

## 02: Check your Habitus

### Louise:

I am Louise. I'm 21 years old and I'm studying social and science communication for my bachelor's degree. And I would like to talk about a topic that has actually been with me for a very long time. And that is: class and shame. And I find class and shame so exciting because I feel like very often we talk about access and access restrictions in very factual, rational contexts, even though the feeling they leave you with is a very emotional one, and even if you want to act as calm as possible in the moment, it still hits you deep down.

"Almost everything I do I look at from all the perspectives I can imagine and try to please the imaginary recipients in order to show that I am in control of what I do. At the same time, I resist this method, reject it, am disappointed by it and irritated. How strong the urge to please everyone still is. The dialogue between the different ways of working is also reflected in my texts. It is productive, but tremendously tiring."

That was a text by Heike Geißler that I wanted to include. I think it captures this feeling, which also very often then ends in shame, very well. Namely, that you are always aware of the perspectives from which you are viewed and how people of different classes perceive and assess and also categorize you.

"I'm sitting in front of a text and suddenly I get scared. Are my thoughts too banal. Is my style too simple, not artistic enough, does it betray my background. Am I embarrassing myself with the text? I try to imagine how it sounds in the ears of others, as if there were something like "the ears" of others." This was a text by Peggy Mettler.

And the two texts I just read can also be found in a booklet, which I find very great. And that is "Check your Habitus" and this collection of texts was published by Daniela Dröscher and Paula Fürstenberg in Sukultur-Verlag and. The collection also has its own website and that is: "checkyourhabitus.com" and can be found there in English, Turkish, Russian, German, Spanish and French. And in these languages you can also buy the book, on the Sukultur website. It costs 6.50 euros including shipping and "Check your Habitus" is a kind of project in which 18 authors have checked and documented their own behavioral patterns and reflected on them. Habitus is a term coined primarily by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu through its use in his work "The Fine Differences" (1979). And habitus actually describes a person's manners. So all their preferences, habits, how the person gives himself in social situations, but also appears in general society. In other words, our supposedly individual taste. But in certain situations, this taste can reveal more or less clearly our membership of a certain social class. And especially in the case of people of the lower social class or class climbers - in quotation marks - this habitus is not a neutral form of expression or of their own existence, because it is very often perceived negatively from the outside, devalued, ridiculed, because it catches one in one's own accidental exposure. And this exposure is usually followed by one thing above all: shame.

"I am convinced that others basically know more than I do. They have a kind of prior knowledge that I cannot obtain anywhere. Their knowledge came to them on its own. They didn't have to learn it or look it up. It was always there." That was a text by Dilek Güngör.

The worst thing about shame is that you think you're the only one who feels that way, Annie Ernaux once wrote. In "Check your Habitus," personal experiences translate into a social structure that challenges the logic of class society and its upward mobility narratives. "Fuck the parquet" becomes "Fuck the parquet," perceived isolation becomes a chorus against loneliness. That's what Daniela Dröscher wrote in the intro to "Check your Habitus." And I think that's very nice, because I think that often in these experiences, where this feeling of shame is very present, you feel very left alone, and this little introduction shows a little bit that a lot of people feel that way, but these people just don't have the possibility or the access to talk about it. And "Check

your Habitus" gives you that opportunity. I also wrote a text myself about a similar experience and I would like to share with you now to conclude this post:

"Forty minutes earlier, I'm panicking, digging through a closet for the best possible camouflage costume. I realize that my choice is the wrong one. From the way a little gawking is going on. I'm 15 minutes late. Fifteen minutes that weren't worth the trouble. It's a birthday dinner. On the spur of the moment, he asked me, "Do you want to come?" Now here. Completely overdressed. All three of them next to me, in sneakers. In an indifference that is forbidden to me by you and everyone in this room. My arms are scratched by the jacket Mom knitted that looks like enough money that no one asks and I can't answer honestly. I feel cheated by the three euro signs on Google Maps next to the restaurant name. You told me what to wear today. As we order, you miss the way my eyes search for the prices next to the dishes. When it's my turn, the pronunciation errors are overheard. I'm grateful. It's a bit like improv theater, I tell myself as I smoke on the patio and look at the people, too, whom I will sweep back downstairs to later. When the bill comes, I feel hot and nauseous, but no one sees the red in my cheeks. Between the fluorescent lights and the waiters in T shirts."