The individual and the mixing of genres: cultural dissonance and self-distinction

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By considering cultural practices and preferences in terms of intra-individual behavioural variation we arrive at a model of the social world which does not neglect individual singularities and avoids the cultural caricaturing of social groups. It then becomes clear that the boundary between “cultural legitimacy” and “cultural illegitimacy” does not only separate different social classes, but divides up the different cultural practices and preferences of individuals across all classes.

Without calling into question the existence of social inequalities before the most legitimate forms of culture, such a scientific point of view allows us to establish the marked statistical frequency of individual cultural profiles composed of heterogeneous or dissonant elements.

Having considered the socio-historical conditions that produce heterogeneous cultural profiles, these frequent cultural dissonances allow us to reinterpret the social functions of culture and to highlight the importance of the study of intra-individual behavioural variations within the framework of a sociology of dispositional and contextual plurality.