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Violence as Capital: an Analytical Brief

Abstract

I develop the notion of capital of violence, arguing that targeted physical force is the fifth, "forgotten capital" in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the four species of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic). Violence is a form of capital because it allows its perpetrators to capture streams of material and symbolic profit and because it is a constituent of social life irreducible to the other four species. It exists under three guises, embodied (aggressiveness, physical force), objectified (e.g., weapons, barracks) and institutionalized (gangs, militias, the police, the army, etc.). It can be accumulated, delegated and converted into other species of capital. Placed in the broader portfolio of efficient resources, it shapes social structure, strategy and experience. It also has three unique properties: it is most efficient when it is held in reserve, threatened but not enacted; it has the capacity to destroy other forms of capital; and it sits at the basis of economic capital. The capital of violence finds its subjective counterpart in the brutalized and brutalizing habitus with cognitive, emotive and conative components that incline one to deploy and withstand physical force. The violent habitus can be learned through osmosis in a violent milieu or through didactic teaching and intensive practice. I illustrate these propositions by examining the so-called Jewish "ghetto" of the occupied territories of Eastern Europe under Nazi rule as a closed ecology of domination in which violent capital accumulated and violent habituses thrived, resulting in the suffusive infliction of reticular and terroristic force. I close by drawing out the implications of this conceptual move for the study of violence and for Bourdieu's theory of practice and power.

Keywords: Violence; Coercion; Capital; Habitus; Pierre Bourdieu; "Ghettos" of the Holocaust.

> Violence is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power.
> Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, volume 1 (1867)

How best to characterize the distinctive structure and texture of the forced microcosm of the Nazi "ghetto" of World War II into which Jews were corralled in occupied Eastern Europe with a view toward

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expelling them collectively from the German *Lebensraum*, before they became conduits for the policy of categorical extermination? Several properties spring forth from converging historiographical and documentary accounts:[1] it is a physically and cognitively closed universe as well as a toxic physical environment; it rests on a rigid, salient and impassable boundary between captives and guards, Jews and "Aryans," inside and outside; it is ravaged by mass hunger and contagious disease such that it foregrounds the urgency of biophysical reproduction; it is saturated with rumors, enforced waiting and the vanishing of futurity; it erodes or denies its residents privacy, dignity and baseline humanity; and it is suffused by violences, plural—both vertical (from Germans to Jews) and horizontal (between Jews). Let me focus on that last trait by developing the concepts of *violent capital and violent habitus as an extension of Bourdieu's theory of practice*, because they help us grasp the specificities of multilayered force and its consequences in the Nazi "pen" and beyond, as well as amend the core of that theory.

I peg my analytic brief on these wartime urban enclosures—the so-called "ghetto" of Warsaw is the most recognized but, by conventional counts, the Germans erected nearly a thousand of them between 1940 and 1944, large and small, closed or open, fleeting or durable [Megargee and Dean 2012]—because they are the empirical puzzle that initially convinced me of the need to develop the concept of violence as capital. Try as I may, I could not account for their genesis, structure and phenomenology by means of the quartet of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital canonized by Pierre Bourdieu [1986]. This methodological move is moreover fruitful because extreme or deviant cases amplify processes and make underlying mechanisms visible, thus facilitating the critique of accepted categories and novel theory-building [Ermakoff 2014; Flyvbjerg 2006]. Put differently: dissecting the paroxystic accumulation of violence as both capital and habitus (itself an embodied form of capital) in territories of Jewish seclusion under Nazi rule can serve to illumine its ordinary manifestations, from school bullying, domestic violence and road rage to street crime, police repression and colonial pacification.

[1] To focus on Lodz, Poland's second largest and most lasting "ghetto" (1940–1944), see Trunk (1962) 2006; Dobroszycki 1984; Adelson and Lapides 1989; Unger 1999; Rosenfeld 2002; Corni 2003; Horwitz 2008; Sierakowiak 1996 and Bethke (2015) 2021. This article builds on my book *Revisiting Hitler's "Ghettos": A Study in Race, Space and Violence* [2027a], which supplies a full picture of the social structure, everyday experience and political regime of the so-called "ghettos of the Holocaust" which, I show, were not ghettos (except in a folk sense) but hybrid formations variably mixing the properties of the reservation, the camp and the prison at the intersection of race and space.

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The "ghettos" of the Holocaust as sites of accumulation of the capital of violence

Before they hatched and executed the Final Solution, the Nazis forcibly corralled and concentrated the millions of Jews of occupied Eastern and Central Europe into urban enclosures that were then and since labelled "ghettos." In *Revisiting Hitler's "Ghettos": A Study in Race, Space and Violence*, I challenge this entrenched convention of history and memory [Wacquant 2027a]. I first retrace in bold strokes the German policy of aggressive land capture and mass population redistribution deployed in response to the "call of the East" designed to give the "Aryan race" the "life-space" it felt it needed and deserved and, most critically, to cleanse that space of what the Nazis saw as the perfidious and infectious presence of Jews [Chapoutot 2014; Ingrao 2016].

Next, I show that the so-called "ghettos of the Holocaust" were not ghettos, *contra* the established historiography of that period [Friedman 1954 and 1980; Adler (1955) 2017; Hilberg 1961 and 1980; Corni 2003; Browning 2004; Cole 2004 and 2013; Horwitz 2008; Stone 2010; Michman 2011; Goldman and Trotter 2017; Hájková 2020; Einwohner 2022; Nowak 2023], but dynamic *institutional hybrids* combining structural components, functional imperatives and experiential features of the reservation, the camp (concentration, labor and transit) and the prison—three fundamental forms of seclusion that secure domination through forcible confinement [Wacquant 2027b: chapter 8]. This difference matters because it explains how and why these enclosures came to operate as sources and sites for the freewheeling accumulation, amplification and diffusion of ethnoracial violence in all of its modalities.

As materialized in its most accomplished instance by the penning of Lodz in Poland [Horwitz 2008], on which I will focus in this article, the Jewish enclosure of the German-occupied city mobilizes space as a medium and target of subjugation. It does not offer a shield and a refuge against oppression, albeit under duress, as the full-fledged ghetto does (1). It is submitted to the capricious authority of a violent sovereign governing through indirect rule, as it delegates the day-to-day management of the enclave to a Jewish council and a Jewish police force tasked with executing German directives on the ground. Instead of providing succor and honor, the enclosure acts as an engine of orchestrated human degradation and organized suffering on a scale unprecedented on the European continent turned into a playground for the colonial folly of the Nazis.

Confining Jews in hellish enclosures that subjected them to physical squalor, extreme overcrowding, grinding hunger, rampant epidemics, forced labor, suffusive terror and periodic deportation shattered the horizontal axis of ethnic solidarity, reciprocity and dignity that undergirds a ghetto in its classical form. It left them stripped of protection along the vertical axis of subordination, rejection and exploitation, exposed to the accelerating *buildup of violent capital and the unfurling of the violent habitus* of their German overlords. Extreme verticality derailed and destroyed brittle horizontality, hence the need for drenching violence to keep the

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institution going until its brutal liquidation. The failure of "ghettoization" as a colonial-carceral project, in turn, combined with a total war gone awry to hasten the formulation and implementation of the policy of systematic extermination (2). The whirling fantasy of seclusion aiming at wholesale expulsion precipitated the turn to the macabre reality of genocide.

The radical historical experiment that is the making of Nazi "security, territory and population" in Poland and its neighbors—to borrow a problematic triad from Michel Foucault [2004]—poses a stiff challenge to the social science of race, space and violence (3). But it also offers a strategic opportunity to specify the dimensions and grasp the mechanisms of the production, accretion and distribution of material and symbolic coercion.

1.-The classical ghetto, such as the *ghetto nuovo* of Venice in Renaissance Italy and the Bronzeville of Chicago in the Fordist United States, is a *Janus-faced institution*: cage and cocoon, sword and shield, at once an instrument of domination and denigration, in the vertical order, and a platform for mutuality and recognition, in the horizontal dimension [Wacquant 2027b].

2.-Had the Germans actually ghettoized Eastern Jews in the full sociological sense of the term, they would have granted them the institutional autonomy necessary to amass the social and cultural capital needed to challenge their seclusion as well as collectively resist—and possibly derail—the drive toward elimination.

3.-On the reasons for the missed rendezvous between social science and the Holocaust, see the stimulating volume edited by Jeffrey Kopstein, Jelena Subotic and Susan Welch, *Politics, Violence, Memory: The New Social Science of the Holocaust* [2023].

Bourdieu's Fifth, Neglected Capital

In the coerced and coercive social space of the Jewish enclosure under German tutelage, the four fundamental species of capital catalogued by Bourdieu accrue and circulate as they would in other contexts.[2] But their accumulation, investment and conversion are inflected, subordinated, amplified, truncated and often even outright suppressed by a fifth form of capital neglected by the French sociologist: *material violence*. I say "neglected" and not "ignored" because Bourdieu does mention it in his account of the historical formation of the state, where we read:

[2] On the definition and properties of these four species of capital, or efficient resources in social games, read the classic article by Bourdieu [1986] on "The Forms of Capital" and its later reworking as an essential plank of the general theory of fields in *Microcosmes* [BOURDIEU 2022], which contains subtle inflexions and elaborations.

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> The state is the result of a process of concentration of different species of capital, *capital of physical force or instruments of coercion (army, police)*, economic capital, cultural or, better, informational capital, symbolic capital, a concentration which is such that it constitutes the state as the holder of a sort of meta-capital granting power over the other forms of capital and over their holders. [Bourdieu 1993a: 109, my italics]

Nowhere does Bourdieu develop this proposition to analyze material violence specifically in its interpersonal, group and state incarnations, even though it is the silent counterpart to his epicentral notion of "symbolic violence."[3] We need only unpack his generic concept of capital, however, to develop the construct of *capital of violence* or capital of physical coercion as the dominant species of capital in the Jewish enclosures of the Holocaust—and beyond.

In the theoretical elaborations of his lecture course at the Collège de France *On the State*, Bourdieu [2012] concentrates exclusively on "the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence" and leaves material violence undiscussed, except to report on its central place in the conception of the Leviathan of Norbert Elias and Charles Tilly. He also briefly speaks to the "cycles of violence" in pre-capitalist or stateless societies, but even then the focus is on symbolic capital.

Similarly, in his lecture course on "General Sociology," Bourdieu does not address physical violence other than to note *in transitu* its place in masculine working-class culture [2015: 321]; the deflation of "physical and direct violence" in history, which he contrasts with the inflation of the "inert violence" of "abstract, anonymous, neutral mechanisms" such as the market, the legal system or the school system [2016: 212-213], which he christens "institutional violence" [2016: 221]; the paradox of the conjoint high incidence and strong euphemization of force in pre-capitalist societies [2016: 220]; the sublimation of physical violence into codes of politesse and civility [2016: 222–223]; and the "pure violence, without finality," other than affirming an identity, during the virulent affrays between football fans [2016: 767–768].

In *Méditations pascaliennes*, Bourdieu [1997: 275–276] postulates a "law of the conservation of violence" according to which persons subjected to abusive physical force will be prone to wield it themselves. But it is not clear whether that law applies only to the "intentional violence" of brutal individuals or also to the circulus it forms with the "inert violence"

[3] For a brief discussion of the interplay between material and symbolic violence, see BOURDIEU 2012: 14–15, 204, 220. Let me stress from the outset that Bourdieu provides all the tools needed to repatriate the capital of material violence into his model, without importing external theory, as I will endeavor to demonstrate.

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of ordinary institutions. Finally, in *La Domination masculine* [Bourdieu 1998], the French sociologist centers his analysis on his theoretical *forte*, namely, the symbolic dimension of domination, giving short shrift to its material counterpart in the form of intimate partner surveillance, coercion and abuse flowing from patriarchy, much to the chagrin of his feminist readers [Adkins and Skeggs 2004].[4]

One has to go all the way back to Bourdieu's early fieldwork as an anthropologist in colonial Algeria to find a treatment of military force in the "regroupment camps," in which over 2 million Algerians were corralled and interned, and which were rolled out by France in its futile effort to stem the independentist tide [Bourdieu and Sayad 1964]. But this treatment is surprisingly thin and sanitized in light of the veritable orgy of official violence unleashed by the French army and settlers—including systematic torture, summary executions, forced disappearances, collective reprisals and the targeted destruction of villages. Similarly, his dissection of the colonial society and the revolutionary war in his youthful essays such as the "The Clash of Civilizations," "War and Social Mutation in Algeria" and "From Revolutionary War to Revolution" [reprinted in Bourdieu 2008] does foreground force as an agent of cataclysmic transformation and social wreckage, but without thematizing it as such.

Physical violence is an *empirical fact* and not a *theoretical category*, which is not surprising since the young Bourdieu had yet to introduce the concepts of capital and symbolic violence, first broached in 1964 and 1970, respectively. The French sociologist is interested in its *sublimation, not its operation*—no doubt because the latter seemed to him transparent, if not self-evident, whereas symbolic violence is secret, surreptitious and elusive, constantly changing face as it travels across circumstances and institutions. But it is analytically easy to extend Bourdieu's framework to encompass the capital of coercion as it fits right in with his embrace of "generalized materialism" [Bourdieu 1972].

Now, I am on record criticizing scholars who have played the game of the christic "multiplication of capitals" (street, sexual, spatial, racial, etc.), so I make this addition cautiously as a conceptual move needed to explicate the functioning of a universe saturated with violences, the Nazi racial enclosure, which one cannot account for with Bourdieu's four core species. My purpose differs from the usual "additive" strategy: it is to

[4] An approach that "twists the stick" in the other direction, giving full priority to the corporal nature of masculine violence, is Elsa Dorlin's *Se défendre: Une philosophie de la violence* [2017], which focuses on wounded bodies and the unequal social distribution of the right to protection and self-defense. I would argue that, far from being antithetical, Bourdieu's and Dorlin's perspective are convergent and complementary.

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rework the foundational quartet into a quintet and not simply add another local category by derivation. Ultimately, the concept of capital of violence must prove its worth in the production of new objects and not as a matter of analytical symmetry or rhetorical elegance on paper.

To anticipate: I propose that physical coercion is not just irreducible; it is the *foundational form of capital* from which other forms of capital, including economic capital, derive. Every social agent detains a minimal capacity to wield it (if only against themselves, as with self-mutilation and suicide):[5] a shove or a slap in the face is to physical violence what the everyday insult is to symbolic violence, its lowest-order manifestation [Bourdieu 2015: 26–29]. But, when it is concentrated, it has the capacity to annihilate the other forms of capital by asserting the primacy of force in the social world when the full chain of causality runs its course.

In differentiated and stratified societies, the state is the agency that most distinctly concentrates manifold instruments of coercion, indeed claims to monopolize their legitimate use. Diverging from the neo-Weberian lineage running through Norbert Elias, Charles Tilly and Bourdieu himself, I wish to stress that this monopoly is vigorously *contested and routinely breached* by social agents who take violent matters into their own hands—from teenage brawls in schoolyards to inmate clashes in prison yards, from conjugal abuse to strategic criminal use, from urban riots to religious pogroms. Not only do violent actors proliferate in social space in spite of the state's claim; they also often refuse to grant legitimacy to the official deployment of coercion. This is attested by wide mobilization against "police brutality," "police abuse" or "police violence"—the label itself is contested—and by the differential inclination of different state elites to allow for or repress the politicization of such routine practices as police stops for identity checks, which commonly lead to street fracas [Maillard, Verfaillie and Rowe 2024].

Material Violence as Foundational Capital

In keeping with the historicist-analytical approach I advocate [Wacquant 2026], I define violence as the *intentional threat or actual use of force* against an individual, social category, population or institution to inflict bodily, material or psychic harm. Bodily harm comprises brutality, injury and

[5] A jail detainee in an isolation cell provides an *experimentum crucis*: he is radically denuded, stripped of all forms of capital; he has only his body left. So he retains the capacity to assault another inmate or a guard, to hurt himself and even to take his own life [WALKER 2022].

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death; material harm encompasses the denial, confiscation and destruction of property; psychic harm includes damage to mental and emotional integrity.[6] These three elements are often mixed, as with incarceration, a legitimate form of violence delivered by the state, which translates into the deprivation of liberty, autonomy, safety, access to material goods and to heterosexual relations–the five "pains of imprisonment" catalogued by Gresham Sykes in his classic *The Society of Captives* [1957]. This leads me to make seven points about material violence or coercion as capital that suggest new pathways to theorize the means and modalities of domination as well as to renew and refine Bourdieu's analytical framework.

1. Physical force is a capital because, like the other species, it enables its holders to "appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor" and to *capture streams of material and symbolic profit* circulating in the pertinent social space [Bourdieu 2022: 613]. A crude illustration is the violence deployed to compel a slave to work; a second is sexual assault or domestic brutality in its various guises; a third is a column of tanks crashing its way through the defense line of a rival army on the battlefield. In all three of these situations, the agent of force seeks—and often gains—the value sought, labor power, sexual gratification or a military advantage. In the absence of coercion, the action would not take the same course and its outcome would be changed. In these illustrations, violence is a *vis activa* irreducible to the other four species of capital. Thus the Nazi enclosures of occupied Eastern Europe simply would not have existed if not for the multiform violences inflicted upon Jews by military, police and civilian agents. Jews were ordered to migrate into their officially designed "ghettos" under threat of immediate deportation or death, and the population transfer typically involved intimidation, confiscation, deportation, beatings and killings by the German police [Cole 2004; Trunk (1962) 2006; Crago 2012].

2. Like cultural capital, the capital of violence exists in *three forms*:[7] *embodied*, as the capacity of an individual, solo or in a group, to deliver or

[6] For a discussion of the difficulty of defining violence and the implications of different definitions, see Dwyer 2022: 2–5. A stimulating program to study "forms of violence" without narrowly defining the latter is Fassin's *Leçons de ténèbres* [2025]. Fassin insists that "it is often more interesting and especially useful to problematize a notion or a concept than to define them—in other words to open up questions rather than to close off a convention" [90]. My position is that it is more risky to not define a concept than to define it, even broadly. Accordingly, I will use physical force and coercion as approximate synonyms for violence, even though not all coercion is violent and not all force is coercive.

[7] Does this mean that the capital of violence is reducible to a subspecies of cultural capital? I contend not, because it has specific properties—including the capacity to degrade and destroy—that other forms of capital do not have. A dare and a test case for the unconvinced reader: account for the death camps of the Nazis during World War II strictly in terms of cultural capital.

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withstand physical force—crucial to strategies of self-protection, material appropriation and honor on the streets of neighborhoods of relegation in advanced society [Bourgois (1995) 2003; Anderson 2000; Sauvadet 2006; Sandberg 2008], for instance, but also at work in the clashes between ethnoracial groups as with riots, pogroms and ethnic cleansing [Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Gerlach 2010; Kopstein and Wittenberg 2018]; *objectified* in the form of equipment and weaponry, offensive (knives, guns, drones, bombs and tanks, etc.), defensive (shields, barbed wire, bunkers, berms, anti-aircraft systems, etc.) and communicative (tattoos, uniforms, insignias, medals, manuals of military strategy), deployed in everyday life or on the battlefield, as illustrated by the militarization of the police across advanced societies [Graham 2010]; and *institutionalized*, in such enduring organizations as gangs, mafias, militias, the police, the prison and the military, which can all deliver diffuse or targeted force and endure the same [Sánchez-Jankowski 1991; Gambetta 1993; Weinstein 2007; Fassin 2011; Bourke 2015]. In this regard, Nazism may be construed as an exceptional accumulation and virulent deployment of the capital of violence in all three of its forms, trained on territorial expansion and racialized population control—hyperviolence in all of its incarnations [Wacquant 2027a].

3. Like the other species of capital, physical violence is *convertible*: a violent actor can generate flows of income and seize material goods (economic capital), acquire artifacts of human skills (cultural capital), press his way into resourceful networks and organizations (social capital) and garner prestige, inspire fear and radiate menace (symbolic capital). The Nazis were particularly adept at the conversion of violent capital into the symbolic capital of intimidation: to this day, the mere mention of the name Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*), the secret police that led the way in brutally enforcing racial policy in both the Reich and its captured territories, strikes terror into the hearts of people all across Europe [Dams and Stolle (2008) 2014].

4. The capital of violence enters into the variegated portfolio of capitals possessed by a given individual or group, determining their position in social space and thence their social *strategies and trajectories*, noting that, like all capital, it has "a tendency to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form" [Bourdieu 1986: 246]. Better yet, violence multiplies the value and amplifies the scope of the other forms of capital by expanding the perimeter of their activation. For instance, violence was deployed to impose forced labor upon Jews, both to increase the economic productivity of that labor and to dramatize ethnic humiliation [Gruner 2006; Aly 2007; Browning 2010]. Relatedly, the capital of violence has the capacity to

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diminish and even obliterate other forms of capital, as when, inside Germany, the Nazis confiscated the property of Jews or excluded them from certain occupations, even though they had the skills and credentials to pursue them, or degraded them publicly to strip them of honor as part of their policy of ethnic persecution [Friedländer 1997].

5. Like social capital, the capital of violence can be *concentrated and delegated*. Bourdieu [2022: 627] writes: "Every group assumes more or less institutionalized forms of *delegation* that allow the concentration, in the hands of a singular agent or a small group of agents, of the totality of the social capital which founds the existence of the group (family, nation but also association or party)." Mandating a "plenipotentiary" to "*represent* the group, to act and speak *in its name*" applies not just to the symbolic register but to the material register: the deployment of the capital of coercion is commonly entrusted with a specialist, lay or professional, the canonical case being the police officer who arrests, searches, books or shoots at a suspect. In World War II, the Nazi managers of the Jewish enclosures of Eastern Europe dispatched the *Schutzpo* (protection police) to patrol the perimeter of the "ghetto," the *Kripo* (criminal police) in response to ordinary crimes against Germans inside the enclosure and the *Gestapo* (secret police) to detect and repress underground political activity, leaving crimes among Jews to the internal Jewish police and its dedicated courts [Bethke (2015) 2021].

6. Coercive power is peculiar, even paradoxical, in that it is most efficient when it is held in reserve, *threatened but not enacted*: intimidation as the projection of latent violence is a strategy superior to its direct exercise because it economizes on material resources and social energy.[8] An individual (in a couple, for instance), a group (jockeying for ethnic position) or a state can influence the conduct of its targets by signaling that it is prepared to activate force without having to do so.[9] The Nazi authorities could get the Jewish councils of the enclosures to take charge of selecting, rounding up and delivering a subset of its population for deportation to death camps, thus dramatically lowering the cost of staging transports in terms of personnel, resources and time, by threatening to deport a larger quota or even to annihilate the whole population via the liquidation of the "ghetto" [Corni 2003; Horwitz 2008]. Intimidation played a pivotal and pervasive role in

[8] For an ethnographic illustration, see the account of Israeli control of Palestinians in "mixed cities" in Silvia Pasquetti's *Refugees Together and Citizens Apart: Control, Emotions, and Politics at the Palestinian Margins* [2026].

[9] There is a large body of interdisciplinary work on deterrence inspired by the landmark books of Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* [1960], and *Arms and Influence* [1966]. For a panorama of research on deterrence of criminal conduct, see Nagin 2013 and Chalfin and McCrary 2017.

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the day-to-day management of the enclosures of the Holocaust by shaping ordinary conduct, thwarting deviation and deterring challenges [Trunk (1962) 2006].[10] The threat of worse coercion makes a coercive move more efficient. But the longer the violent agency goes on without acting on its threat to prove its force, the less efficient its intimidation. There is thus a *distinctive economy of violent goods* stretched out over time, much as there is a distinctive "economy of symbolic goods" with multiple temporalities, according to Bourdieu's [1993b] dissection of fields of cultural production.

7. Last but not least, inserting the capital of violence into Bourdieu's theoretical schema revives and reformulates the question of the *causal priority and primacy* of this or that species of capital. Consistent with his doubly materialist ontology, Bourdieu [2022: 629, my italics] proposes that "economic capital is *at the basis of all the other forms* of capital" and that "these transformed and disguised forms of economic capital [i.e., cultural, social and symbolic] produce their specific effects" only insofar as "they dissimulate (first of all to their holders) the fact that economic capital is at their basis."[11] One must ask, then: *is the capital of violence, in turn, not at the basis of economic capital*, since property rights and market relations are enforced by the law or regulated by conventions which, "in the final analysis" (an expression Bourdieu himself uses), rest on violence (legitimate or not, an issue we shall table for now)?

This is certainly the view of Karl Marx who, in part VIII of *Das Kapital*, argues that capitalism arises from violent expropriation: the forcible separation of producers from the means of production through enclosure, colonial conquest, slavery and other forms of state-backed dispossession. His most pertinent formulation figures in his discussion of the "primitive accumulation" of capital:

> These methods [of primitive accumulation] depend in part on brute force, for instance the colonial system. But they all employ the power of the state, the concentrated and organized force of society, to hasten, as in a hothouse, the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition. Force [*Gewalt*] is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power [Marx (1867) 1976: 915–916].[12]

[10] This is reminiscent of the US South during the era of Jim Crow: the individual behavior and collective action of African Americans were decisively shaped by the omnipresent threat of "white death" if they deviated from the local racial etiquette or otherwise chafed at their inferior standing [WACQUANT 2024a].

[11] Note that, in *Méditations pascaliennes* [1997], Bourdieu takes an agent-centered perspective and proposes that the quest for symbolic capital as recognition by the other is the driver of the human condition, and thus the primary mover of action.

[12] This is the Penguin/*New Left Review* translation by Ben Fowkes. Note that, like Weber, Marx uses the word *Gewalt*, which some other translators render as "violence" (see note 14 *infra*).

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There is no shortage of archeologists and historical anthropologists, from Carneiro [1970] to Earle [1997] to Flannery and Marcus [2012], who argue that early economic accumulation at the dawn of civilization was carried out by political operators ruling through warfare and coercion.[13] The accumulation of capital in the cities of early modern Europe was likewise entwined with war-making and state-building [Tilly 1990]. As for contemporary society, the example of eviction suffices to remind us that brute force is central to shaping market relations—here the functioning of the lowest tier of the housing market, an essential good by any definition [Desmond 2016; François 2023].

Applying Bourdieu's formulation cited above to deepen and extend the theoretical line he traces, I propose that violence as the capital of physical force is "at the basis" of economic capital and that the latter can exercise its specific effects only insofar as "it dissimulates (first of all to their holders) the fact that the capital of violence is at its basis." In other words, violence is the only truly naked form of capital, whereas economic capital itself, even in its crudest manifestations, is already a transformed, misrecognized form of power.

Violence Accumulated, Delegated and Racialized

In Western history, after the age of absolutism, the bureaucratic state gradually "monopolizes the legitimate use of violence"—to recall Max Weber's classic definition of the Leviathan.[14] It protects the population from the threat of force and abuse by pacifying social space as part of what Norbert Elias [(1939) 2000] calls the "civilizing process." This allows for the extension of social networks, the flourishing of formal organizations and the development of courteous sensibilities based on the taming of affect, the privatization of bodily functions and the internalization of social constraint. Intolerance of violence rises and stamps social structure, experience and personality alike. In differentiated societies, the use of the capital of coercion is normally tightly constrained and regulated: its

[13] But see the landmark account of *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* by David Graeber and David Wengrow [2021], in which the control of information (cultural capital) and competitive or charismatic politics (symbolic capital) combine with the control of violence to determine the course of early human history.

[14] Weber uses the term *Gewalt* (*physischer Gewaltsamkeit*, meaning "physical coerciveness"), which covers a broad semantic space comprising violence, force, authority to compel and the power to command. In German, Bourdieu's *violence symbolique* is rendered with this broad semantic halo as *symbolische Gewalt*.

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deployment is channeled by norms, laws and the supervision of the state as the "central bank of violent capital" (borrowing Bourdieu's evocative characterization of symbolic capital) validating or sanctioning the use of coercion at all scales, from interpersonal relations to group encounters to state action. In a world-historical perspective, Westerners live in societies in which, thanks to the legal-rational state—to invoke Weber again—violence has been drastically deflated, domesticated and sequestered [Muchembled 2008].[15]

Not so under Nazi rule, where the state is a direct source of *both diffuse and targeted ethnoracial violence* of staggering breadth and intensity. Indeed, Elias [(1989) 1996] has argued that Nazism may be viewed as the spawn of a "decivilizing spurt" (*Entzivilisierungsschub*) within the civilizing process, marked by the erosion of restraints on violence, the activation of ethnic *ressentiment* and the legitimation of brutality and cruelty. The violence of the German Leviathan leading to and during World War II is delivered by its official agents as well as by ordinary people and groups operating *by delegation*—explicit in the case of the internal Jewish police charged with order maintenance inside the enclosures, tacit in the case of local auxiliaries and civilians, such as the Polish citizens who took it upon themselves to chase, brutalize, capture and kill Jews trying to escape the enclosures [Grabowski 2013; Gross 2022].[16] Such informal deputization of a multiplicity of operators violates the principle according to which "physical violence can no longer be applied but by a specialized grouping, especially mandated for this purpose" [Bourdieu 1993b: 109]. Another way to put it: inside the "ghettos" of the Holocaust, the capital of violence accumulates on a colossal scale and circulates at an accelerated speed; its activation reaches every last corner of the social structure, floods every crevice of physical space and seeps deep into subjectivity, both Jewish and German.[17]

[15] This helps explain why the social sciences, born in the tow of the civilizing process, have largely neglected violence as a theoretical object [Fassin 2025, chapter 1, "Épistémologie d'une ignorance"].

[16] This was not unique to Poland: in Eastern Europe, the local population collaborated with the Nazis in "hunting" Jews in Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Romania. Inside the old Reich, ordinary German citizens participated actively in the coercive policing of Jews by surveilling and reporting them to the authorities for a whole range of violations of rules of racialized control [Gellately 1990]. A culture of denunciation thrived and increased the scope and intensity of state violence.

[17] In his "everyday history" of ordinary German occupiers in Warsaw and Minsk, Lehnstaedt [2016] shows that violence was embedded deep in the routines not just of Nazi officials, police, SS personnel and soldiers, but also of low-level bureaucrats, railway workers, technicians, teachers and their families, united by the shared belief in belonging to a "master race" (*Herrenvolk*).

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Nazi violence in the urban enclosure is at once instrumental, expressive and consumptive. *Instrumental*: it is deployed as a means to an end, to impose caste subordination, enforce labor exploitation and compel institutional exclusion, the three faces of domination [Wacquant 2024b: 26–27]. Its most decisive and dramatic day-to-day manifestation is the police patrolling of the enclosure's perimeter: attempts to come close to or cross the fence are met with lethal force [Bethke (2015) 2021]. *Expressive*: violence is mobilized to send messages to the Jewish captives and to signify their inferior status and utter rightlessness—they have no prerogatives and their lives are worthless. Indeed, some of this violence, such as the staging of mock executions or forcing Jews to dance, kneel or crawl on the street or to run a gauntlet, not to mention sexual violence (long censored in the memorial and historical literature), has no other purpose but to terrorize and humiliate.[18] Nazi violence is also *consumptive*, that is, delivered for its own sake, in a sort of Nietzschean quest for the frenzied pleasure of punishing and hurting, as with the sadistic episodes of "violence for entertainment" in which some German officers indulged, randomly killing Jews for no particular reason and without concern for consequences.[19]

Why this orgy of brutality? I have shown elsewhere that, in situations of categorical rivalry in social and physical space, *race is an accelerant of violence*, especially when the boundary it draws is based on descent, and even more so, strict hypo-descent, which fuels feverish anxiety about blood purity [Wacquant 2024b: 144–153]. Now, blood purity was an individual and collective obsession in Nazi Germany because the frontier between Aryans and Jews was established genealogically and not culturally. It was legally codified and bureaucratically enforced, making it sharp, bright and rigid. You were defined as a Jew if you had one or more grandparents themselves classified as Jewish, regardless of your present faith and social ties. Blood was the foundation of "thinking and acting like a Nazi" [Chapoutot 2014].[20]

[18] The topic of sexual violence against Jewish women in Nazi captivity was long suppressed or submerged, even denied, until the panoramic collection edited by Hedgepeth and Saidel [2010] documenting rape, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, forced abortion and sterilization. See also Waxman (2017: chapter 1) and Hájková (2020).

[19] In *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers* [2000: 96], Christopher Browning recounts many such episodes including this one (albeit in a camp): a commandant "descended upon the terrified prisoners virtually every night and invariably left dead Jews in his wake. Many of his killings were theatrically staged for his greater personal amusement or even to entertain invited guests."

[20] After the Nuremberg laws, to prove their "Aryan blood," Germans were required to present records of their forebears' baptisms. This forced Christian churches to hire dedicated staff to respond to mass requests for such documentation [Bergen 2021: 179].

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Racial anxiety thus nourished the "confrontational tension and fear" that Randall Collins [2008] has shown sets in motion the micro-machinery of violence from below, which in this case was multiplied and amplified by the macro-machinery of violence from above built by a frenetic racial state intent on reorganizing a class society along caste lines in a matter of years [Burleigh and Wippermann 1991]. This led to a squaring of brutality, where abusive coercion feeds on itself in a spiraling movement that boosts both intensity and extensity. I call this distinctive pattern of built-in escalation fed by ethnoracial division the *violence of violence* [Wacquant 2024c], which was in full bloom in the Jewish enclosures of the Holocaust. It is nonetheless important to stress here that racial division does not by itself *mechanically* determine the tenor and intensity of violence. Rather, it has to be articulated and activated by symbolic entrepreneurs—who are not always successful—and harnessed to the capital of coercion accumulated by pertinent organizations, chief among them the state [Weitz 2003; Mann 2005; Straus 2006].[21]

The Leviathan is the key vector of this dynamic escalation up to the ultimate form of violence, namely genocide, best understood as a political project at the junction of state-making and race-making aiming to purify the national society [see Aly and Heim (1991) 2002; Browning 2004 and Cole 2004 on Nazi policy; see also Madley 2016 on Amerindians in California; Bloxham 2005 on Armenians in Turkey; Straus 2018 on a panorama of African cases; Kiernan 1996 on Cambodia and Naimark 2001 on Bosnia].[22]

Moreover, the state itself is not a just a space of forces, but also a space of struggles over the purpose, priorities and means of policy [Bourdieu 1993a], and the Nazi state was notoriously "polycratic" [Broszat (1969) 1981]. It comprised a plethora of agencies pursuing different agendas and each hoarding its own capital of violence and jealously commanding its delivery, including the Interior Ministry, the *Wehrmacht*, Reich Railways, the SS and local civil administrations. When it comes to the "ghettos" of occupied Europe, the pursuits of their German administrators vacillated between the two poles of attrition (Jews in their racial enclosure are a physical threat and a moral nuisance to be gradually

[21] Put differently, there is no one-to-one correspondence between what Brubaker *et al.* [2006] call "everyday ethnicity" and ethnicity as a precipitant of and guide for violent collective action.

[22] The classic study here remains Jacques Sémelin's *Purifier et détruire: Usages politiques des massacres et génocides* [2005]. Mamdani [2001] shows that the Rwandan genocide sits at the point of convergence of colonial race-making and postcolonial state-making. A germane theoretical elaboration for Western Europe is Mann [2005], who proposes that genocide is the means by which a unified polity (*demos*) fabricates a culturally unified or organic citizenry (*ethnos*).

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degraded) and exploitation (they are a captive labor force that can be harnessed to the war economy), until the solution of extermination (they are vermin to be erased from the expanding *Lebensraum* of the *Volksgemeinschaft*) won the day in Berlin. In short, "the state" is not a violent monolith but an architectured multiplicity of violent agencies whose degree of oversight and coordination varies depending on the structure of the bureaucratic field.

Violence Embodied: The Brutalized and Brutalizing Habitus

If there is a violent capital in Bourdieu's sense of the term, it follows logically that there exists a *violent habitus* resulting from its sedimentation in bodies in the form of a "set of durable and transposable dispositions" to wield and withstand physical coercion in its different forms, individual, group and institutional.[23] Like all dispositions, the violent habitus is at once taste and ability. It is spawned by *osmotic* learning based on durable immersion in a familiar universe suffused with violence—growing up in a household plagued by intense domestic brutality, in a neighborhood dominated by street gangs or during a simmering civil war [Kalyvas 2003]—or by *didactic* learning in the form of methodical instruction—as in a militia camp, a police academy or during military training and deployment.[24]

As with every habitus [Wacquant 2014], the violent habitus has a *cognitive* component composed of categories of perception that detect, guide and appreciate occasions for coercion and its commission, in particular by the social, moral and spatial compartmentalization of targets [de Swaan 2015]; an *affective* component made of patterned emotional susceptibilities and proclivities (anxiety, tension, fear, rage, resentment, pride, enjoyment, delight, exhilaration) that make violence attractive and even pleasurable; and a *conative* component consisting of the practical mastery of the gestures, techniques and "tricks of the trade" of violence—violence as an "ongoing practical achievement," to borrow the words of Harold Garfinkel [1967], pope of ethnomethodology.[25] Violence is living labor assaulting living and dead labor.

[23] Here I follow the basic genesis, structure and functioning of habitus as developed by Bourdieu [1972, 1980, 1997].

[24] These are the two manners of acquiring cultural capital, as Bourdieu demonstrates in *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* [1979].

[25] An astonishing narrative account of "retail" genocidal killing as routine daily labor requiring acquired competence, individual endurance and collective coordination is Jean Hatzfeld's *Une Saison de machettes* [2003].

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In the case of Nazi agents of coercion, violence was learned via both formal training and immersive execution. In *Ordinary Men*, Christopher Browning [1992] follows the members of run-of-the-mill German police units tasked with systematically murdering Jews in the hinterland of occupied Poland, village by village, house by house, person by person, bullet by bullet. After an initial period of shock, disgust and reticence, they gradually gained the technical know-how, moral callousness and emotional profile needed to dispatch their gruesome duty—they became skilled "violence workers."[26] Similarly, in *Violence in Defeat: The Wehrmacht on German Soil, 1944–1945*, Bastiaan Willems [2021] documents how radicalized army units returning to Germany after three years of brutal fighting on the Eastern front as the war was turning against the Axis arrived "with an ingrained barbarised mindset" that fueled a sweeping wave of intra-ethnic violence in the last-ditch defense of the homeland. Under the right conditions, violence as position and experience can turn into violence as disposition fueling violence as skilled action at ground level [Beorn 2014].

But we need to stress here that, in Bourdieu's theory of practice, *disposition is not action*: to express itself, the violent habitus must be plunged into the appropriate situational and interactional milieu whose temporal maelstrom will always of necessity produce individual-level variations in conduct [Luft 2015]. This means that dissecting the formation and enaction of violent inclinations must go hand in hand with deconstructing the makeup of the social worlds in which they express themselves. This is all the more necessary when we consider, by way of hypothesis (suggested by Yacine Chitour in personal communication), that the violent habitus may be a *cleft habitus* composed of contradictory dispositions, some civil and peaceable and some confrontational and aggressive, each activated by distinct social stimuli and organizational settings. Bourdieu's [2004] notations on the genesis and structure of a cleft habitus are sketchy but tantalizing: they can be extended to explain how Nazi policymakers and frontline agents could be cold "monsters" at work and caring "family men" at home.[27]

[26] The notion is developed by Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros and Zimbardo [2002] to designate the police officers who committed routine torture and murders under the military dictatorship in Brazil. It spotlights the role of the state in training, organizing, routinizing and legitimating the delivery of extreme violence. It documents how this complexus of objectified, organizational and dispositional violence targeted political opponents and dissidents before migrating to the punitive containment of marginal populations in the city by regular police units after the return to democracy.

[27] Robert Jay Lifton describes this as "doubling" in his stunning study, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* [1986].

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The distinctive features of the violent habitus or, what is the same, the "violentization" of a class, gender, ethnic or organizational habitus, entails weakening inhibition toward aggression, an increased readiness for confrontation, a lack of subjective identification with the target, moral desensitization, and emotional detachment or glee at inflicting humiliation and pain. Here, Bourdieu's dispositional theory of action converges with the symbolic interactionist model of "violentization" as the cumulative and self-reinforcing socialization to violence proposed by Lonnie Athens [1992, revised expanded edition 2017].[28] In extreme cases, violence becomes integrated in the "moral economy" of everyday life such that it grows omnipresent, expected and normalized, a currency of social valuation and exchange [Karandinos *et al*. 2014]. Where brutal world and brutal habitus meet, *violence becomes doxic*. Such was the case with Hitler's "ghettos."

What is the empirical payoff of this theoretical elaboration? It enables us to see that the Nazi enclosure of the occupied territories of Eastern Europe was a *closed ecology of domination in which violent capital accumulated and violent habituses thrived* and circulated unimpeded, resulting in the suffusive infliction of reticular force from threatened to minimal to lethal, from routinized to eruptive and from individual to categorical.[29] Consider the fact that the enclosure was penetrated and surveilled not by one but by four different police forces, three German and one Jewish, and that police officers on all four forces resorted to violence, ranging from kicking to killing, as a matter of course [Bethke (2015) 2021].

Consider also that the Nazi police and military or other officials, as well as their local auxiliaries and collaborators, could storm the enclosure at any moment, invade its public and private spaces alike, and seize, beat, torture and kill its residents. They could also drag them off for forced labor and abduct them for deportation. There was no protection, recourse or remedy against this naked violence fueled by the mutual reinforcement of coercive capital and forcible habitus. As I show elsewhere [Wacquant 2027a], the communal organizations built by Jews

[28] "Violentization," according to Athens, proceeds through four stages, which track the genesis and formation of the violent habitus: initial brutalization, belligerency, violent performances and virulency (incorporation into personal identity). A crucial difference: symbolic interactionism is mental; the theory of practice is carnal.

[29] To capture this ramifying architecture in the *villas misérias* of the Argentine metropolis, Auyero and Berti [2015] develop the fruitful notion of "chains of violences," plural. Willis [2015] shows similarly how a "killing consensus" emerged in Brazil's urban periphery involving police, criminal actors, residents and local politicians. This consensus translates into the "mundane disappearance" of tens of thousands of people yearly whose lives are deemed worthless by the state [Willis 2022].

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inside the Nazi enclosure were manifold and dense but thin and brittle, incapable of cushioning the shock of violence [Adler (1955) 2017; Trunk (1962) 2006; Rosenfeld 2002; Cole 2004; Horwitz 2008; Hájková 2020], as such institutions would be in a fully formed ghetto.[30]

From one angle, the historicist, the Nazi pen can thus be viewed as a formation *sui generis* for the intensity, frequency and multiplexity of the destructive physical force it concentrates and unleashes. From another angle, the analytical, it can be grasped as an extreme case of the virulent articulation of race, space and domination in a milieu saturated by coercion as both accumulation and disposition. This virulence can be encapsulated by the following formula: *the capital of violence was the meta-capital of the Nazi enclosure* inasmuch as it trumped and subordinated all other forms of capital when the question of their relative primacy was practically posed.

Searching for plausible parallels and locating historical analogues in terms of the concentration of violent capital and the unleashing of the violent habitus in targeted space is the only way to establish the specificity of the Nazi "ghetto," so-called, not the principled postulation of its incomparability.[31] Consider the following cases: recurrent razzias during settler colonial conquest [Brower 2009], the intricate layering of terroristic coercion in the Soviet Gulag [Applebaum 2003], the murderous regime of British detention camps during the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya in the 1950s [Elkins 2005], the cataclysmic waves of political purges under the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia [Kiernan 1996] and the gross brutality of everyday life in the contemporary Brazilian prison [Darke and Antillano 2017]. In all of these spaces, material violence rules and determines the worth, if any, of the other species of capital.

It is only through reasoned comparison that one can establish that a constellation escapes a given social type or provides an exacerbated version of the same. The *cult of historical exception* is not an asset but an obstacle to knowledge, as demonstrated by Detienne [2000]. Historicity and analyticity are not epistemological antagonists but complementary moments in theoretical construction that allow us to delineate the particular against the backdrop of the universal. Logically, the very claim

[30] The walls of the Jewish ghettos of Europe in the 18th century limited the movements of their residents in the city but they also provided partial protection from ethnic violence in the form of pogroms. Similarly, the black ghetto of the US industrial metropolis at the mid-20th century sheltered its population from the kind of unpredictable and rampant white violence, epitomized by lynching, that plagued the rural settlements of the US South from which that population hailed.

[31] For a deft critique of the "incommensurability thesis" in case comparison, read Steinmetz 2004.

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that something is "incomparable" is self-refuting, for it presupposes that a comparison has indeed been made.[32]

Theoretical Payoff of the "Capital Quintet"

To conclude, consider this question that every epistemological skeptic is bound to ask: is reconceptualizing violence as capital merely a rhetorical move with no theoretical benefits, analytic payoffs or empirical bonus? I argue, to the contrary, that the profits of this move are fivefold.

1. It reminds us that physical violence is *not a thing but a social relation* with broad, multifaceted and rippling effects on bodies and institutions—the two modalities of existence of history—and that as such, it strengthens, weakens or crosscuts other relations [Villarreal 2024]. In short, it promotes a radically relational approach to the topic that opens new investigative vistas going beyond the conventional focus on perpetrators and victims, vistas that can conjugate the macrohistory of Nazi state formation [Kershaw 2015] with the microhistory of violent practices on the ground in the commission of the Holocaust [Zalc and Bruttmann 2017].[33] One implication of the notion of capital as "congealed labor" is to invite us to view *violence as a form of living labor* that demands exertion, skills, organization, rewards and replenishment (about which more below under the rubric of habitus).[34]

2. Capital spotlights and ties together properties of violence that are usually treated separately, if at all: it can be *accumulated, converted and delegated*. Each of these processes, in turn, can be smooth or problematic and deserves its own focused inquiry. Violence can also trigger capital conversion aiming to escape it. To take a dramatic instance, what positional and dispositional properties enabled select Jews targeted for deportation inside the Nazi enclosures of World War II to dodge the transport by successfully claiming the identity of a worker, activating

[32] The question of its comparability has been the object of politically fierce and morally delicate debate since the inception of research on the Holocaust. See, for instance, Rosenfeld's [1999] "The Politics of Uniqueness" as well as Stone [2004] and Blatman [2015].

[33] Since everyone claims to be "relational" these days, let me specify what I mean here. I mean constructing the nested spaces of objective social positions occupied by agents, positions that govern interactions and whose potentialities are activated (or not) by agents endowed with suitable dispositions, which themselves can be recursively grasped as the embodied precipitate of historical peregrinations through social space [Bourdieu 2015, 2016].

[34] For a meticulous account of the different stages of bureaucratized racial violence fusing the material and the symbolic from the standpoint of its targets, read Nicolas Mariot and Claire Zalc, *Face à la persécution: 991 Juifs dans la guerre* [2010].

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social relations of patronage and protection or bribing the internal Jewish police entrusted with delivering the captives slated for elimination [Corni 2003; Finkel 2017]? Strategies of violence delivery and strategies of violence avoidance are joined at the hip.

3. Violence as capital compels us to bring structure and agent together by stipulating that it takes a *violent habitus* (system of dispositions) to fully actualize the capacity of a violent apparatus (system of positions). Now, not every agent of violence is a violent agent: many "functionaries" of the Nazi machine of racial destruction bore no special ill-will or racial animus toward its victims.[35] This deviation from the theoretical stipulation invites us to raise the empirical question of the social conditions under which functionaries of violence take up their function and under what modality—as with the *Einsatzgruppen* who carried out the "Holocaust by bullets" with the help of the Wehrmacht in Soviet territories and the Baltic states [Desbois 2008; Beorn 2014; Lower 2021].

4. Treating physical coercion as capital reveals that its inner core consists in the threat or the infliction of damage upon individuals, groups, institutions and things. Viewed from this angle, the capital of violence differs from its four cousins: it possesses the distinct capacity to operate both as a *force of production*—when it serves to plunder the possessions of and extract labor from the Jews captive in the so-called "ghettos" of the Holocaust—and as *a force of destruction*—when it imposes upon them famine, epidemic disease and conditions of work so brutal that it kills them off faster than it can recruit them [Trunk (1962) 2006; Gruner 2006]. This is what mandates elevating violence as a fundamental form of capital—absent which we cannot account for the deployment of material suasion in all of its forms.

Focusing on the distinctively destructive tenor of the capital of physical force also clears the way for a historical and ethnographic *sociology of intimidation* as a prevalent form of domination, operative in intimate,

[35] This is Hannah Arendt's [1963] well-known thesis of the "banality of evil" from the standpoint of the "lifeworld": Adolf Eichmann was not a sadistic Jew-hater moved by a burning racial passion but a dutiful bureaucrat intent on fulfilling his institutional role with a focus on career advancement. (But see the strong dissent of David Cesarani in *Becoming Eichmann: Rethinking the Life, Crimes, and Trial of a "Desk Murderer"* [2006]]. It is reinforced by Zygmunt Bauman's analysis of the relations between *Modernity and the Holocaust* [1989] from the standpoint of the "system," which proposes that technical rationality, administrative efficiency and emotional distance can drive the unleashing of systemic racial violence. This position has been challenged by Burleigh and Wipperman [1991], Sémelin [2005], Friedländer [1997, 2007], Kershaw [2008], Chapoutot [2014] and Caplan [2020], among the many scholars who insist on the primacy of racial ambition and abjection in the rise and rolling out of Nazism. See Stone [2023] for a provocative synthesis of these positions that expands the conventional policy, geographical and causal focus of Holocaust studies.

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public and international spaces alike, situated at the murky interface between material and symbolic violence. This allows us to bring under the same conceptual canopy phenomenal constellations as different as "campaigning" for respect on the streets of the US inner city [Anderson 2000], the coercive control of intimate partners [Stark 2007], gang extortion [Contreras 2013] and differential responses to genocidal impulse complicating the binary between perpetrators and victims [Luft 2023].

5. The fifth and last implication concerns Bourdieu's theory of practice and power. Adding material coercion to the quartet of economic, cultural, social and symbolic species to form the *quintet of Bourdieu's capitals* fortifies the analytical foundations and expands the empirical reach of that theory. It fully realizes Bourdieu's fundamental intuition, present from his early writings and no doubt shaped by his experiences as a young anthropologist working in a dying colony torn by a brutal war [Perez 2022], that social action is driven and patterned by *force*, *both* material and symbolic. It is revealing that a central expression in his conceptual lexicon is *rapport de force* (generally in the plural), whose translation in English as "relation of power" or "balance of power" does not quite convey the sense of dynamic tension and kinetic energy expended to dominate. In his description of the field as a "field of forces" and a "field of struggles," Bourdieu [2022: 579] explicitly refers to magnetic force fields or "gravitational fields." This is the physicalist moment in his construction of social space. This text has endeavored to heed that moment and to give it its full theoretical due.

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