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Philip Golub, Frédéric Lebaron, Ivica Mladenović,  
Franck Poupeau, Gisèle Sapiro and Zona Zarić

## PIERRE BOURDIEU AND POLITICS

This paper is the product of a roundtable discussion held at the international conference Horizons of Engagement: Eternalizing Bourdieu, organized by the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory of Belgrade, Serbia, the Centre for Advanced Studies of The University of Rijeka, Croatia, the École Normale Supérieure of Paris, France, and the French Institute in Serbia. The event was planned on the occasion of the ninetieth anniversary of the birth of one of the world's leading sociologists – Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002). The greatest indicator of the scope of Bourdieu's influence is the fact that he has become the world's most cited sociologist, ahead of Émile Durkheim, and the world's second most cited author in social sciences and the humanities, after Michel Foucault and ahead of Jacques Derrida. As part of this discussion, we address the subject of "Bourdieu and Politics", politics – broadly constructed. We evoke Pierre Bourdieu's involvement in public affairs during the 1990s, while taking into account the concept of the collective intellectual that Bourdieu introduced into social sciences by giving it a specific meaning.

**Ivica Mladenović:** Professor Sapiro, you recently directed an impressive collective work: *Bourdieu International Dictionary* (Sapiro 2020), which has already become the best-selling encyclopedia and dictionary of sociology and ethnology on Amazon. It contains nearly 600 entries, it is composed of a team of 126 authors from 20 countries, and brings together specialists of Pierre Bourdieu, among them sociologists, political scientists, philosophers, historians, anthropologists, and others. The entries cover: concepts, objects of research, methods, disciplines and intellectual currents with which Bourdieu interacted,

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as well as his favorite authors and his relationships with his peers, his works, the journals, associations he founded, editions, significant events such as the Algerian War, May 1968, the strikes of 1995, as well as the main countries in which his work was received (from the US to Japan). I would like to ask you what was the motivation behind this immense 6-year-long project?

**Gisèle Sapiro:** It was the editor I was working with for my series at CNRS Editions who had first the idea and commissioned the dictionary. CNRS Editions has a dictionary series, and he wanted to open it to the social sciences and start with Bourdieu. I immediately accepted because I had an experience with dictionaries – I was part of the team of the *Dictionnaire des intellectuels français* (Winock, Julliard 2002) – and because over the years I had worked with a significant international network of Bourdieu specialists. We agreed from the start that it should not only be about concepts but also about his life, thinkers he discussed with, places where he published, including newspapers like *Le Monde*. We had much fun with the editorial board while establishing the list of entries. The dictionary has three objectives:

1) First a *pedagogic* one: it is an introduction to Bourdieu's thought for students, and researchers less familiar with his thought, but also for those more familiar, as it helps deepen our understanding of his work (I myself learned a lot from reading the articles). For instance, you can find not only the more specific concepts of Bourdieu's theory such as *field*, *habitus*, cultural capital, symbolic violence, but also concepts that he uses or redefines such as belief, interest, disinterestedness, *hysteresis*, misrecognition, or *nomos*. And also concepts he discusses or rejects such as public opinion or norms. You can also find classical authors he referred to: philosophers such as Pascal, Hume, Kant, Rousseau or Kripke, sociologists such as Durkheim, Elias, Goffman, Merton or Max Weber, or anthropologists such as Mauss and Lévi-Strauss. But it is not at all a purely academic approach aimed at mummifying Bourdieu's thought;

2) This brings me to the second objective: the dictionary is meant to serve all those who take on Bourdieu's theoretical and methodological approach to research, and to be continued all around the world. It is a tool for researchers willing to carry on this theoretical and empirical program in a dynamic way. It can help them navigate easily in his work, find references, connect concepts and objects with broader theoretical or methodological issues in the social sciences: why we should be suspicious about functionalist explanations, what does it mean to have a relational approach, which empirical works were undertaken on the fields of cultural production and the issue of autonomy beyond Bourdieu, and so on;

3) This leads us to the third objective: this dictionary is conceived as a contribution to *the epistemology and history of the social and human sciences*, since Bourdieu has discussed the most important paradigms and theories of his time, such as Marxism, structuralism, rational choice theory; and he contributed to developing a social history of the human and social sciences, that need not be purely conceptual and focused on key thinkers (though we did include figures

like Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault), but anchored in the social world and connected to social agents and institutions.

For instance, we included the institutions he was trained in, like the *Ecole normale supérieure*, and the ones he worked in like the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales* and the *Collège de France*, which he himself included in his research on higher education and the academic field. We also included the journals he edited: *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, the series he edited: “Le sens commun” and “Liber”, and the main countries of reception of his work (28 entries). One can observe the different receptions: in the UK, it was first his sociology of education, in Italy and Brazil it was his sociology of culture and of symbolic power. When *Distinction* was translated in the US (Bourdieu 1984), it helped create the sociology of culture as a sociological domain, which did not exist before as such.

**Zona Zarić:** Philip, according to Pierre Bourdieu, it is easy for a sociologist to cease to be an adherent (of certain parties, unions, associations), but it is difficult to refuse adherence, i.e., the (semi-)social conscience that is at the heart of his thinking. Moreover, the history of sociology is a history of commitment, contrary to what the idea of ‘axiological neutrality’ suggests, which artificially separates the scientific work that produces scholarship from the commitment that consists in bringing the scholarship into the public sphere. Gisele Sapiro, in a recent interview, emphasized that Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology was everything but neutral. What do you think is the difference between scientific objectivity so important to Pierre Bourdieu and axiological neutrality on the other side?

**Philip Golub:** Let me begin with an anecdote to frame this issue. Many years ago, at the end of the 1990s, I was travelling to an international conference with a prominent colleague from the French academy who, at some point in our rather long journey, moved our friendly discussion to the fraught question of Bourdieu’s recent political engagement, expressing rather deep dismay over the latter’s choice to speak out and act out on the public stage about sharply contested political and social questions of the moment. In his view, by so doing, Bourdieu would have blurred the barrier between scientific analysis and activism, and broken with the detachment, the neutrality required of the scientific enterprise. To borrow the title of a classical book on the history of science, Bourdieu would have fallen off the *edge of objectivity* into the purgatory of subjectivity, of mere opinion, and thereby somehow tainted, diminished his body of scientific work, his *oeuvre*.

The epistemological problem of the edge of objectivity in the social sciences is, of course, a core concern in Bourdieu’s work. Leaving out some of the spookier parts of quantum physics, the edge is pretty well defined. In the “hard sciences” such as physics which deal with inanimate objects and forces, external to the observer, subject to laws that can be discovered and verified through the reproducibility and falsifiability of experiments. This kind of knowledge is cumulative: general relativity supplanted Newtonian mechanics

but did not thereby make it useless. And Galileo's law of falling bodies works. This does not mean that there aren't complex epistemic issues involved in the production of new knowledge (scientific revolutions), but that new knowledge is subject to objectifying tests. But what defines the edge, if there is one, in the social sciences, which deal with not only material but intersubjective and symbolic dynamics?

Bourdieu deals at length with the question of objectivity throughout his work, in his courses at the *Collège de France* and in other locations. The business of social science is to bring to light phenomena that are not accessible through simple intuition or immediate perception, to discover (in the sense of uncovering) the logics of social being and of social action, logics that remain hidden in the labyrinthine structures, the "unconscious" generated by the fields and force-fields of social order. But, as Bourdieu points out, the knowing subject discovering those logics cannot achieve the "objectivism of the 'gaze from afar' of an observer who remains as remote from himself as from his object" (Bourdieu 2003: 282).

As we know, the observer observes, writes and speaks from a specific location in social space-time, emitting judgments and interpretations that can modify the facts on which they are passed – Marx is a rather good example – and that enter "into the actual constitution or production" of the social world (Giddens). In any case, one certainly cannot, as Bourdieu writes, "build a science on something as poor and disappointing as (Weberian) ethical neutrality" (Bourdieu 2015: 67). The scientific observer must certainly proceed with detachment from the object of study, to avoid simply relating the subjectivities of people and engaging in storytelling but cannot erase his/her character as a social subject. So how do we move from this issue of method to political/ethical *engagement* in the public sphere/arena? Engagement raises issues distinct from the epistemological and methodological problems of the social sciences, but the scientist (*savant*) is perforce also a citizen – in this case a citizen with an extraordinarily solid and broad theoretical toolbox on which to base his judgments – and, like everyone else, is inevitably swept up in the historical currents, the struggles, and ethical dilemmas of the present. As such, the scientist cannot avoid the inescapable question of moral choice, of ethics in politics. The choice to act or not to act.

Indeed, it is precisely because the knowing subject has a slightly greater degree of freedom than most people, having pierced through some of the veils of material and symbolic domination, and has a claim to knowledge, and hence voice, that he/she/they can and sometimes must engage. As C. Wright Mills pointed out a long time ago in his study of power structures in the United States, "the powers of ordinary men are circumscribed by the everyday world in which they live, yet even in these rounds of job, family and neighbourhood they often seem driven by forces they can neither understand nor govern" (Mills 1956: 3). The social scientist rarely governs but at least she can grasp the force fields that shape people's lives and lift the veils – the most important of which is the illusion of spontaneous freedom – that make power and domination

misrecognizable to the many. Bourdieu's oeuvre deals with various dimensions of domination, material and symbolic. And as he himself notes – I'm translating from one of his courses at the College de France: "There is, in any case, affinity between the position of the dominated and the scientific position. Once the scientific truth is produced, the dominated in a space – field – hear it better and use it immediately, distorting it, tampering with it so that it expresses them more completely" (Bourdieu 2015: 71). The dominated, in other words, are then in a better position to become, at least to some extent, self-determining actors. In short, the demarcation line is not as clear as some would have it, even if scientific work and engagement are obviously not on the same plane.

**Zona Zarić:** Franck Poupeau, you have collected and edited Pierre Bourdieu's public interventions in a book entitled *Political Interventions: Social Science and Political Action* (Poupeau, Discepolo, David 2008). This publication includes all of Pierre Bourdieu's interventions between 1961 and 2001. It therefore allows us to follow directly and in a very interesting manner, his evolution in relation to the topics that interested him and on which he took a position from the age of 31. Would you describe for us this evolution, perhaps by adding some nuances in the difference between the early and late Bourdieu, as well as the regularities that characterized him during this 40-year period?

**Franck Poupeau:** One of the key points of the book *Political Interventions: Social Science and Political Action*, that I elaborated in 2000 with Thierry Discepolo, was to show the continuity of Bourdieu's commitment since the 60s. A very common vision of his trajectory was insisting on his public position taking, since the social movement of 1995 in France. For example, Bourdieu's initial research questions in Algeria were very political and tackled issues such as the conditions of access to politics and politicization, and to revolutionary positions. Those are the same problems he deals with years later in *La Distinction* (1979). This Algerian period has been the metric of his entire sociological research, not only the issue of social conditions of access to politics, but also his conception of collective work in social sciences. Thus, the book *Political Interventions: Social Science and Political Action* does not only try to reconstitute Bourdieu's political commitments (even if his political interventions were the core of the book) but it also aims to explore and present his way of practicing sociology, that provided a real continuity and coherence to his scientific work, even if clearly his public interventions only became visible in the 90's.

**Ivica Mladenović:** Frederic Lebaron, you are one of the authors of the book *The December of French Intellectuals* (Duval, Gaubert, Lebaron, Marchetti, Pavis 1998). This book challenges dominant interpretations, which were given by the media and dominant intellectuals, of the intervention of intellectuals – among them Pierre Bourdieu – during the social movement against the devastation of the social security system in November and December of 1995. This was possibly the largest social movement since May 1968. At that time

you worked at the *Centre de sociologie de l'éducation et de la culture* created by Bourdieu after May 68. Is this perhaps the moment when he really begins to deeply put into question and challenge what in France is called the *pensée unique* (single-mindedness). We encounter at that time the center-left magazine *Esprit* denouncing Pierre Bourdieu as a left-wing populist, leftist extremist, and even a Krypto-Lepenist. Could you contextualize Pierre Bourdieu's commitment against the "Juppé Plan" and the reasons behind how he became the intellectual of reference for the social movement as a whole, but at the same time so stigmatized in the mainstream media?

**Frédéric Lebaron:** In 1995, Bourdieu was already present in the public space since many years (in a sense ever since he published about Algeria as Franck just explained), but it was especially the case after the success of *La misère du monde* (Bourdieu 1993). This scientific collective book corresponds to an evolution of his commitment, to the left and to more radical social movements, to put it simply. After the Rocard years – when he supported a French socialist “modernist” prime minister –, Bourdieu had been heavily disappointed by the French center-left government, especially in the sectors of education and social policy. He is one of the first intellectuals who points out and criticizes what he calls the retreat of the left hand of the State – Welfare state, social state, education, health, social welfare – attacked by the right hand (economy and security, put simply). The term “neoliberalism” is not a very present one in *La misère du monde* but rather in activist spheres (in France, around *Politique-La revue*, Jacques Kergoat etc.). Between 1992 and 1995, Bourdieu became closer to these networks, in which activists from NGOs, unions and political organizations were present, and at the same time he went on to develop an original international – European at first – intellectual network with *Liber, revue européenne des livres*.

In November and December of 1995, he is already present as a “personnalité de référence” in these national and international spheres: that is the reason why he is suddenly asked to revise a petition against the neoliberal Juppé reforms – suppression of a generous retirement scheme for railway workers, new conditions in health insurance: disguised austerity measures –, which he will rewrite and diffuse. What struck us when we studied this with a group of doctoral students (Duval, Gaubert, Marchetti and Pavis) is the large symbolic capital that Bourdieu already held at that time in these activist spheres, which made him immediately central, very visible, and symbolically powerful. This capital will be increasing in the following years, with a more international dimension.

Bourdieu who had supported Rocard and the *Confédération française démocratique du travail* (CFDT) is now a radical opponent of the neoliberal shift of this pseudo-left, and therefore seen as a traitor by the mainstream “center-left” media *Esprit*, already a place of anti-Bourdieu intellectual position-takings, it is now also closely linked to the neoliberal conversion of the left. For others (more right-wing) he is a new figure of leftist intellectual

irresponsibility. Not to be forgotten that Bourdieu was a pupil of Raymond Aron, the incarnation of right-wing responsible commitment. In his speech at the *gare de Lyon* – railway station – Bourdieu put at the centre of the process the leading role of economists, and the stakes around economics, especially at the international level (IMF, WB). This is the most original aspect of his commitment which puts social sciences at the forefront of political struggles.

**Zona Zarić:** As you all saw in our invitation, one of the aims of this round table was to understand how Pierre Bourdieu became a leading intellectual (or a public intellectual as it is referred to in the Anglophone world) – after having focused, in his early years, on pursuing a professional career as a social scientist. Gisèle Sapiro, to describe this evolution you used a beautiful expression: *from social theorist to global intellectual*. Tell us how you explain this transition and what the notion of the global intellectual means to you?

**Gisèle Sapiro:** Before I answer, I would like to remind that Bourdieu's work had a political dimension from the start, and he had commitments long before the 1990s, though he never was an activist, he always used sociology as a tool for objectifying the unequal power relations in society. In the research I did with Mauricio Bustamante on the circulation of Bourdieu's work in translation, based on a quantitative analysis of his translated books, we observed four phases (Sapiro, Bustamante 2009):

1) In the first phase, Bourdieu's work was received in specific areas, such as the sociology of education, the sociology of culture and anthropology (his theory of practice and habitus). He thus became a reference as a specialist of these domains;

2) The translation of *Distinction* into English in 1984 helped unify the reception of his theoretical framework. He then became a reference as a social theorist;

3) By the mid-1990s, as his work was getting more and more international recognition, he put his renown at the service of a cause, following the model of the French intellectual tradition since Zola and the Dreyfus Affair. In this sense we can speak of a global intellectual, who takes a stand on political issues on a global (rather than national) scale. Bourdieu's cause was the struggle against neoliberalism. But he also criticized the growing domination of the media on the political and cultural fields. His book *On television* was at the time his most translated work (into 25 languages up to 2008). It was the first of a series he launched in a small format and more accessible style, capable of reaching a wider audience. This formula was a success and imitated by others afterwards;

4) Since Bourdieu's death, there is a new phase - he is becoming a classical author, as testified by the numerous tributes, conferences around the world, and new translations. But I think it is very important not to transform Bourdieu's theory into a simple academic reference, and to keep alive its dynamic and critical, or even subversive potential, both as a research program and as a social critique of the mechanisms of domination and symbolic violence.



**Ivica Mladenović:** In an article he wrote in the 1990s about the Yugoslav affair, Bourdieu fiercely denounced a kind of narcissistic exhibitionism that leads every intellectual to take an individual position, or even to expose their little free forum or little opinion, as he put it. In fact, as we know, he advocated for collective work, in a network, which allows for combining the competences of each and every member. He thus pleaded for the creation of an international autonomous collective intellectual who would become a real instrument of symbolic struggle, a tool for the diffusion of critical knowledge and a more direct intervention in public debate. Bourdieu elaborated the concept of the *collective intellectual*, against the figure of the total intellectual embodied by Sartre – who could embrace all subjects – and in the extension of the specific intellectual defined by Foucault. What is the logic behind this idea of Pierre Bourdieu’s *collective intellectual* and what remains of this idea today?

**Frédéric Lebaron:** In 1999, Bourdieu had become rather central in the flustered sphere of social movements in France and Europe. When he wrote a text about former Yugoslavia (Kosovo war), in May of 99, he was only responding to current events as he had always done, at least since 81. For example, he signed a petition “Call for a just and durable peace in The Middle East” – almost the same title as the Kosovo one – against the first Iraq war in 1990-91 and the French intervention in the Gulf. This petition might have been his first movement out of the pseudo-left (since both Mitterrand and Rocard were clearly in favor of NATO’s intervention against Saddam Hussein and Iraq). The pseudo-left that was clearly in favor of a military US intervention, might have helped awaken Bourdieu to the reality of the French Socialist Party. One has to recall that Bourdieu and Foucault were seen as part of the anti-totalitarian left – Foucault was quite close to Bernard Kouchner and Bernard Henry Lévy – after they intervened many years earlier against the French left-wing – socialist-communist – government, annoyed by the situation in Poland under Jaruzelski, as described by Didier Eribon in his biography of Foucault.

In the 1990s, Bourdieu moved towards much more anti-imperialist and critical positions, without becoming a supporter of the soviet-type communism or “traditional” left-wing revolutionary forces, which he had criticized for romanticism in his Algerian period. He bases his international commitment on his intellectual network and his conception of universalism, which is rooted in both the theory of – autonomous – fields, and a personal intuition of international solidarity (manifested in the case of Algeria through *Le Comité International de Soutien aux Intellectuels Algériens* – CISIA created in 93). During this period, Bourdieu begins to project his action in a more collective manner, less and less on the sartrian model of *total intellectual*, rather both as a *specific* (Foucault) and *collective intellectual*. In the 80s, he wrote reports with his fellow colleagues, professors at the College de France, that were rather favorable to more competition and market in higher-education and began *Liber* after the fall of soviet-style communism. In the 90s, and especially after 1995, he invested a significant part of his time in collective action of various forms.

Most notably the *Raisons d'agir* group, that had significant international ramifications (Franz Schultheis, Luc Van Campenhout, Nikos Panayotopoulos), and a “national” basis around Gérard Mauger, Louis Pinto, Christophe Charle, Gabrielle Balazs, Claude Poliak and those we called the “young” (Franck and I included, but also Bertrand Geay and others).

This academic intellectual network was intertwined with activist networks, small struggling NGOs (“assos de lutte”, such as *Marches européennes contre le chômage* etc.) and unions (Solidaires, IG-Medien etc.). Through various international initiatives which have burgeoned after 1995 Bourdieu had met many activists; to name but a few: Detlev Henschel, Claude Debons and of course Annick Coupé. Gérard Mauger and I had developed this Bourdieu-inspired notion of ICAI (collective intellectual international autumn), which does not give complete answers about the political orientations of this ICAI, but expands Bourdieu’s ideas around the dissemination of critical tools, reflexive attitudes, empirical results of the social sciences, etc. The practical consequence of this conception is very-much related to the diffusion of symbolic tools, through various channels, such as alternative media, critical publishing houses, etc. This is clearly in line with Bourdieu’s notion of autonomy, and it is the major output of this conception of the collective intellectual. It remains relevant today, at the age of digitalization. I try to argue that in my last book *Savoir et agir*. I am of the belief that it should be reassessed in a context of global economic actors which are even stronger, especially through social media, and in a context where sciences, social and natural, are at stake.

**Ivica Mladenović:** Philip Golub, in 1999 with Pierre Bourdieu you signed a call for peace, asking for an end to the bombings against Serbia and rejecting the false alternative between NATO and Milosevic. Would you briefly introduce us to the intellectual context in France and in the Western world in the late 90s and explain to us the difficulties of taking such a heterodox position at the time and in general?

**Philip Golub:** The Bourdieu Appel of 1999, as it has come to be known, led to a very sharp ideational confrontation in France, that you carefully analyze in your PHD on the French intellectual debate over the wars in former Yugoslavia. So you are actually in a better position than I am to frame the French intellectual context in which it occurred, even if I signed the text. The Appel was a political statement that was designed to shift the course of the conversation, if one can call it that, over the bombings. It aimed to lift a corner of the veil of the dominant discourses that legitimated, transfigured and rendered misrecognizable actions of power and violence that fitted uneasily with the universalizing democratic narratives of the time. The situation was one where a great imperial power clothed its purposes in the garb of universalistic humanitarian aims, and where a predatory state group in Serbia clothed its predation and ethnonationalism in an anti-imperialist garb. The Appel argued against both, flying in the face of the blinding (in the sense of making blind) dichotomous

division between imperial democrats on the one hand and fraudulently anti-imperialist ethnonationalist gangsters on the other.

The broader intellectual environment was the emergence of a doctrine of so-called humanitarian interventions in the context of the new ordering of the world in the post-Cold War, where the democratic West enunciated a right, supposedly founded on the lessons of the Second World War and the Shoah, to intervene outside of the existing jurisprudence of international law, in the domestic affairs of so-called rogue or failed states – a classification that authorizes intervention by denying the latter the *de jure* protections afforded to “normal” sovereign states, and that *ipso facto* makes the classifier into a world policeman. As Bourdieu notes, and as I have sought to show in my work, imperial universalist discourses that make general truth claims are an instrument of “legitimation and domination, giving the dominant the sentiment that they are well-founded in their domination, at the level of national societies but also at world society level where, for instance, the dominant or colonizers could with a clear conscience consider themselves to be bearers of the universal”. The colonized, of course, always knew this universal to be fraudulent, in the sense that it was merely the expression of particularistic interests.

Hence the notion of universalist imperialisms and imperial universalisms, exemplified in French and U.S. discourses and practices (though one can extend this to other expressions of cultural exceptionalism). Due to their roles in ushering in republican and democratic modernity, both developed self-understandings as bearers and carriers of the universal. Universalism, he writes, is a “(French) national specialty [...] a claimed and presumed universality, which is accompanied by signs of a practical form of universality, a form of domination that ignores itself as such [...] This pretension to universality implies an imperialism of the universal” (Bourdieu 2012: 253–254). It also, of course, a US speciality where national aims and universalist discourses merge to produce a distinct US idiom regarding the universal application of supposedly inherent US liberal and democratic virtues, whose symbolic planetary diffusion is complemented, when the US thinks necessary (which is quite often), by the kinetic action of bombs and bullets. When asked in 1998 what justification the US had to bomb various facilities in Iraq, the then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said: “If we have to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further into the future”. This extraordinary statement should not have been read as hypocrisy or as a lie craftily imposed on unaware subjects, but rather as the expression of the imperial universalisms secreted by the habitus of US elites.

**Zona Zarić:** Franck Poupeau, you directed the posthumous publication of the *College de France* courses that *Pierre Bourdieu* gave between 1989 and 1992 on the question of the State (Bourdieu 2012). Earlier, you published the book *The Sociology of the State. The School and its Experts in France* (Poupeau 2003). According to Marx, the State is part of the superstructure based on the infrastructure represented by relations of production. Marx also believed that the

State takes a position in class struggles, and that it is not a neutral arbiter, but that it favors the ruling class by securing the structures and organizations of the capitalist mode of production. Bourdieu agrees that politics and the state are above all characterized by the phenomena of power. But he presents us with quite a different analysis. Could you tell us what exactly Bourdieu sees as the role of the state and politics in the functioning of society?

**Franck Poupeau:** That's a difficult question, first of all I would like to mention that *On the State* - which we should have maybe named *The Invention of the State* - was realized in collaboration with Marie-Christine Rivière, Patrick Champagne and Remi Lenoir, and in the end, with a major contribution by Loïc Wacquant. As a preliminary remark, I would like to say that the analysis of the State is present throughout Bourdieu's sociology, even when he does not talk about the State specifically: in *La Reproduction* you won't find the word *state*, but the notion of state goes beyond the concept of pedagogic authority (Bourdieu & Passeron 1970). Thus, there is a kind of evolution of Bourdieu's perspective and this evolution has been mentioned by Frederic Lebaron when he talked about the presence of Bourdieu inside the French state since the 80s through the reports he wrote for the government on education. To add another important remark - I would like to point out that Bourdieu doesn't always refer to Marx on the State. He refers to him on many other aspects, but on the State, he is quite critical of his analysis, siding more with the French Marxists like Althusser and his notion of "the ideological apparatus of the State", which he criticizes profusely and that represents a significant part of the reason behind why he developed the notion of *field* (and consequently that of field of power, of bureaucratic field, etc.).

First of all, Bourdieu was clearly aware of the way in which the French state has remodeled traditional society since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in *On the State* he addresses the double dimension of the State: domination and integration, monopolization and unification. So, it is not a question of antinomy between two theories - Marxist versus French republican theory - but a question of an antinomy in the very functioning of the State: the modern state is progressing towards universalization that is to say de-particularization of local culture, while at the same time monopolizing the universal as it produces a concentration of power. As Bourdieu states in *On the state*: "To a certain degree, one could say that integration - which must be understood in Durkheim's sense, but also the sense of those who spoke of the integration of Algeria, which includes the idea of consensus - is the condition for domination. This is basically the key thesis that I want to develop. The unification of the cultural market is the condition for cultural domination: for example, it is the unification of the linguistic market that creates dialect, bad accents, dominated languages" (Bourdieu 2014: 222).

This idea of the process of unification that is at the same time a process of universalization, which Bourdieu presents just as Weber and Elias do, is associated with the constitution of a unified social space linked to the State as,

I will quote Bourdieu: “The state, then, as holder of a meta-capital, is a field within which agents struggle to possess a capital that gives power over the other fields” (Bourdieu 2014 : 197). This unification of homogeneous and de-particularized space occurs in relation to a central locus which in the French case means the tendency to replace personal relations with territorial relations by constituting groups linked to the state like jurists for example. Bourdieu examines the mandatory education system as an instrument of integration contributing to the unification of the nation state. I believe that this double reality of the State explains many misunderstandings, as it is also a double reality of Bourdieu’s trajectory - he is a product of the system he criticizes, the French school system, the French academic elite, and his rebellion against the very same system, is the core of his analysis of the State, as a double function of integration and domination, unification, and monopolization.

**Ivica Mladenović:** When we talk about Marxism today, it is most often in plural, because there have always been many Marxist currents. We remember that even Marx criticized some Marxists in France when he was still alive, saying that if they are Marxists, he himself is not. On the other hand, it is harder to discern sharp distinctions, lines of fracture among the bourdieusians. Why do you think this is so? Is it because Bourdieu’s *oeuvre* is as much about method as it is about theory building? Or perhaps that it does not contain the explicitly normative and teleological elements of most Marxist thought? Or is there another more appropriate explanation?

**Frédéric Lebaron:** I think the comparison with Marx and Marxism is both fascinating, important and a bit misleading. Marx’s writings and Marxism as a global doctrine expanded especially during the second International – of course the third and fourth – and inside related national organizations of the worker’s movement (first in Germany SPD, France with a lot of struggles, then Russia, China and many other countries). Marxism gave to these organizations a set of consistent doctrinal elements which allowed a structuration of performative discourses (or as Bourdieu would put it “effects of theory”), which themselves allowed a structuration of the class as a subject, with the help of intellectuals. It was clearly normative (exploitation theory), and teleological (with the religious components of the advent of a classless society), even if it is also a scientific research program (with empirical controversies with Bernstein and the revisionists). This situation dramatically changed with the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 when it was incorporated and central in state doctrines, first the Soviet Union, then a set of important states, until today (People’s Republic of China). One should never forget this empirical reality of Marxism.

Bourdieu’s theory is developing in the international scientific field, now through necessarily partial theoretical improvements or reorganizations, and through empirical controversies (for example around *Distinction* and the social space). It is far less present in the political field in general, unions, NGOs etc. My thought on that is that we should start by analyzing the influence on

the way politicians refer to science and base their discourse on the existence of autonomous scientific fields. I argue precisely that in my last book (Lebaron 2021). The collective intellectual is not that homogeneous after all, since there are individual trajectories throughout the international level (Loïc Wacquant, Didier Eribon, Gisèle Sapiro, Franz Schultheis and others), with their own networks, and small collectives such as the group around the *Raisons d'agir* publisher, or around *Agone* and the *Savoir Agir* association around Mauger, Collovald, and myself. Among us, there are some differences in organizational style, political orientation, or relation to various organizations. This was a matter of intense debates around Bourdieu before he died, with a more “anarchist” – “libertarian” – and “radical” pole – anti-election – and a more “democratic socialist” pole, closer to the political field. They are still present today, though less visible and reorganized around new issues, such as neoliberalism, feminism, and issues of identity.

**Ivica Mladenović:** Gisele Sapiro, we very often hear that *Pierre Bourdieu* is a determinist, which serves his opponents to delegitimize his sociology. You often mention that the opposite of methodological determinism is not individual freedom but *le hazard*, or chance. Jacques Bouveresse has pointed out very well that some of our greatest philosophers, Spinoza and Leibniz for example, as well as Freud, were more rigorous determinists than Bourdieu. My hypothesis is that Pierre Bourdieu’s social determinism is perceived as menacing precisely because of this faulty understanding of freedom and its potential political implications. What do you think?

**Gisèle Sapiro:** As French philosopher Jacques Bouveresse explains (2004), a minimum of methodological determinism is necessary, otherwise you cannot do any science. As you say, and it was Moritz Schlick who pointed this out, the contrary of determinism is not freedom but chance. Any scientific explanation requires a set of explanatory factors. This takes us back to the big controversy about the human and social sciences vs. the natural sciences. Can mechanical causality be applied to human beings who have intentions, representations, choice, reflexive thought? Or should we develop a specific, comprehensive approach based on hermeneutics following Dilthey? Phenomenology opposed behaviorism on this basis. Bourdieu was trained in phenomenology, so he would never admit mechanical causality and would include representations and beliefs as part of the object. But still, like Max Weber, he does want to identify laws in human behavior. His sociology is not looking for deterministic causal mechanisms in the same way as in physics. The social sciences are working on probabilistic laws, like in medicine, and also on tendency laws, like in economy. When Bourdieu and Passeron in *The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relations to Culture* calculate the chance to access university according to the social origin, it is not a deterministic law, it is a probability (Bourdieu and Passeron 1964).

What Bourdieu's theory of the *habitus* and capital claims is that the room for manoeuvre one has varies according to one's resources and skills, meaning the economic, social and cultural capital, or under the communist and unique-party regimes – one's political capital. Sometimes one depends on the other: in countries where higher education isn't free and available to all (like in the US), economic capital conditions the acquisition of cultural capital, except for a very small proportion of scholarships. The value of the different resources may also vary from field to field: economic capital is not a sufficient resource in the educational field in the sense that you cannot buy a diploma, you need some achievements. The same applies to the fields of cultural production. The social world is all about conversion of economic capital into symbolic capital and vice-versa (for instance, winning an important literary prize increases the sales of a book). This is why Bourdieu uses the concept of strategy which means agency and the capacity to improvise in new situations, which depend both on our dispositions, that is to say our *habitus*. We also discuss other laws and effects in the dictionary, for instance the *Gerschenkron effect*: the fact that capitalism did not develop in Russia as in England or in France because it appeared later. Or the *Don Quichotte effect*: the inertia of *habitus* when the social world changes. Or a law to which he didn't give a name: the fact that the more the situation is risky, the more the interactions will be codified and formal.

So, there is a real "bad faith" in the reduction of Bourdieu's sociology to determinism. I would say that this faulty understanding of freedom derives itself from the resistance to acknowledge the social factors that restrict our freedom and room for maneuver, due to a denial of the arbitrariness of privilege and of the social conditions for acquiring cultural capital. Symbolic violence according to Bourdieu precisely stems from the collective denial of the mechanisms of domination. His sociology aims at unveiling these mechanisms. For Bourdieu, unveiling these mechanisms will have an emancipatory effect and help us enlarge the room of maneuver and try to avoid reproducing them. However, as he underscores in *Masculine domination*, becoming conscious is not sufficient, because we have internalized these schemes of perception, of evaluation and of action in our bodies in the course of our first and secondary socialization, and they are part of our *habitus*, they are like a second nature, which is very hard to get rid off. This is the biggest obstacle to our freedom. As Bourdieu argues, the main thing that education instills into us is a sense of one's place, meaning to adjust ourselves to new situations by spontaneously excluding options that are "not for us", "inaccessible" (for instance, access to some luxury goods, or to property, or to higher education).

**Zona Zarić:** Franck Poupeau, you published the book : *The Misadventures of Criticism* in the *Raison d'agir* Editions (Poupeau 2012), created by *Pierre Bourdieu*, with the idea of making scientific knowledge more accessible to the general public. In this book, you propose a very useful reflection on sociology in general, as well as the political stakes around the renewal of critical thinking. For example, you very convincingly evoke the emergence of an "increasingly

subtle and invisible domination, mixing constraint and adherence, moral conformism and logical conformism, ignorance and recognition” (ibid.: 28). If I may advance this idea: in a way your analysis adds an additional layer to Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology that is often linked to the treatment of social phenomena that are too static. Social struggles, for example, are often considered to lack individual initiative but rather to arise from objective social conditions. Pierre Bourdieu thus describes the movement of the unemployed as “a social miracle”. To express his own trajectory and social success he used when referring to himself the French word *miraculé*, or miraculous exception, referring to someone who has escaped his social fate. With this in mind, I would like to know your opinion on the tools of Bourdieu’s critical sociology that enables the dominated to act and escape their fate?

**Franck Poupeau:** Originally in this book I wanted to develop the idea of what I call *militant capital*, the techniques that activists develop through their commitments. One of the points of this notion was to try to generalize Bourdieu’s theory of the conditions of politicization (the link between cultural capital and political opinions). It aimed to demonstrate that commitment or at least politicization was not so easy and not so natural. Finally I changed my mind in the book because of the context of what was happening in France 10 years ago, and the criticisms - generated especially by people like Rancière - of the division between people who know, such as sociologist, and people who don’t know, and it seems to me that at a time there was a kind of a common agreement on many perspectives: the postmodern perspective, postcolonial perspective, pragmatist perspective, into a kind of spontaneous view of politics and mobilizations. I observed that in the naturalization of mobilization of indigenous communities in South America but also in Rancière’s works, in the work of James Scott on popular groups and their immediate and natural commitment.

That was the main objective if we want to analyze why domination is so strong and persistent, especially symbolic domination, it’s not to say only sociology can fight it, but rather to point out that in the context of development of new forms of symbolic domination, you cannot develop mobilization without learning processes and without educating groups that are concerned by this domination. So it is not only the analysis of domination and the conditions of possibility of access to politics that matters, but also the analysis of what may mobilize people and how to disseminate knowledge against symbolic domination.

**Zona Zarić:** Philip, you published a critique of the notion of soft power last year entitled *Soft Power, Soft Concepts and Imperial Conceits* that mobilizes Bourdieu’s readings of symbolic power and violence and uses a bourdieusian framework (Golub 2019). The aim of this critique was to bring to light what you call the “imperial cosmologies” embedded in the performative discourses of the powerful. Could you discuss this and tell us how you think Bourdieu can be integrated into international political theory?



**Philip Golub:** My recent critique in *Soft Power, Soft Concepts and Imperial Concepts* mobilizes Bourdieu, in ways just discussed, but also Gramsci's core concept of *cultural hegemony* to deconstruct the *imperial cosmologies* – the set of persistent cultural assumptions about modernity and historical purpose that naturalize domination and hence produce and reproduce international inequality – that underlie western international liberal discourses. I argue that “soft power”, as formulated by Joseph Nye, is not descriptive but prescriptive, serving as a performative *power discourse* that transfigures, dissimulates, and euphemizes relations of force and dominance in world politics. The paper can be read as part of a growing interest in applying Bourdieu to various issues and a variety of international/global objects. Indeed, several collective books and special issues of journals, for instance the 2011 special issue of *International Political Sociology*, have come out over the past decade, with some powerful results. A good example, to my mind, is the work of Yves Dezalay and Bryant Garth on international circulation (the import and export as they term it) and the diffusion of international expertise as a competition for hegemony – discursive domination.

They show how this particular field (international governance expertise), where imperial politics are built on “prescriptive and purportedly universal discourses” (such as human rights or economic development), which are “played on a double register of scholarly learning and civic morality”, touches on a core mechanism of symbolic domination in contemporary international relations in which specialized personnel embedded in national power structures (Bourdieu 1989) as well as in international or supranational institutions produce and reproduce the meanings and practices that reproduce hierarchy. These agenda-setting and rule-making specialized personnel, working through public institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, the OECD, the WTO, the European Commission, or through informal power bearing clubs and groups – the Eurogroup, the WEF, etc. – make knowledge-claims that conflate particularistic interests – either of an imperial state or of convergent transnational interests – with the universal or cosmopolitan interest.

The claim to universality is not only *genetically corrupted*, as Bourdieu notes, it is also an instrumentality of domination – the discursive field of expertise is consubstantial to what Edward Said, discussing unequal North-South relations, calls the “relationship of power, of domination... of complex hegemony” that the “West has historically maintained with non-western societies”, a remark than can just as well be applied to the relations in the European Union between the core and peripheries of the Union since the eurozone sovereign debt crisis in 2010. These, I believe, are particularly significant examples of the way in which Bourdieu's work can be translated into international relations research agendas.

**Ivica Mladenović:** I have one final question for all of you: The idea of the end, or at least the decline of intellectuals, is defended in a significant number of texts published over the last thirty years. This idea was evoked even before

Pierre Bourdieu's involvement in the social and intellectual struggles of the 90s. How do you see this hypothesis and what is, in your opinion, the role and place of intellectuals in contemporary societies and in social struggles?

**Philip Golub:** There is a classical role – the making sense of the social world – in an age in which the perfusion and confusion of information and of knowledge – has actually become extremely difficult. To try to clarify the intertwined links and show the processes at work and the lawfulness of certain processes and the way in which they work so that the making sense of the social world in a historic and generic sense – but also showing new emerging patterns of politics – and in doing so in critical fashion pointing out to a new age of inequality which needs to be theorized and then transformed into various forms of praxis, of scientific praxis, political praxis. That is the first and perhaps most important subject of such action and the second one is the creation of public spaces. If there is a role of the collective intellectual it is to create public spaces where precisely issues can be clarified, brought to light and in which the phenomena which are not easily understood or mastered can be given more clarity and mastered by people who actually need to use these concepts from the social sciences to be able to own their own lives, to become self-determining actors, at least in part.

**Frédéric Lebaron:** I analyzed this issue in an editorial of *Savoir Agir* 2015 – republished in my last book –, that I ironically entitled *Vers le retour des intellectuels* (towards a come-back of intellectuals, collective and international). It is a typical buzz of mainstream media and politicians to regularly deplore the decline or the death of intellectuals, Bourdieu had reacted to that in the 80s. Politicians such as Manuel Valls – former so-called “socialist” prime minister under the so-called socialist president François Hollande – or more recently our minister of education, the very right wing Jean-Michel Blanquer, have begun to directly attack intellectuals for being insufficiently mobilized against Islamism or even for being too sympathetic to their cause (“islamo-gauchisme”). It's a bit of a paradoxical position (the dominant media changes all the time): is it a decline or a too strong presence but on the bad side (left)? At the same time mediatic intellectuals – the ones that exist only in the mediatic sphere – are more and more permeable to racism and antisemitism.

I think more or less the contrary, scientists including social scientists are at the center of the stakes today – covid-19 crisis, epidemiologists, economists, other social scientists have a lot to say –, but our conditions of interventions have dramatically changed, and I think we should not only acknowledge it but take that more seriously into account. We in France have a remaining centralized Parisian conception of the intellectual: he is publishing books and intellectual journals – *Les Temps modernes*, *Le Débat*: both have recently died – in major commercial – for-profit – publishers, writing texts in *Le Monde* or *Libération* or signing petitions for the same audience as these newspapers. Bourdieu shared this model to some extent, at a global level as Gisèle has shown, but he

began to challenge it in the second half of the 90s with new more independent collections of smaller books of intervention, supporting alternative journals of various sorts (including satiric ones), mobilizing through more organized collectives more independent from mainstream politicians and media.

With digitalization, these evolutions are more obvious today. Part of the intellectual struggles are centered on Twitter (battles of threads), blogs and on-line direct publications, including scientific results, and their interpretation (Piketty website). We saw that to a very large degree with the Covid crisis. Collectives and activists remain weak, because there is now a large disconnection between fields. We are in a sense the victims of these unintended consequences of autonomisation. Therefore, I think we should recreate interdependencies between the scientific fields and for example the field of unions, the field of NGOs, the political fields. It was the initial idea of Bourdieu and Foucault in the 80s, but I think they were captured by another intellectual and political project. This is a general and critical issue as such. In times of growing social inequality and anomia, we have a certain responsibility here. I think we could try to organize new kinds of social solidarity in line with the analyses of *La misère du monde* and *The Economy of Happiness*. I don't mean only verbal and symbolic but also material, financial solidarity. The workers' movement has, in a sense, created the idea of welfare and social solidarity. We should reinvent solidarity at a global scale, by linking it to the diffusion of sociological (qualitative, narrative, and quantitative) accounts of various sorts of misery: misery of condition, poverty, absence of future (the "damned of the earth"), misery of positions, including that of academics in more and more precarised and impoverished institutions. We should give people collective projects in which they could create perspectives for the future. Sociologists without borders, unite!

**Franck Poupeau:** I completely agree with what Frederic said on the interaction between the fields, which is a key point within Bourdieu's framework. I did not partake in more serious research on this matter, other than through the more common sources of information that helped me better perceive this decline of the autonomy of the intellectual field, which also Phillip mentioned. There are both external and internal factors worthy of mentioning. External factors - the impact of the economy, or of the media on intellectual life, and internal factors - in the intellectual world and in the university, there is less and less funding and there is a major debate going on about the recent reforms and the further precarisation of academic employees, the process of evaluation etc. All these internal factors contribute to reducing the capacity of transformation of the field, the capacity of retranslating external elements into their own rules and norms of the intellectual field. That would be the first element of response, but on this kind of issue Gisele Saprio has worked much more precisely. To add an optimistic perspective, I would say that despite the differentiation of the fields, the main objective would be to recreate the conditions for collective work, and to try and avoid the production of "proletaloid intellectuals" mentioned by Weber between two world wars.

**Gisèle Sapiro:** This idea of the decline of intellectuals emerged in France in the 1980s. First in the context of Sartre's death and the victory of the Socialist Party in 1981. It was related to the marginalization of the figure of the leftist intellectual in the context of the rise of expert knowledge. You can find a special issue of *Esprit* in 1981 on the intellectuals' silence. By the end of the decade, this decline was more broadly connected to the absurd notion of the "end of history" in relation to the fall of communism. During the 1980s, anti-communist ideology attacked intellectuals who supported the communist regime as irresponsible and tried to discredit them. A new form of relationship between intellectuals and the government emerged with the model of think tanks imported from the US (the *Fondation Saint-Simon*). In the context of the first war in Iraq, this motto of the intellectuals' silence came back. As social scientists were getting enrolled in government expertise, the mediatic intellectuals, especially the so-called new philosophers, occupied more and more the public space in France. It was notably the case during the war in ex-Yugoslavia. Bourdieu's reflections on the collective intellectual emerged by that time, at the beginning of the 1990s, as he was thinking of ways to put expert knowledge at the service of the dominated rather than of the dominant. This is how he launched the association *Raisons d'agir*, on which Frédéric and Franck can elaborate better than I can.

I would like to highlight the underlying idea: Foucault and Bourdieu criticized Sartre's model of the total intellectual as acting on all fronts. Foucault proposed the figure of the *specific intellectual*, who intervenes based on her specialty. But he proposed that this expert knowledge, instead of being neutral and adjusted to government or economic demand, be critical and respond to demand for protest. He himself started working on prisons as he was engaging against the penitentiary system. This model of commitment was better adapted to the social sciences than that of the prophetic intellectual embodied by writers like Zola or a philosopher like Sartre.

Bourdieu added to this specific engagement the collective dimension of research: no one in the social sciences can embrace the whole domain of specialized knowledge, thus collaboration and division of labor becomes necessary, as well as the cumulative methods of science. This is why he created *Raisons d'agir*, the organization and publishing house. In practice, it means working on objects left aside by governmental policy, but also analyzing reflexively the state's demands for expertise, and how it frames our way of thinking. And of course, being critical about intellectuals themselves. Most often the media wanted Bourdieu to appear alone, and he had to fight to impose the names of his collaborators, as Frédéric and Franck can attest. For me this is a model of commitment that is more relevant than ever, and some organizations such as the *Fondation Copernic* or *Raisons d'agir* play such a role but are much less visible in the public space. This does not replace strikes, demonstrations, petitions, and other means of traditional, collective action, but can bring them some support. I would like to end on this note pointing out that in the past year France has been the theater of new modes of social movements, which include

protests of the intellectuals and artistic professions, on which we worked with my students as a form of participant observation: we saw lawyers throwing their robes, teachers throwing their books, dancers dancing outside the Bastille and so on. It was a very creative movement that was unfortunately interrupted by the pandemic. But these new modes of action are now part of the repertoire!

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