

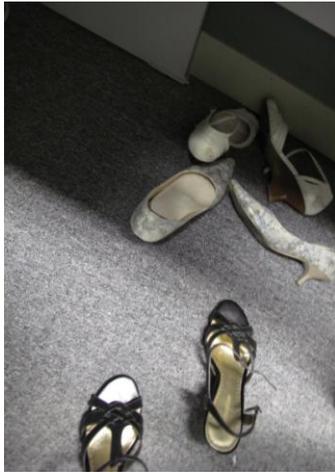
From Object to Cosmology: meaning and inference in everyday life

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This paper draws on two ideas which are brought into conjunction in the construction of the argument. First, the paper examines Bourdieu's notion of apparently self-evident order and secondly de Certeau's views of the practices which seek to obstruct, oppose and resist such an imposition. It is Bourdieu (2010a: 164) in his well known observation, who points out that social order tends to produce "the naturalisation of its own arbitrariness" and speaks of "systems of classification which reproduce in their own specific logic, the objective classes... in the relations of production... [that in turn] make their specific contribution to the power relations of which they are a product" (Bourdieu, 2010a: 164). Yet as Bourdieu argues, such power relations produce a "*quasi perfect* [italics added] correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization [so that] the natural and social world appears self evident" (Bourdieu, 2010a: 164). Bourdieu has argued that "because the subjective necessity and self evidence of the common sense world are validated by the objective consensus on the sense of the world" (Bourdieu, 2010a: 167) there is no dissent because "the legitimacy of the dominant classification" (164) means that submission to that legitimacy operates even when it is contrary to an individual's interests. Indeed, such is the power of the *habitus*. It is the relentless of common sense which bears down on the individual such that they held in place by the overwhelming power of common-sense. Bourdieu expresses this in terms of "the structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of class conditions) [which] produce *habitus*, systems of durable transposable *dispositions* which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular" " (Bourdieu, 2010a: 72) apparently without visible direction, that is to say, by the very fact that these structures are taken-for-granted and sedimented by common-sense, tacitly reproducing structures and dispositions. De Certeau, on the other hand, talks about the tactics of the everyday, the often miniscule movements which, often clandestine in nature, disperse and defy such orderly structures (de Certeau, 1984: xiv). This has much in common with Goffman's (1968) notion of "secondary adjustment" and with Canetti's work on "the sting" (Canetti, 1960; Cooper, 1990; Linstead and Chan, 1994) and these ideas will be examined as further explanatory contributions to the reversal of power which is at work in the examples provided (*see* Fleming and Sewell, 2002; Fleming and Spicer, 2007, 2008).

The intention here is to throw light on the lived experiences which accompany such analysis and specifically to do this via the meanings which attach to objects which are frequently used as a proxy to stand in opposition to the structures of order in which they are located. A simple illustration of this is to be found in the photograph [below] which shows the shoes which belong to the person to whom the desk belongs.



The point is that the shoes in the photograph are high-heeled and, *per se*, they represent a specific pattern of work and social expectations. They are under the desk ready to be worn to enter an explicit site of performance and, as the photograph shows, discarded when that performance ends. The paper examines a series of such examples of objects and their meanings and context, and considers their significance in resistance to the strictures of sedimented common-sense.

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