar social trajectories.

## Chapter 12 - The preferences of individuals originate from and represent the material circumstances of their places in the class.

So which tastes relate to the positions in which class? In excruciating detail, significant sections of *Distinction* provide the answer to this question.

But unless you're very involved in French culture in the 1960s, the particulars in and of themselves aren't that important, so we're going to skip through most of them and start wrapping it up on a more broad scale.

We're going to answer a potentially more relevant issue rather than digging at the ins and outs of how certain preferences relate to certain class positions: why do they relate in the first place?

For any variety of references from any number of places in which individuals have preferences, we might disassemble this idea: clothes, home furnishings, tv programs, personality characteristics, and just about everything else. But let's start with the region where we have taste in the most literal way to keep it nice and concise: food.

There are some simple explanations of why the dietary habits of individuals derive from and represent the material circumstances of their class positions. You can only buy cheap meals if

you are poor. You should spend the cash on fine dining if you are wealthy. But besides capital, there are other, less-obvious variables.

For starters, working-class men tended to put a high emphasis on possessing physical strength and a muscular body in France in the 1960s. In turn, this mirrored the fact that many of them engaged in manual labor that demanded muscle strength. Now it would be hard for you to bulk up on petite haute cuisine plates. If you are a working-class citizen, the cheaper, the better, you will want a filling, nutritious meal.

So behind your working-class diet, there will be certain material requirements. Such situations cause you to grow a willingness for a certain form of food. And for other fields of taste, the same goes. For instance, with clothes, you would be drawn towards cheap, durable clothes that you could afford with your modest salary, but that could survive the wear and tear of manual work as well - two essential factors for a working person.

Note how all of these instances of taste in the working class originate from common material circumstances and represent them: low wages and manual labor. This takes one to a more general argument: individual preferences for diverse items such as food and clothes, do not merely scatter by chance in the same class position. There are material background circumstances that bind them together.

## Chapter 13 - The preferences of people are fundamentally ingrained in their habitus.

Let's sum up: the material circumstances of the lives of people cause them to establish such dispositions for items such as food and clothes. In essence, these provisions express themselves as tastes, for instance, desires for one food style over another.

Now, consider that you have brought all the arrangements of somebody to all the places of taste, not just food and clothes, but the decor, literature, art, paintings, activities, and so on. The outcome will be something called a habitus by Bourdieu - the last technical word that we will cover in these sections.

Your habitus is simply your general collection of arrangements for everything in life that you can do and purchase. Think of it as being behind all the "lifestyle" decisions as to the guiding light. To place this argument in the more scientific vocabulary used by Bourdieu: the habitus is the conceptual concept behind your lifestyle, the simple reasoning behind the way you live your life.

To unwrap this definition, let's stick to the food and clothing tastes of the French working class. If we look below the layer where we can see an inherent fixation on the utility of each object rather than esthetics. Instead of fancy meals and trendy dresses, the middle class needs filling food and durable clothes. They think more about the content of their food and clothes than the

shape, to translate this into metaphysical terms. For instance, in the context of food, they are more worried about a dish's nutritious quality than how it is prepared or served.

After all, you do not have any spare time or discretionary money to waste on food if you are a part of the working community, but you still need to draw a great deal of energy out of it. First and foremost, you need to worry about your life, getting as many calories out of your food as you can. You then ought to concentrate on the quality and usefulness of the food. You can't pay to put a fee on its more structured and aesthetic parts.

At the root of the lifestyle of the working class is this focus on usefulness and content over esthetics and shape. It's a vital part of how they visualize and view the world surrounding them, and in every aspect of life, including art and culture, it teaches their tastes. Instead of avant-garde filmmaking with non-linear plots and independent film methods, the working class, for instance, chooses simple easy-to-follow films with interesting characters and thrilling storylines. And why? Since, instead of its formal elements or artistic merit, they mainly think about the quality of a movie (its "substance") and entertainment value (its "utility").

## Chapter 14 - The wealthy elite's tastes give them the means to distinguish themselves off from other classes.

You'd have a fairly good definition of the habitus of the wealthy members of the cultural elite if you take what we just said about the middle class and put it in the opposite.

The longevity of these individuals is all but guaranteed because of their resources, because they have more than enough time and wealth to devote to the non-essential aspects of their food, clothes, and just about everything else. Then they can afford to neglect the essence and functionality of items and rely instead on their formal and esthetic aspects.

In doing so, they live as if they are "above" the working class's ordinary material world, swimming about in a rarer domain of "refined" taste, a realm where simple food is converted into a gourmet dining experience, simple clothes into an exquisite manifestation of one's personality, and so on. Although a little more boring is the facts.

In the form of "upper culture," the explanation for this becomes particularly obvious. For instance, you need to understand what separates it from other Impressionist paintings to be able to understand the formal, artistic aspects of a painting that make it a "good" instance of Impressionism. Also, you will need to be able to separate Impressionism from all the other art movements that accompanied, succeeded, and competed against it throughout its heyday.

And that means you ought to be well-versed in the history of art and various aesthetic philosophies. This, in essence, demands that as you reach adulthood, your family and the culture surrounding you spend a lot of time and energy in building your cultural capital. If you go

sufficiently far in the school system, you will understand some of these things. Others you can experience from more casual means, such as regular trips to the museum or finding artwork in the home of your relatives.

You would not even be able to recognize the qualities of a work of art that you are expected to have views on, such as the recognizable brushstrokes of an impressionist drawing, without all of this experience and cultural resources.

The elite are therefore not only able to differentiate between, say, a Monet and a Manet by possessing "refined" preferences for things such as art; they can differentiate themselves as the kind of people who can differentiate between certain kinds of things. Or in other terms, their preferences make it easier for them to identify themselves as elite participants.

Taste, thus, gives them a status marker, a means of assessing who belongs and who does not belong to the elite ranks.

## Chapter 15 - Taste gives a means for us to make class comparisons.

So these are the general strokes of the concept of the connection between taste and class by Bourdieu. From here as he delves further and further into the fine differences between the various preferences of different class communities within each of the major social divisions of France in the 1960s, the specifics become more complex.

We now have, though, enough of an outline of the philosophy of Bourdieu to be able to zoom out and look at the larger picture of what it teaches us.

Assume if you wake up one day and everybody in your culture begins approaching you as if you belonged to the upper class, to grasp this theory. It's as if everyone in the world is immediately able to say you "right this way, sir or ma'am." Whether you're seeking to enter a VIP lounge, attend a gala dinner packed with wealthy and popular people, or get a credit line for starting a new business idea.

Congratulations. You're a part of the upper class for all kinds of reasons now. And that's because the class is a social phenomenon that we create through our connections and experiences with each other. When other people see and perceive you as belonging to that class, you are a part of this or that class.

The presence of class requires separate actions of labeling, to translate this into fancier words. Others ought to identify them as belonging to certain social groups for one individual to belong to the working class and another individual to belong to the middle class. But how can these categories be made? Well, there must be qualifications for each class to belong to. In some

cases, lower-class persons need to look and behave, and others need to be able to distinguish their looks and attitudes as being middle class.

Our sense of taste makes it possible for any of those things to occur. The middle-class preferences of an individual, on the one side, causing him to look and behave like a middle-class guy, sporting middle-class clothes, consuming middle-class food, enjoying middle-class activities, and so on. On the other end, the preferences of other people cause them to accept these lifestyle decisions as those of a middle-class person. For instance, upper-class representatives will see the fashion preferences of the middle-class citizen and say at a glimpse that he is not one of them because his style does not adhere to their own.

Therefore in terms of class, the taste is what helps one to differentiate both ourselves and other persons. The taste is a question of distinction, to wrap it all up with a single word.

## Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste by Pierre Bourdieu Book Review

The preferences of people are eventually embedded in the material circumstances of their lives. They originate from the class roles of people in society, represent, and define them. The amount of capital, the distribution of capital, and the social trajectory shape these roles, which shape the three dimensions of the social space from which the class system of society can be interpreted. By calculating their changing quantities of economic and cultural resources, we can define people's place in this space. Within the three-dimensional space, various sets of tastes refer to different places. These preferences supply the cultural elite with exclusive means of showing their elite status, both to each other and to those with less cultural capital than themselves, so people require cultural capital to grow and practice "valid" tastes for items like art.

<https://goodbooksummary.com/distinction-by-pierre-bourdieu-book-summary-review/>