

**A SYNTHESIS AT THE CROSSROADS OF SOCIOLOGICAL THOUGHT:
BOURDIEU'S INTELLECTUAL DANCE WITH MARX, WEBER AND
DURKHEIM***

Gürhan ÖZPOLAT**

İbrahim ARAP***

Abstract

Pierre Bourdieu's sociological thought has been characterized by methodological and reflexive eclecticism, emphasizing the importance of establishing a dialogue between opposing theories. This practice of critical eclecticism allowed him to transcend the boundaries between different epistemologies and contribute to the development of a new sociological tradition. However, Bourdieu's relationship with various traditions of thought in constructing his sociological theory goes beyond mere eclecticism. In this article, we position Bourdieu as a synthetic thinker and focus on some aspects of his relationship with the founding figures of sociological thought (Marx, Weber, Durkheim). Rather than identifying which theorist Bourdieu owes more to, our focus is on understanding the various influences that shaped his distinctive sociological framework.

Keywords: Bourdieu, Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Sociological Thought

*Under the supervision of Associate Professor İbrahim Arap, this article has been prepared, drawing from the theoretical framework presented in Gürhan Özpolat's doctoral study.

**Research Assistant, Dokuz Eylül University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Public Administration Department. Email: gurhanozpolat@gmail.com; ORCID: 0000-0002-1404-2063

***Associate Professor, Dokuz Eylül University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Public Administration Department. Email: ibrahim.arap@deu.edu.tr; ORCID: 0000-0001-5890-5927

Makale Gönderim Tarihi: 01/08/2023, **Makale Kabul Tarihi:** 09/10/2023

Sosyolojik Düşüncenin Kavşağında Bir Sentez:

Bourdieu'nün Marx, Weber ve Durkheim ile Entelektüel Dansı

Öz

Pierre Bourdieu'nün sosyolojik düşüncesi karşıt teoriler arasında diyalog kurmanın önemini vurgulandığı metodolojik ve düşünümsel bir eklektizm ile karakterize edilmiştir. Bu eleştirel eklektizm pratiği, onun farklı epistemolojiler arasındaki sınırları aşmasına ve yeni bir sosyolojik geleneğin gelişimine katkıda bulunmasına olanak tanımıştır. Ancak Bourdieu'nün sosyolojik teorisini inşa ederken farklı düşünce gelenekleriyle olan ilişkisi salt eklektizmin ötesine geçmektedir. Bu makalede Bourdieu'yü sentetik bir düşünür olarak konumlandırıyor ve onun sosyolojik düşüncenin kurucu isimleri (Marx, Weber, Durkheim) ile olan ilişkisinin bazı veçhelerine odaklanıyoruz. Bourdieu'nün hangi kuramcıya daha çok şey borçlu olduğunu belirlemekten ziyade, odak noktamızı onun özgün sosyolojik çerçevesini şekillendiren çeşitli etkileri anlamak oluşturuyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bourdieu, Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Sosyolojik Düşünce

An Eclectic Sociologist?

In addition to the importance of the social and historical context in which Pierre Bourdieu lived, and the intellectual trajectory he followed, one should not forget the relationship he established with previous traditions of thought while developing his sociological theory and constructing new concepts. Unlike Karl Mannheim's "socially unattached / free-floating *intelligentsia*", which he described in all good faith (Mannheim, 1954, pp. 136–146), Bourdieu, as a sociologist, never hovers in the air. Sociological research cannot be conducted in a theoretical vacuum. However, it is built on the foundations of the theoretical production of inspired thinkers. To understand why Bourdieu's concepts are produced, operationalized, or necessary, it is therefore important to comprehend the relationship he establishes with the sources that influence him. Bourdieu's sociological theory did not simply fall from the sky (Champagne & Christin, 2019, p. 14).

The question of how Bourdieu treated the theoretical sources that contributed to the development of his sociological thought reflects a scholastic point of view. According to the prevalent view among scholars

studying the theoretical dimensions of Bourdieu's sociology, the French sociologist is regarded as an eclectic thinker who pragmatically engages with various intellectual traditions and thinkers within those traditions. This approach, meticulously framed by Bourdieu with the epistemological principles and theoretical propositions, implies a dialectical, methodological, and reflexive eclecticism. It entails a shifting emphasis from one to another at different times, rather than an unrestricted conceptual eclecticism (see Sulkunen, 1982; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Swartz, 1997; Webb et al., 2002; Barrett, 2015).

Bourdieu argues that, in many cases, one of the most significant obstacles to the advancement of scientific knowledge is the failure to establish dialogues between theories initially positioned in opposition to each other. The French sociologist specifically highlights dogmatic philosophy as an example of such a position characterized by "scholastic purity." In contrast, critical sociology adopts a stance of "reflexive eclecticism." Engaging in this critical practice of eclecticism requires sociologists to resist the temptation of relying solely on introspection and instead embark on an outward journey that transcends the boundaries between different systems of thought. For the birth of any new tradition, dialogue with existing traditions is essential, and the success of a critical sociologist depends on their ability to navigate the artificially separated epistemologies (Susen, 2011, p. 380).

When Bourdieu discusses the dialogue between theories, he does not refer to the "false eclectic syntheses" that were once popular in sociology. According to him, the negative perception associated with the concept of eclecticism is merely an excuse employed by some individuals to mask their "ignorance." In essence, eclecticism poses a direct threat to the comfort that arises from confining oneself to a particular tradition, which makes intellectual life relatively effortless (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 12).

When viewed through Bourdieu's perspective, who, influenced by Bachelard, embraces the motto "there is no science but of the hidden," the significance of establishing a critical dialogue between conflicting thinkers and ideas becomes more apparent:

"The sociologist is better or worse equipped to discover what is hidden, depending on how well armed he is scientifically -how well he uses the capital of concepts, methods and techniques accumulated by his predecessors, Marx, Durkheim, Weber and many others- and also on how 'critical' he is, the extent to which the

conscious or unconscious intention that impels him is a subversive one, the degree of interest he has in uncovering what is censored and repressed in the social world. And if sociology does not advance more quickly than it does, like social science in general, that's perhaps partly because these two factors tend to vary in inverse ratio" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 10).

As he stated in another interview with him:

"As far as the 'sources' are concerned, people may be surprised by this, but I really proceed eclectically in this regard: I am engaged in reflexive eclecticism. For me, it is not necessarily a contradiction to 'borrow' stuff from everywhere: from Marx to Durkheim via Weber, as long as all this leads to a certain theoretical coherence, which nowadays is castigated as 'totalitarian' by the postmodernists. Besides, this 'eclecticism' is not tantamount to randomness. ... The opposition between Marx and Weber, for example, is usually a rather artificial one, and there is no reason why their respective contributions should not be subject to cross-fertilisation. The same applies to Durkheim and Weber. We need this conceptual integration, which every forward-looking science is capable of producing" (Bourdieu et al., 2011, p. 118).

If Bourdieu had indeed developed an eclectic sociology, as he suggests here, it may be because his sociology naturally tends to engage with rival traditions of thought, often in parallel. This eclecticism also imparts distinct characteristics to Bourdieu's work.¹ However, the matter becomes

¹ Webb, Schirato and Danaher (2002, p. 4) argue that Bourdieu's work possesses at least two distinctive virtues due to its eclecticism. Firstly, as a "non-specialist visitor" to various fields, Bourdieu is relatively free to explore without being constrained by the established "ways of seeing" imposed by disciplines such as art history, linguistics, fashion, law, sport, religion, and others. This freedom enables him to pose questions that may be "unthinkable" for researchers who have been immersed in the specific norms and divisions (*nomos*) of a particular field. It also allows him to pursue lines of inquiry that these researchers, bound by the field-specific *nomos*, might be unaware of or deliberately avoid due to fear of deviating from accepted positions within their respective fields. Secondly, Bourdieu effectively employs practical insights derived from various traditions of thought and thinkers to transform existing bodies of knowledge and imbue them with a practical and political dimension. His studies on the sociology of education, sociology of art, sociology of culture, sociology of knowledge and science, among others, demonstrate that relations of domination are fundamental in structuring all social fields. Although this perspective may risk being overly reductionist, one could argue that Bourdieu's examination of the fields of

particularly intriguing when considering Frédéric Vandenberghe's perspective. In a brief footnote, Vandenberghe argues that Bourdieu's sociology is not truly eclectic but rather "synthetic" in the Kantian sense of the term:

"Bourdieu is not a syncretic but a synthetic and heretical thinker. He draws on Durkheim, Marx, Weber, and others but insofar as he critically corrects them, one could as well describe him as an anti-Durkheimian Durkheimian, an anti-Weberian Weberian, or an anti-Marxist Marxist. One could even say that he thinks with Althusser against Althusser and against Habermas with Habermas, but not -and this is probably the only exception- that he thinks with Bachelard against Bachelard" (Vandenberghe, 1999, p. 32).

Bourdieu consistently demonstrates a willingness to turn the scientific tools he developed upon himself, and he openly invites us to critique his own work. Therefore, it would be unfair to Bourdieu and his sociology to adopt the interpretation that he was merely an eclectic thinker, as he himself acknowledges. It would be also incorrect to claim that he simply gathered generally compatible elements from preceding traditions of thought and assembled them in a simplistic manner, excluding the contradictory aspects of those traditions.²

The implication of this approach, which Vandenberghe momentarily dismisses, is that Bourdieu engages in a process of comparing and selecting conflicting arguments from different traditions of thought in order to construct a new sociology. At best, he harmonizes and reconciles the arguments put forth by opposing thinkers at a higher level; akin to different metals losing their original properties when melted together in a crucible, resulting in new alloys with distinct properties. This approach suggests that in Bourdieu's "sociological soup", it becomes unclear where the ideas of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and others begin and end. Nonetheless, a discerning connoisseur will be able to taste each of these "flavors" on their palate and readily distinguish them from one another.

cultural production (religion, language, education, knowledge, science, art, etc.) itself constitutes a political sociology.

² In another text, he makes a direct strategic suggestion to avoid eclecticism. For further reference, see (Bourdieu, 1988).

It is evident that Bourdieu does not adopt a syncretic stance, which he implicitly refers to as “false eclecticism” and equates with uncritical eclecticism.³ If we were to follow this perspective, reminiscent of the metaphor of a salad bowl, Bourdieu emerges as a sociologist who skilfully integrated different traditions of thought while preserving the distinct elements of each tradition separately. Referring back to the previous example, one can easily discern where Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and others fit within this metaphorical bowl.

As mentioned earlier, although this topic is the subject of purely scholastic debate, it is worth exploring the reasons for Bourdieu’s classification as a synthetic thinker, even if it may deepen the critique put forth by Vandenberghe. However, one can also choose to pause at this point and find satisfaction, for the time being, in the notion that there are theoretical gains to be made from interpreting Bourdieu from such a standpoint.⁴ Within this framework, while delving into Bourdieu’s relationship with preceding traditions of thought and uncovering the influence of thinkers representing those traditions on his work is an option, it may be more attainable to focus on specific names that hold particular importance in relation to his sociological contributions.

The Legacy of Classical Sociological Thought: Borrowings, Continuities, Ruptures

Figure 1 provides a schematic categorisation of the traditions of thought and their influential thinkers with which Bourdieu engaged in the construction of his sociology. As Susen and Turner, the authors we relied on to construct this visualisation, are well aware, this classification is a highly polarised reading of philosophical and social theory, and thus in danger of leading to highly reductionist and misleading assessments of the traditions listed here and the names placed within them. Some of the names in this template, where percentages and colours do not have any particular meaning

³ Bourdieu lists three names that he thinks openly adopt this attitude: Talcott Parsons, Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton. According to him, Parsons is to the European sociological tradition what Cicero is to Greek philosophy. Parsons takes the original texts and translates them into a rather loose language. He produces a “syncretic message” from a kind of academic combination of Weber, Durkheim and Pareto, leaving Marx out. On the other hand, he argues that Lazarsfeld is infected with the empirical bias of the Viennese school, a kind of “short-sighted neo-positivism”, and thus remains theoretically blind. Finally, he argues that Merton is positioned somewhere in between, producing “minor academic treatises” in the form of “medium-range theory” and “clear and simple little syntheses” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 37).

⁴ Michael Burawoy (2019) provides one of the most competent examples of reading both Bourdieu and Marxism from this very position, uncovering some of the intellectual influences embedded within Bourdieu’s sociology.

A Synthesis at the Crossroads of Sociological Thought: Bourdieu's Intellectual Dance with Marx, Weber and Durkheim

(except for Marx, Weber and Durkheim), could easily be listed under another category, while the existence of some names could be directly challenged. In addition, it could be equally argued that there are far more important names that should be included, even though they are not in the current template.⁵

For example, Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn, who are listed under the philosophy of science category, seem rather out of place in this template. If it is necessary to include someone from the tradition to which these two names belong, Imre Lakatos would have been a more reasonable choice. It is also surprising not to see prominent figures in French history and philosophy of science, such as Alexandre Koyré and Gaston Bachelard, included in this category. Similarly, the absence of Ernst Cassirer's name and the category of "philosophy of symbolic form" associated with his thought weakens the validity and representativeness of this classification. The list of omissions could be expanded to include figures like Alfred Schütz, Kurt Lewin, Erwin Panofsky, Norbert Elias, John Dewey, Charles Tilly, and even Michel Foucault.

Indeed, one could compile an extensive list of the various intellectual traditions that Bourdieu incorporates into his work. In other words, Bourdieu's work not only offers an original synthesis of the "holy trinity" of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, as it is often emphasized in academic literature, but also demonstrates the ongoing relevance of their ideas in contemporary social debates (Susen & Turner, 2011, pp. xx–xxi). Therefore, this simple template will undoubtedly prove useful as it reflects Bourdieu's inclination to engage with diverse thinkers and intellectual currents, while encompassing the three fundamental pillars of his work—the "Marx-Weber-Durkheim spectrum." It also highlights his intellectual dialogues with critical social scientists from various traditions.

⁵ While it may seem plausible to create a more objective template of the traditions and theorists that influenced Bourdieu's sociology through methods like classification analysis or bibliometric analysis based on his texts, the multi-layered nature of Bourdieu's sociology poses challenges for arriving at conclusive results using such analyses. In addition, it will be necessary to analyze the frequency of references to uncover these influences. Therefore, important figures like Blaise Pascal, whom Bourdieu rarely mentioned until the publication of his work *Méditations pascaliennes* just five years before his passing, might be inadvertently excluded from this new template, despite Bourdieu's explicit declaration of being a Pascalian. At this juncture, one could easily fall into the temptation of employing Bourdieu against Bourdieu: His subjective statement of being a Pascalian holds meaning only at a second-order level of objectivity, necessitating the harmonization of studying the objective structures that constitute Bourdieu's sociology and his subjective statements. Indeed, this approach aligns with Bourdieu's own method of bifocal analysis, wherein he sought to connect both subjective and objective elements. Bourdieu employed this approach when studying the works of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. See (Bourdieu, 1991b).

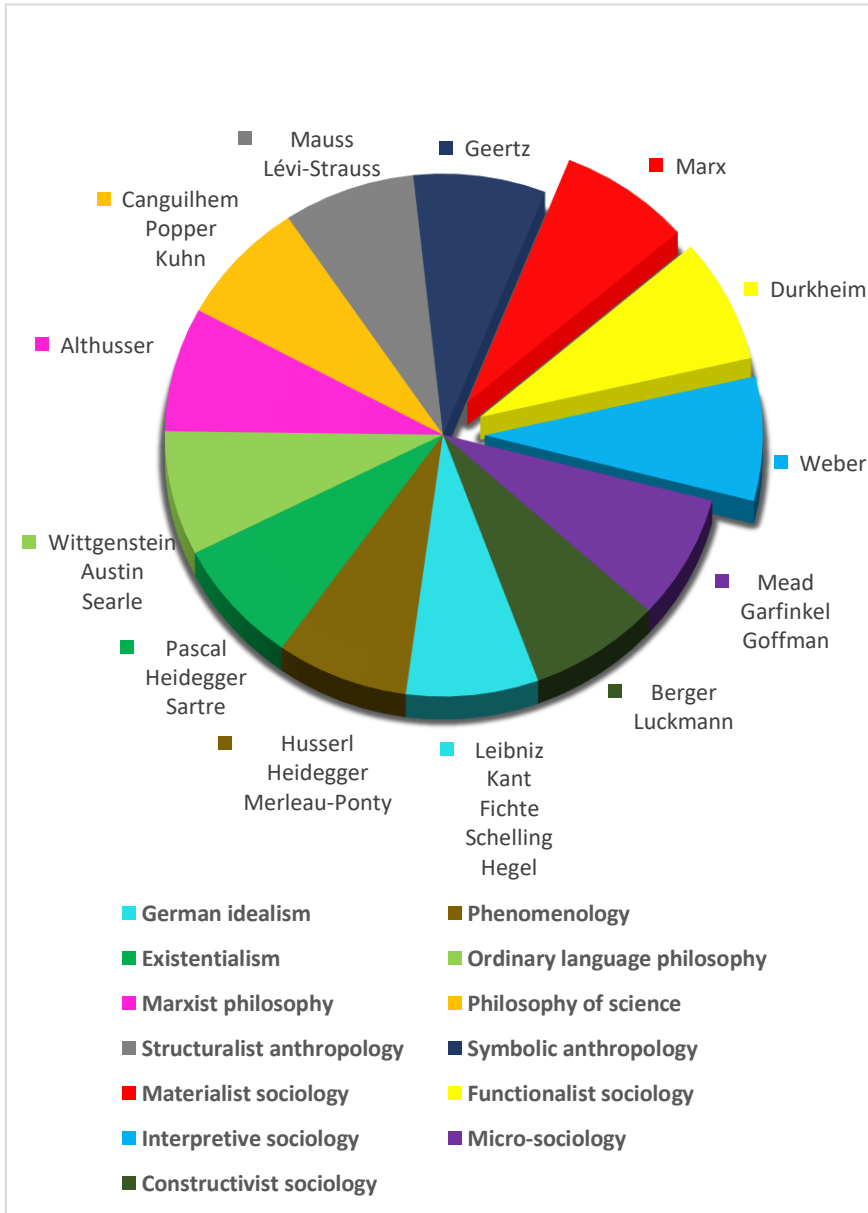


Figure 1. Thinkers and Thought Traditions Influencing Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology

However, when examining the reproduction of social hierarchies, mechanisms of domination, and the relationship between individuals' social origins and their preferences and practices, Bourdieu primarily draws upon the works of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim (Jourdain & Naulin, 2016, p. 7). Despite Bourdieu's tendency to distance himself from explicit identification with these three classical sociologists, he undeniably utilizes all three in a meaningful and selective manner. Moreover, we have at least two compelling reasons to argue that Bourdieu achieved a synthesis of sorts between the works of these three figures. Firstly, Bourdieu posits that the theories of these founding fathers of sociology, despite apparent opposition, converge on similar epistemological principles of the social (Bourdieu, 1968, p. 682). Secondly, Bourdieu establishes a critical approach that connects these three thinkers, wherein he highlights their respective contributions and gaps in the examination of symbolic violence (Swartz, 1997, p. 38). In Bourdieu's view, the hindrance to the communication between concepts, methods, and techniques is often sociological rather than logical (Bourdieu, 1993, pp. 12–13).

For Bourdieu, “Marx, Weber, and Durkheim represent landmarks which structure our theoretical space and our perception of this space” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 30). However, Bourdieu's objective is to transcend the mystique that often surrounds their sociologies (Champagne & Christin, 2019, p. 9). He does not incorporate their ideas in an eclectic manner but rather synthesizes them within a geometric space that brings together diverse perspectives (Fowler, 2011, p. 47).

At the core of Bourdieu's intellectual project lies the enduring debate between cultural idealism and historical materialism, a debate that has held a central place in Western social thought since Marx. Bourdieu's sociology represents a bold endeavour to transcend the classical polarity of idealism and materialism, seeking a shared ontological foundation between these two axes through a materialist yet non-reductionist interpretation of cultural life. Just as the classical authors of sociological thought (Marx, Weber, and Durkheim) developed epistemologies, theories, and concepts to comprehend and elucidate the social world, Bourdieu forged a more robust epistemology, theory, and methodology that enabled an understanding of the structures and relationships within the social world. As Bourdieu himself frequently articulated, his relationship with Marx, as well as with the other two classical authors in the history of sociological thought, is characterized by a dialectic of borrowings, continuities, and ruptures. While his thought originates from Marx, Bourdieu's sociological journey encompasses considerable

engagement with Durkheim and Weber (Swartz, 1997, p. 7). In essence, Bourdieu's ability to see beyond others stems from his position of standing on the shoulders of these "intellectual giants" who preceded him.

Karl Marx: The Cartesian Roots

While Bourdieu's relationship with Marxism appears problematic in various respects (Bonnewitz, 2002, p. 13), his engagement with Marx operates on a distinct level from the dimension that stands out in his criticisms of Marxist thinkers as a whole.⁶ His critique of Marx is targeted at certain aspects of Marx's theory, rather than a wholesale rejection. In fact, Bourdieu's productive dialogue with Marx's theory had highly beneficial consequences for the development of his own theoretical work. Although Bourdieu's thought, with some exceptions, often demonstrates a tendency to distance itself from the dominance of Marxist thought, few would dispute today that Karl Marx was a significant influence on his intellectual development.

In an interview, Bourdieu himself mentioned that he initially encountered Marx's writings in the 1950s as a young student, and subsequently engaged with his works extensively at a later stage:

"When I was a student in the fifties, phenomenology, in its existentialist variety, was at its peak, and I had read Being and Nothingness very early on, and then Merleau-Ponty and Husserl; Marxism didn't really exist as an intellectual position, even if people like Tran-Duc-Thao managed to give it a certain profile by raising the question of its relation with phenomenology. However, I did read Marx at that time for academic reasons; I was especially interested in the young Marx, and I had been fascinated by the 'Theses on Feuerbach'" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 3).

This quotation provides valuable insights not only into Bourdieu's formative years but also into the broader framework of his sociological thought, prompting two thought-provoking observations. Firstly, Bourdieu's direct engagement with Marx's works, alongside the contemporary debates influencing French phenomenology at the time, becomes evident. It is highly likely that the revolutionary fervour expressed in Marx's *Theses on*

⁶ In a quantitative study that analyzed Bourdieu's references to Marx and Marxism across all of his books and over a hundred articles, it was discovered that the French sociologist positioned himself closely to Marx. Bourdieu frequently made positive references to Marx and his ideas. However, the study also revealed that Bourdieu distanced himself significantly from Marxists, often expressing negative views towards them. See (Gilles, 2014).

Feuerbach, particularly Thesis XI, exerted an influence on the young Bourdieu, who was a philosophy student in his twenties. Additionally, Bourdieu's interest was likely piqued by Thesis I, which emphasizes that mental structures are not simply objects of intuition, and Thesis VI, which argues that the "essence of man" does not exist as an inherent abstraction in each individual but arises from concrete human activity. However, it is important to note that Bourdieu's affinity with Marx during this early encounter should not be misconstrued as blind allegiance. Despite arguments from writers like Bridget Fowler, who assert that Bourdieu is one of the "greatest heirs" of the Western Marxist tradition, Bourdieu himself never identified as a Marxist.⁷ While he acknowledges Marx's significant contribution to his thinking, the relationship between Marx's ideas and Bourdieu's own work is best understood as a dialectic of "borrowings," "continuities," and "ruptures" (Braz, 2017, p. 29).

The second thought-provoking aspect of this quote pertains to Bourdieu's emphasis on the limited presence of Marxism within the intellectual field. Considering his enrolment at the *École Normale Supérieure* (ENS) as a student in 1951, it can be inferred that Bourdieu is referring to a period between 1950 and 1955. In light of this information, it is noteworthy that Bourdieu does not associate Sartre, who held significant influence in the French intellectual landscape after World War II and attempted to synthesize phenomenology with Marxism, with the Marxist tradition (Bonnewitz, 2002, p. 6). Moreover, although Marxist theorists in France reached their zenith during the unprecedented growth of the university system in the 1970s (Angermuller, 2004, p. 80), it is clear that Marxism was not as feeble in the French intellectual field in the 1950s as Bourdieu suggests. In fact, during the early 1950s, Marxism and existentialism were dominant currents of thought

⁷ David Swartz rightly points out that some early British and American writers interpreting Bourdieu's work made the mistake of situating him within the Marxist tradition. In this respect, he particularly points out Inglis (Swartz, 1997, p. 38). In fact, there are understandable reasons why the British professor, a cultural studies specialist, considered Bourdieu as a Marxist sociologist in his article (see Inglis, 1979). Looking at the references to Bourdieu in the article (such as "*Sociologie de l'Algérie*" (1958), "*Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*" (1963), "*Le déracinement: La crise de l'agriculture traditionnelle en Algérie*" (1964), "*Reproduction in Education*" ([1970] 1977), and "*Outline of a Theory of Practice*" ([1972] 1977)), it becomes clear that the work closest to the publication date of the article was published in France in 1972. These works, written by Bourdieu between 1958 and 1972 under the direct or indirect influence of the Algerian experience, contain significant references to Marx's economic terminology, from the choice of research problematics to the names given to his research. Interestingly, in another work published in French in 1985 and translated into English in 1990, two French authors, one a professor of political science and the other a professor of philosophy, position Bourdieu as the representative of French Marxism (Ferry & Renaut, 1990). However, the "most Marxist" and "most revolutionary" portrayal of Bourdieu still belongs to Gad Yair (2009, pp. 36, 78, 130, 140).

within the French intellectual world, with the anti-positivism of existentialism and the official scientific Marxism of the French Communists presenting major obstacles to the development of social theory and empirical research (Swartz, 1997, pp. 16–17). Given Bourdieu's claim that he consistently finds himself opposing dominant models in his research and political positioning, it is difficult to justify his adoption of a Weberian or Durkheimian position against a "relatively weak" Marxism (Bourdieu, 2008a, pp. 106–107). Undoubtedly, there are other reasons behind Bourdieu's criticism of Marxism on various occasions, and as the years progressed, this criticism grew in intensity alongside the growing distance between the French sociologist and Marxism.

The lectures on *On the State* contain striking passages that highlight the intensity of Bourdieu's criticism. In the introduction to the opening seminar of the academic year, Bourdieu asserts a significant similarity between Althusserian Marxists and Parsonsian structural functionalists in their approach to explaining social mechanisms in terms of functions. Such a statement would undoubtedly capture the attention of even the most heterodox Marxist (see Bourdieu, 2014, p. 6).

The criticism continues to be reiterated in the following weeks, indicating a persistent and ongoing intensity in Bourdieu's critique:

"I had intended to compare Eisenstadt and Perry Anderson in order to show you how, beneath the apparent opposition between a structural functionalist tradition and a Marxist tradition, there are many resemblances. To sum up very quickly: Eisenstadt is functionalism for everyone, whereas Anderson is functionalism for certain people. Eisenstadt asks what the functions of the state are for the totality of the social order, all classes together, whereas Anderson examines the class functions for the dominant of that time, that is, the feudalists. But the essential thing is that they are both functionalists" (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 81).

The severity of this criticism is heightened in a seminar held a year later:

"...Marxism does not have the theoretical means to think state domination, or indeed any species of domination. Paradoxically -and here I am bending the stick- Marxism is unable to think what it never stops talking about. To

understand this kind of immediate submission that is stronger than any explicit submission, to understand this submission without an act of submission, this act of allegiance without an act of allegiance, this belief without an act of faith, to understand everything that makes up the foundation of the social order, you have to emerge from the instrumentalist logic in which the Marxist tradition thinks ideology, ideology being perceived as the product of the universalization of the particular interest of the dominant that is imposed on the dominated. (You could also invoke the notion of false consciousness, but what is superfluous in 'false consciousness' is precisely 'consciousness'. There is nothing sadder than Marxist discussion of these problems, as you are stuck within a philosophy of consciousness, of the relationship of submission as a relationship of alienation based on something like a failure of political cogito)" (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 169).

In fact, Bourdieu is not alone in his criticism that Marxism lacks a theory of the state or a theory of power in a broader sense. In other words, it is not a new theoretical "discovery" to assert that Marx's writings do not offer a comprehensive and systematic theory of the state (Miliband, 1965, p. 278). Early on, Miliband highlighted that Marx never attempted to present such a theory. Martin Carnoy also recognized the absence of a "single, coherent theory of the state" in Marx's works, predating Bourdieu's observations. Furthermore, according to Carnoy, the lack of a unified and well-formulated analysis of the state is not only evident in Marx's views but also in the writings of Engels and Lenin, serving as a significant obstacle to establishing a universally accepted definition of the state within Marxist theory (Carnoy, 1984, p. 45). Surprisingly, Poulantzas also shares a perspective that partly supports Bourdieu's stance, stating that there is no general theory of the state to be found in the Marxist classics, not only due to the authors' inability to develop one, but also because such a theory can never exist (Poulantzas, 2000, p. 20). Lastly, the criticism that Marxism lacks a theory of power originates from Michel Foucault.⁸

What is striking in the passage above is not just Bourdieu's critique of Marxist theories of the state or power, but also his implicit suggestion that

⁸ For a detailed discussion on this issue see (Özpolat, 2020).

Marxist philosophy is directly connected to the Cartesian tradition of thought. Bourdieu, as indicated in the passage, retrospectively associates Marx with Hegel (in terms of philosophy of consciousness) and then with Descartes (through the notion of “political cogito”) by means of the concept of “false consciousness.” It becomes evident why Bourdieu substitutes Marxist terms like “false consciousness” and “ideology” with concepts such as “misrecognition” and “symbolic domination,” and even declares himself as being influenced by Pascal. What truly troubles Bourdieu about Marxism is its Cartesian heritage:

“It is this doxic submission of the dominated to the structures of a social order of which their mental structures are the product that Marxism cannot understand insofar as it remains trapped in the intellectualist tradition of the philosophies of consciousness. In the notion of false consciousness that it invokes to account for effects of symbolic domination, that superfluous term is “consciousness.” And to speak of “ideologies” is to locate in the realm of representations — liable to be transformed through this intellectual conversion called “awakening of consciousness” (prise de conscience)— what in fact belongs to the order of belief, i.e., to the level of the most profound corporeal dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 14).

Nevertheless, it is clear that Bourdieu inherited some key themes from the German philosopher. Above all, Bourdieu draws on Marx’s general program to write a sociology of reproduction. He also adopts Marx’s perspective in reading the social order in terms of relations of domination (Bonnewitz, 2002, p. 13). Like Marx, he argues that capital underpins the social world and determines the positions that agents occupy in social space. Bourdieu is also a materialist like Marx in his search for the practical elements that determine human consciousness in social life. Again, he accepts the Marxist idea that symbolic systems fulfil social functions, such as the reproduction of class domination and inequality, albeit with slight retouching (Swartz, 1997, pp. 38–39). In this context, Bourdieu himself states that the aim of all his work is to “put forward a materialist theory of the symbolic” (Bourdieu, 2014, pp. 166–167, 192–193).

However, from a broader perspective, his dissatisfaction with Marxist thought outweighs the common points he shares with it, and this time he criticizes it on three main lines (Schirato & Roberts, 2020, pp. 29–30): Firstly,

he sees in Marxism a disturbing general tendency, inherited by Marx from the Hegelian legacy, to abstract and systematize itself or to present itself as a universal category. Secondly, he objects to the classical distinction in Marxism between infrastructure and superstructure and to the idea that social reality is ultimately reducible to, or must necessarily be explained in terms of, relations of production.⁹ Thirdly and finally, he is seriously disturbed by the Marxist theory's tendency to ignore or at least underestimate the social experiences and effects of everyday life. Based on these criticisms, he distances himself from Marxism in three ways (Swartz, 1997, pp. 66, 73–74, 82–83). Firstly, he uses the concept of interest for goods and services that do not appear economic at first glance. Secondly, he extends the idea of capital to all forms of power, whether material, cultural, social, or symbolic. Lastly, he further emphasizes the importance of symbolic forms and processes in the reproduction of social inequalities, and he will be accompanied by Weber in the next part of his journey.

Max Weber: A Materialist Symbol Theorist

Bourdieu's relationship with Weber is important in two respects. Firstly, Bourdieu stands out as one of the most influential figures, alongside Raymond Aron, in the recognition and dissemination of Weber's sociology in France. However, Aron's Weber (the conservative Weber) and Bourdieu's Weber (the leftist Weber) are opposed to each other in many respects. Although Bourdieu first became aware of Weber through a book by Merleau-Ponty, he actually read Weber for the first time in Algeria. At that point, Weber's works had not yet been translated into French. The young sociologist, who learned German in order to read Weber, translated some chapters of *The Protestant Ethic* during this time.¹⁰

⁹ In the seminar on January 31, 1991, as part of his lectures on the state, Bourdieu seems to paradoxically reproduce the opposition between infrastructure and superstructure rather than transcend it. He even goes on to state that, ultimately, the superstructure is decisive. He says: "In other words, the old model of infrastructure and superstructure -a model that has done a lot of harm in social science- must be rejected, or, if you insist on keeping it, it must at least be turned upside down. Do we not have to start from symbolic forms if we want to explain an economic miracle? Doesn't the foundation of things that seem to us the most fundamental, the most real, the most determinant 'in the last analysis', as Marxists say, lie in mental structures, symbolic forms, these pure, logical, mathematical forms?" (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 161). However, in subsequent weeks (February 21, 1991), he corrects himself: "Certain people will say, I know, that because I put symbolic capital before economic capital, reversing the old opposition between infrastructure and superstructure, I am therefore an idealist, a spiritualist, or what you like. This is mistaken, since I reject this dichotomy" (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 193).

¹⁰ The first translation of this work into French was made in 1964. Raymond Aron's voluminous work, the last chapter of which is devoted to Weber, was first published in 1967. See (Aron, 1967).

Upon returning from Algeria in 1961, Bourdieu began lecturing on Weber's sociology of religion. In an interview, he mentioned that while he requested to lecture on Weber, Aron, whom he assisted, allowed him to lecture on Durkheim but had difficulties with Weber (Bourdieu et al., 2011, pp. 111–116). However, it can be argued that Bourdieu's contemporaries (Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida) employed the "strategy of bringing in a non-French player to the field" when it came to the reception of Nietzsche in the French intellectual sphere. This strategy can be observed in Bourdieu's case with Weber. After 1960, as a "young sociologist" just arrived from Algeria, it could well be argued that he used Weber's conception of sociology to strengthen and legitimise his own weak position within the field of French sociology (Ünsaldı, 2013, pp. 33–34).

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Bourdieu's engagement with Weber can be viewed as an act of rediscovery (Bourdieu et al., 2011, pp. 121–122). In fact, instead of merely engaging in classical exegetical work, Bourdieu seeks to uncover new implicit meanings within Weber's analyses (Braz, 2017, p. 45). However, Bourdieu's primary motivation for shifting his focus from Marx to Weber is to develop a theory of symbolic goods and practices that transcends both economic reductionism and idealism. Moreover, contrary to common belief, Bourdieu argues that Weber was actually "preoccupied with preserving the 'symbolic' in the context of a materialist conception of history" and should not be considered anti-Marx (Bourdieu et al., 2011, p. 118).

"...there is something which, at least in Weber, one can see very clearly –and this is what has impressed me the most: the reference to Marx. Weber seeks to close one of the gaps in Marxism. In Die protestantische Ethik he asserts, roughly speaking, that he does not claim that his work explains everything, but that it is only aimed at rectifying a picture which Marxism had painted in a somewhat reductive fashion. In essence, Weber is concerned with retrieving the symbolic dimension of social life –not as the primary and ultimate dimension, but as a dimension which deserves its legitimate place in history" (Bourdieu et al., 2011, pp. 115–116).

In fact, according to Bourdieu, it is not only Marxists who have failed to acknowledge the Marxist elements in Weber's work. On the contrary, even self-proclaimed Weberians have contributed to the perpetuation of the illusory opposition between the two thinkers. Bourdieu asserts that

“specialists in Max Weber, who was the great weapon against Marx, never read him well enough, even though Weber called himself a Marxist, something that bothers Marxists and Weberians alike” (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 359).

According to Bourdieu, Weber effectively employs various aspects of materialist analysis to develop a materialist sociology of religion that incorporates the symbolic nature of religious phenomena. In a way, Weber presents a political economy of religion (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 36):

“...in contrast to the usual regression of Marxism towards economism, which understands the economy only in the restricted sense of the capitalist economy and which explains everything in terms of the economy defined in this way, Max Weber broadens economic analysis (in the generalized sense) to areas that are generally abandoned by economics, such as religion. Thus, in a magnificent formulation, he characterizes the Church as the holder of the monopoly of the manipulation of the goods of salvation. He opens the way to a radical materialism that seeks the economic determinants (in the broadest sense) in areas where the ideology of ‘disinterestedness’ prevails, such as art and religion” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 12).

The primary objective of Bourdieu's sociology is to expand Weber's model of political economy, originally centred on the religious sphere, to encompass other social domains, aiming to encompass all dimensions of cultural and social life. Bourdieu asserts that his sociology of culture shares the same essence as Weber's, employing a political economy framework to extend the materialist critique to the development of the religious sphere (Swartz, 1997, p. 41). Unlike Marx, Bourdieu argues that an individual's position in the social space cannot be solely determined by their role in the relations of production. In other words, the economic dimension alone is not the sole criterion for determining positions (attitudes) within the social space. Instead, in order to ascertain the positions individuals occupy in the social space, a more intricate understanding of social space, akin to Weber's approach, must be employed (Jourdain & Naulin, 2016, p. 109).

By asserting that knowledge of social action stems from the meaning individuals attribute to it, Weber establishes an interpretivist sociological tradition that opposes a purely naturalistic and objectivist approach. In other words, Weber's sociology begins with the “meaning” that guides social action,

aiming to make social action comprehensible. Within this framework, Weber's definition of sociology serves as a reminder of the importance of considering subjective structures in explaining social phenomena, a topic that Bourdieu frequently emphasizes:

"Sociology (in the sense in which this-highly ambiguous word is used here) is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences. We shall speak of "action" insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behavior -be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence. Action is "social" insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (Weber, 1978, p. 4).

In Bourdieu's sociology, the functions performed by forms of legitimacy and legitimate representations, which contribute to the reproduction of social order, hold significant importance. Inspired by Weber, the French sociologist questions the particular contribution of legitimate representations in maintaining social order, particularly regarding the positions occupied by those most vulnerable to domination (Champagne & Christin, 2019, p. 141). According to Bourdieu, "in relation to Marx, it was Weber who put the Humean question: how is it that the dominant dominate?" (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 173).¹¹ The German sociologist answers this question by shifting the analysis from the abstract realm of philosophy to the concrete field of sociology, examining how domination can persist without solely relying on physical violence. Domination is fully effective when it is legitimized and internalized by social agents. Bourdieu not only emphasizes the "objective cooperation" of the oppressed in their subjugation but also provides an explanation for this "ontological complicity" that avoids falling into the essentialism of "naive psychologism" (W. Reich) or "voluntary servitude" (La Boétie).¹² He seeks to address this sociological problem through an

¹¹ In fact, David Hume is neither the only nor the first person to ask this question. This question, to which thinkers from Étienne De La Boétie to Blaise Pascal, from Baruch Spinoza to David Hume, from Antonio Gramsci to Wilhelm Reich, sought an answer, is, as Deleuze and Guattari point out in *Anti-Oedipus*, arguably one of the most ambiguous issues in political philosophy: "That is why the fundamental problem of political philosophy is still precisely the one that Spinoza saw so clearly, and that Wilhelm Reich rediscovered: "Why do men fight for their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2000, p. 38).

¹² Deleuze and Guattari attempt to address this question from the perspective of the "politics of desire." According to these authors, the de-territorialization of the social constitutes the most characteristic and crucial aspect of domination. The manner in which desire is suppressed in a

analysis of the historical formation of tendencies that perpetuate the subordination of the oppressed (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 24).

Hence, from Bourdieu's perspective, it becomes comprehensible how domination can operate without encountering resistance, and how this legitimized domination facilitates the perpetuation of inequalities (Braz, 2017, p. 45). Through this lens, Bourdieu seeks to analyse why and through what mechanisms those subjected to domination accept it, seemingly in agreement with those who uphold the existing social order (Swartz, 1997, pp. 42–43). At the core of his investigation lies the question of how those in positions of power, status, and authority employ these attributes to create a "legitimate gaze" that exerts influence over those who are subjected to domination (Bonnewitz, 2002, pp. 15–16).¹³ The dominant culture plays a crucial role in fully integrating the ruling class by facilitating communication among its members and establishing arbitrary boundaries that separate them from other social classes. Additionally, it contributes to the illusory integration of society as a whole, leading to cultural indifference among the dominated classes, and ultimately contributes to the legitimacy of the established social order by establishing and legitimizing hierarchical distinctions (Bourdieu, 1991a, p. 167). "Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness" (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 164). Bourdieu differs from Weber at this point in that he sees this legitimizing activity as a derivative of the "historical unconscious" rather than as a "free act of consciousness" in both senses of the term. According to him, legitimacy has its origins in the direct agreement between the unconscious and the embedded structures, such as those that

society directly determines its structure. The primary goal of domination has always been to suppress and control desire, altering its existing organization and context within its own closed system. However, while the two authors construct a metaphysics of desire that affirms the politics of desire, they ultimately reproduce an essentialist perspective by assuming that desire is inherently self-revolutionary. For a brief critique of this issue see (Özpolat, 2018).

¹³ According to Bourdieu, the issue of "cultural arbitrariness" is one of them. In *Reproduction*, Bourdieu and Passeron focus on how those in a dominant position in a given society ultimately legitimize the values and meanings they wish to impose on those who are not in a dominant position through the structure and institutions of the educational system. What is imposed on students in the education system "seeks to reproduce the cultural arbitrary of the dominant or of the dominated classes" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 5). The meanings and values imposed are fundamentally arbitrary formations, even if they are not so in terms of their social consequences. The concept of "cultural arbitrariness" is used by the authors in this context to reveal the elements that conceal the arbitrariness of the power of those in power. A similar emphasis on education as the imposition of arbitrariness is also present in *The Love of Art*: "Inasmuch as it produces a culture which is simply the interiorization of the cultural arbitrary, family or school upbringing, through the inculcation of the arbitrary, results in an increasingly complete masking of the arbitrary nature of inculcation" (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1991, p. 109).

regulate temporal rhythms (for example, the completely arbitrary division of time at school into hours) and objective structures (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 14).

Although Bourdieu does not fully acknowledge it, another influence derived from Weber's sociology of religion can be found in the concept of "field." Bourdieu develops this concept both in opposition to and in alignment with Weber, drawing upon his analysis of the relationships between priests, prophets, and magicians (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 49). However, Bourdieu contends that Weber fails to recognize that interactions are structured by conflicting interests, and that these interests are intertwined with broader power structures. Similar to his critique of symbolic interactionists, Bourdieu perceives Weber's analysis as influenced by an "interactionist" perspective, as it primarily focuses on interpersonal and intersubjective relations among actors (Bourdieu, 2006, p. 121).

Émile Durkheim: Reappropriating the Legacy

One might think that almost everything has been said about the relationship between Pierre Bourdieu and his compatriot Émile Durkheim. In the academic literature, their theoretical affinities at various levels have been extensively discussed. Additionally, Bourdieu's many years of teaching at the sociology chair at the *Collège de France*, which was founded by Durkheim himself, their common graduation from ENS, and several other shared biographical features have often been emphasized (Braz, 2017, p. 49). Bourdieu has even been referred to as the "New Durkheim" in some cases (see Riley, 2015). Furthermore, due to his political interventions after 1990 (Bourdieu, 2008b), some authors have presented him as "Durkheim's Left Hand" (see Göker, 2001). However, this title seems more appropriate for Marcel Mauss, who was accused by his uncle (Durkheim) of "wasting his time" because of his "militant socialism."

Bourdieu, undoubtedly, belongs to a long tradition of sociology that originated with Durkheim and continued with Mauss. This tradition aimed to establish the universalist claims of sociology in opposition to the particularist claims of psychology and cultural literature (Harker et al., 1990, p. 217). However, it is important to acknowledge that Bourdieu's position differs from the Durkheimism described by Paul DiMaggio (DiMaggio, 1979, p. 1470). DiMaggio argues that Bourdieu's perspective aligns more with an anthropologist's approach to the world and its problems rather than that of a revolutionary in the service of Marxism. In fact, as Jean-Louis Fabiani highlighted in his speech at the colloquium "*Durkheim au Collège de France*," Durkheim had been largely "demonized" in France by the time Bourdieu embarked on his sociological career. This demonization affected not only

*A Synthesis at the Crossroads of Sociological Thought: Bourdieu's Intellectual
Dance with Marx, Weber and Durkheim*

philosophers but also sociologists.¹⁴ By reappropriating Durkheim, Bourdieu sought to restore his lost reputation.

At the time Bourdieu entered the ENS, sociology in France was in a precarious institutional position. In fact, Durkheim's influential legacy had already fallen out of favour even before World War II, primarily due to the premature deaths of his most brilliant successors and its marginalization within the French academic sphere. Sociology was not taught as a subject in high schools, and there were no undergraduate sociology departments in universities. By 1950, the total number of postgraduate sociology chairs in France could be counted on one hand. With the passing of Marcel Mauss, Durkheim's nephew and colleague, in 1950, the second generation of Durkheimians lost their last direct connection to Durkheim's pioneering intellectual achievements. In the early 1950s, whatever was known about sociology in France was associated with George Gurvitch and Georges Davy, who were professors at the Sorbonne. However, these figures can be seen as "failed" philosophers who adopted a position similar to that of the social philosophers of the pre-Durkheim period, rather than engaging in empirical sociological research (Swartz, 1997, p. 21). While empirical sociology was gaining popularity across the Atlantic as it distanced itself from abstract philosophy and critique of organized capitalism, in France, Durkheim's prolific positivism became routine, neutered, and essentially stagnant under the influence of university philosophy. What was needed was precisely an empirical social science rooted in a sound epistemology. Pierre Bourdieu, a former student of the *École Normale Supérieure* (ENS) and a philosopher, would ultimately bring new life to the discipline (Robbins, 2003, p. 29).

Bourdieu's practice of sociology is critical, avoiding the temptation of social prophecy. It is theoretical, yet grounded in empirical research. It is scientific without surrendering to positivism. He legitimizes and institutionalizes his sociological approach within the Durkheimian tradition, while also laying the foundations of a new school of sociology (Swartz, 1997, p. 26). However, it should be emphasized that Bourdieu was not concerned with adhering to a specific theoretical tradition. *Le Métier de sociologue* can be seen as a reworking of *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique*. Although Bourdieu is often seen as a contemporary counterpart to Durkheim¹⁵, he

¹⁴ Jean-Louis Fabiani, Bourdieu fut-il durkheimien ?, **L'héritage indirect de Durkheim au Collège de France**, France, 2019, <https://www.college-de-france.fr/video/pierre-michel-menger/2019/07-col-compagnon-menger-fabiani-20190607.mp4> (07.08.2022). This speech was also published as an article. See (Fabiani, 2022).

¹⁵ Frédéric Lebaron (2017, p. 12) rightly states the relationship between the two works as follows: "The standpoint adopted in the book recalls Durkheim's stance in *The Rules of Sociological*

cannot be reduced to a simple disciple of Durkheimian sociology. He is a theorist in his own right:

“Far from seeking to reduce Bourdieu’s sociology to a mere variation of the Durkheimian score, I would like to suggest that, while he leans firmly on them, Bourdieu imprints each of its pillar-principles with a particular twist, which allows them, ultimately, to support a scientific edifice endowed with an original architecture, at once closely akin to and sharply different from that of the Durkheimian mother-house. This is another way of saying that Pierre Bourdieu is an inheritor who –contrary to Marcel Mauss, for example– could and did, in the manner of an intellectual judoka, use the weight of the scientific capital accumulated by Durkheim to better project himself beyond his august predecessor” (Wacquant, 2011, pp. 91–92).

However, it can also be argued that Bourdieu’s theory appears to be somewhat incomplete, or more accurately, open-ended. Unlike Talcott Parsons, he did not strive to develop a closed sociological system. Bourdieu did not seek to create a comprehensive “theory of everything” or a “unified field theory” akin to what physicists pursue today. Instead, his theory encompasses a flexible conceptual framework with enduring themes and recurring analytical strategies that exhibit a gradual and progressive nature. While there are certain meta-theoretical principles that guide all of his research within this framework, his theory remains open and does not necessitate closure (Swartz, 1997, p. 5).¹⁶ In fact, from this perspective, Bourdieu seems to aligned himself more closely with Mauss rather than Durkheim. The following two quotations, the first from Mauss and the second from Bourdieu, shed light on Bourdieu’s appropriation of not only the legacy of “Uncle” Durkheim but also that of “Nephew” Mauss:

“I am not interested in developing systematic theories. ... I simply work away on my materials, and if, here and there a valid generalization appears, I state it, and pass on to something else. My major interest is not to set up some broad general theoretical scheme that covers the whole

Methods and, indeed, *The Craft of Sociology* can be read as an expression, in the context of the 60s, of a modernized Durkheimian programme, in the context of the evolution of a global sociology, and also the philosophy of language.”

¹⁶ For a detailed discussion on this issue, see also (Swartz, 2013).

field (an impossible task), but only to show something of the dimensions of the field, of which so far, we have touched the edges. ... Having worked in this way, my theories are scattered and unsystematic; and there is nowhere that one can find them summarized" (Mauss, 1991, p. 145).

"The notion of field does not provide ready-made answers to all possible queries in the manner of the grand concepts of "theoreticist theory" which claims to explain everything and in the right order. Rather, its major virtue, at least in my eyes, is that it promotes a mode of construction that has to be rethought anew every time. It forces us to raise questions: about the limits of the universe under investigation, how it is "articulated," to what and to what degree, etc. It offers a coherent system of recurrent questions that saves us from the theoretical vacuum of positivist empiricism and from the empirical void of theoreticist discourse" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 110).

A comprehensive list of such shared epistemological concerns and attitudes between Mauss and Bourdieu could be compiled.¹⁷ However, if we shift our focus from the nephew to the uncle, we will find that there are considerable amount of "common plinth and cracks" between Durkheim and Bourdieu, as aptly described by Loïc Wacquant.¹⁸

One of these concerns revolves around the idea that the reciprocity between social structures and mental structures serves significant political functions.¹⁹ Similar to Durkheim, Bourdieu perceives symbolic systems as classification systems that highlight the social functions of "collective representations" and "primitive classifications," in addition to their cognitive functions (Brubaker, 1985, pp. 747–748). Consequently, social agents are not solely governed by physical forces, but they also embody cognitive

¹⁷ For a brief but insightful study of the intellectual lineage between Durkheim, Mauss and Bourdieu, see (Fournier, 2010).

¹⁸ Here we will be content with highlighting two of the most striking ones. For detailed discussions, see (DiMaggio, 1979; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 12–15; Swartz, 1997, pp. 45–48; Wacquant, 2011).

¹⁹ One of the clearest statements on this subject can be found in *State Nobility*: "There exists a correspondence between social structures and mental structures, between the objective divisions of the social world -especially the division into dominant and dominated in the different fields- and the principles of vision and division that agents apply to them" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 1).

structures themselves. According to Bourdieu, Durkheim surpasses Cassirer in this regard by suggesting that these forms of classification are not transcendental and universally applicable, as in the Kantian tradition, but rather historically constructed, contingent upon the conditions of historical production, grounded in non-compulsory consensus, and entirely arbitrary (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 165). These taxonomies function as “structuring structures” in the sense that they themselves shape reality. Moreover, these systems, akin to Saussure’s model of language, operate based on the logic of “difference” or “distinction”:

“Symbolic consecration has very real effects, among other reasons because those it differentiates are already differentiated and because, as we have seen, the distinctive practices it imposes upon them, particularly in getting enormous investments out of its chosen people (in line with the logic of “noblesse oblige”), constantly reinforce these differences. Through a process very similar to the one that produces social differentiation between the sexes, the educational institution tends to produce embodied, and hence naturalized, social differences by building on preexisting social differences, which it reinforces by enabling them, through official recognition, to become fully realized and lastingly inscribed in objectively measurable dispositions, constantly asserted in the objectivity of practices” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 150).

Although these symbolic systems, solely derived from an activity of “misrecognition,” are inherently arbitrary, it is precisely this arbitrariness that renders them subjects of various forms of domination and resistance struggles. However, when it comes to the social functions they serve, they are far from arbitrary. These systems operate as matrices that represent relations of domination. Nevertheless, due to the logic of “distinction” they embody, they also tend to obscure these very relations of representation, and this is precisely where Durkheim’s idealism poses a challenge for Bourdieu (Garnham & Williams, 1980, p. 214). Durkheim suggests that the social power revealed by symbolic systems fulfils the function of social solidarity based on consent, contributing to the establishment of social order. In contrast, according to Bourdieu, these systems merely reproduce and reinforce existing forms of domination (Swartz, 1997, p. 48).

The structures that arise from classification schemes such as class, ethnic group, gender, and so on, are historical structures that play a crucial role in effectively constructing society. These structures contribute to the formation of a social structure that naturalizes both the reality itself and the arbitrary divisions that underlie its representation (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 4). In Bourdieu's view;

“This shows, parenthetically, that a sociology of the perception of the social world should determine not only the social frames of perception, in other words, the taxonomies used in ordinary experience, their social genesis, and the practical conditions of their implementation (particularly the -usually practical- context of their use), but also the differential power of differentiation that the different principles of classification collectively used to construct the social world -for example, economic or cultural criteria (“class”) and ethnic criteria (“race”)- effectively wield, in the objectivity of the practices of the different categories of agents, in accordance with the position they occupy in the objective classifications. This sociology must at the same time determine the potential gaps between the constructed classifications of science and the practical classes of everyday perception” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 160).

This is because these structures tend to portray the power relations between social groups as “natural” and as if they were unavoidable “necessities,” rather than acknowledging them as arbitrary outcomes of past historical struggles. In other words, existing classifications construct the social space we inhabit in a manner that benefits the victors and preserves their privileges. The success of these classifications largely hinges on their ability to both forget and make us forget that their arbitrariness is indeed arbitrary (Bourdieu, 2014, pp. 115, 121). However, once we recognize that symbolic systems are social products that not only reflect social relations but also contribute to their formation, it becomes evident that altering the representation of the social world holds the potential to reshape social life and reverse the asymmetry within relations of domination. It is precisely this mission that Bourdieu's “interventionist sociology”²⁰ undertakes:

²⁰ As Bourdieu puts it in the last pages of *The Weight of the World*: “Producing awareness of these mechanisms that make life painful, even unlivable, does not neutralize them; bringing

“...one should not forget that there is nothing illusory about collective illusion and that the divisions (whether solidly or poorly founded in objectivity) that agents Institute for practical reasons are part of the objective reality that science must account for, and contribute in a way to creating this reality. Scientific analysis itself makes its own contribution, although in an opposite sense, for in uncovering the real oppositions that the visible antagonisms of the classification struggle conceal, it tends to weaken the social effects related to misrecognition” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 161).

Therefore, it can be asserted that these struggles of classification take place within symbolic arenas where individuals and groups encounter one another through direct interactions in everyday life, as well as in collective and individual struggles within the realms of cultural production and politics. This constitutes the second aspect in which Bourdieu deviates from the Durkheimian tradition (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 12–13). In this regard, Bourdieu aligns with the notion that acts of resistance inevitably emerge within the symbolic order during wars of classification. This perspective echoes Foucault's assertion that there is no relation of domination without resistance.

Postscript

Bourdieu's position within sociological theory is indeed challenging. He analyses how individuals and social groups acquire and maintain different forms of capital (economic, social, cultural, symbolic) and how these forms of capital shape their position in the social field and the opportunities available to them. He focuses on the interaction between structure and agency, skilfully incorporating both material and symbolic dimensions of social life simultaneously. Furthermore, his unique emphasis on social stratification, power relations, and the role of culture in the reproduction of social inequalities greatly distinguishes him from most of the contemporary sociologists. As mentioned earlier, some early Anglophone writers labelled him as a Marxist, but more recently, critical voices like Bridget Fowler (2011) and Michael Burawoy, (2012) have highlighted his connection to the historical

contradictions to light does not resolve them. But, as skeptical as one may be about the social efficacy of the sociological message, one has to acknowledge the effect it can have in allowing those who suffer to find out that their suffering can be imputed to social causes and thus to feel exonerated; and in making generally known the social origin, collectively hidden, of unhappiness in all its forms, including the most intimate, the most secret” (Bourdieu et al., 1999, p. 629).

materialist tradition, or at least his potential for engaging in dialogue with it. In this context, Paul DiMaggio (1979) considers him a Durkheimian sociologist, while Rogers Brubaker (1985, p. 747) suggests that although Bourdieu does not exclude the influence of Marx and Durkheim, his theory is primarily indebted to Weber. In short, Bourdieu is often viewed as a “Rorschach test” for sociological theory. Those who examine his sociological framework and answer the question “what do you see here?” inevitably reveal something about themselves. Although the question of whom Bourdieu is more indebted to must be answered, it is not necessary to favour one (Marx) over the others (Weber or Durkheim).

Çıkar Çatışması Bildirimi: Yazarlar, çıkar çatışması bildirmemiştir.

Ek Beyan: Çalışmaya 1. yazar %70, 2. yazar %30 oranında katkı sağlamıştır.

References

- Angermuller, J. (2004). *Why there is no poststructuralism in France: The making of an intellectual generation*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Aron, R. (1967). *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique*. Gallimard.
- Barrett, T. (2015). Storying Bourdieu: Fragments toward a bourdieusian approach to “Life histories.” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915621399>
- Bonnewitz, P. (2002). *Premières leçons sur la sociologie de Pierre Bourdieu* (2nd ed.). Presses Universitaires de France.
- Bourdieu, P. (1968). Structuralism and theory of sociological knowledge. *Social Research*, 35(4, Focus—Conservative Approaches in the Human Sciences (Winter)), 681–706.
- Bourdieu, P. (1988). Vive la crise!: For heterodoxy in social science. *Theory and Society*, 17(5), 773–787.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *In other words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology* (M. Adamson, Trans.; 1st ed.). Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991a). *Language and symbolic power* (G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.). Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991b). *The political ontology of Martin Heidegger*. Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *Sociology in question* (R. Nice, Trans.). SAGE Publications.
- Bourdieu, P. (1994). Rethinking the State: Genesis and structure of the bureaucratic field. *Sociological Theory*, 12(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.2307/202032>
- Bourdieu, P. (1996). *The state nobility: Elite schools in the field of power* (L. C. Clough,

Trans.). Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine domination* (R. Nice, Trans.). Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2006). Legitimation and structured interests in Weber's sociology of religion. In S. Whimster & S. Lash (Eds.), *Max Weber, rationality and modernity* (pp. 119–136). Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (2008a). *Sketch for a self-analysis* (R. Nice, Trans.). The University of Chicago Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2008b). *Political Interventions: Social Science and Political Action* (D. Fernbach, Trans.). Verso.

Bourdieu, P. (2013). *Outline of a theory of practice* (R. Nice, Trans.; 28th ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2014). *On the state: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989-1992* (D. Fernbach, Trans.). Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P., Accardo, A., Balazs, G., Beaud, S., Bonvin, F., Bourdieu, E., Bourgois, P., Broccolichi, S., Champagne, P., Christin, R., Faguer, J.-P., Garcia, S., Lenoir, R., Œuvrard, F., Pialoux, M., Pinto, L., Podalydès, D., Sayad, A., Soulié, C., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1999). *The weight of the world: Social suffering in contemporary society* (Pricila Parkhurst Ferguson, S. Emanuel, & S. T. Waryn, Trans.). Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Darbel, A. (1991). *The love of art: European art museums and their public* (Caroline Beattie & N. Merriman, Trans.). Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1990). *Reproduction: In education, society and culture* (R. Nice, Trans.). SAGE Publications.

Bourdieu, P., Schultheis, F., & Pfeuffer, A. (2011). With Weber against Weber: In conversation with Pierre Bourdieu. In S. Susen & B. S. Turner (Eds.), *The legacy of Pierre Bourdieu: Critical essays* (pp. 111–124). Anthem Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An invitation of reflexive sociology*. Polity Press.

Braz, A. (2017). *Bourdieu*. Ellipses Édition.

Brubaker, R. (1985). Rethinking classical theory: The sociological vision of Pierre Bourdieu. *Theory and Society*, 14(6), 745–775.

Burawoy, M. (2012). Marx meets Bourdieu. In *Conversations with Bourdieu: The Johannesburg moment* (pp. 31–46). Wits University Press.

Burawoy, M. (2019). *Symbolic violence: Conversations with Bourdieu*. Duke University Press.

Champagne, P., & Christin, O. (2019). *Pierre Bourdieu: Une initiation* (2nd ed.). Presses universitaires de Lyon.

Carnoy, M. (1984). *The state and political theory* (1st ed.). Princeton University Press.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (2000). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. University of Minnesota.

DiMaggio, P. (1979). On Pierre Bourdieu. *American Journal of Sociology*, 84(6), 1460–1474. <https://doi.org/10.1086/226948>

*A Synthesis at the Crossroads of Sociological Thought: Bourdieu's Intellectual
Dance with Marx, Weber and Durkheim*

Fabiani, J.-L. (2019). *Bourdieu fut-il durkheimien?* <https://www.college-de-france.fr/video/pierre-michel-menger/2019/07-col-compagnon-menger-fabiani-20190607.mp4>

Fabiani, J.-L. (2022). Bourdieu fut-il durkheimien? *L'Année Sociologique*, 72(2), 365–386. <https://doi.org/10.3917/anso.222.0365>

Ferry, L., & Renaut, A. (1990). *French philosophy of the sixties: An essay on antihumanism* (M. H. S. Cattani (trans.); 1st ed.). The University of Massachusetts Press.

Fournier, M. (2010). Durkheim, Mauss et Bourdieu: Une filiation?. *Revue Du MAUSS*, 36(2), 473–482. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rdm.036.0473>

Fowler, B. (2011). Pierre Bourdieu: Unorthodox Marxist? In S. Susen & B. S. Turner (Eds.), *The legacy of Pierre Bourdieu: Critical Essays* (pp. 33–57). Anthem Press.

Garnham, N., & Williams, R. (1980). Pierre Bourdieu and the sociology of culture: An introduction. *Media, Culture & Society*, 2(3), 209–223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016344378000200302>

Gilles, É. (2014). Marx dans l'œuvre de Bourdieu. Approbations fréquentes, oppositions radicales. *Actuel Marx*, 56, 147–163.

Göker, E. (2001). Durkheim'in sol eli: Pierre Bourdieu'nün muhalefeti. *Praksis*, 3, 228–251.

Harker, R., Mahar, C., & Wilkes, C. (1990). Conclusion: Critique. In R. Harker, C. Mahar, & C. Wilkes (Eds.), *An introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu: The practice of theory* (1st ed., pp. 195–225). Palgrave Macmillan.

Inglis, F. (1979). Good and bad habitus: Bourdieu, Habermas and the condition of England. *The Sociological Review*, 27(2), 350–368. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1979.tb00339.x>

Jourdain, A., & Naulin, S. (2016). *Pierre Bourdieu'nün kuramı ve sosyolojik kullanımları* (Öykü Elitez (trans.); 1st ed.). İletişim Yayınları.

Lebaron, F. (2017). The craft of sociology. Epistemological preliminaries. *Praktiske Grunde - Nordisk Tidsskrift for Kultur- Og Samfundsvidenskab*, 1(2), 7–16.

Mannheim, K. (1954). *Ideology and utopia*. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

Mauss, M. (1991). Marcel Mauss. In Dirk Käsler (Ed.), *Sociological adventures: Earle Edward Eubank's visits with European sociologists* (pp. 139–147). Transaction Publishers.

Miliband, R. (1965). Marx and the State. *The Socialist Register*, 2, 278–296.

Özpolat, G. (2018). Revolutionary desire in Deleuze and Guattari. *ETHOS: Dialogues in Philosophy and Social Sciences*, 11(2), 58–67.

Özpolat, G. (2020). Bringing Althusser and Foucault together: A brief overview of the question of the State. *Possible Journal of Philosophy*, 9(18), 7–16.

Poulantzas, N. (2000). *State, power, socialism* (P. Camiller, Trans.; 1st ed.). Verso.

Riley, D. (2015). The new Durkheim: Bourdieu and the State. *Critical Historical Studies*, 2(2), 261–279. <https://doi.org/10.1086/683641>

- Robbins, D. (2003). Durkheim through the eyes of Bourdieu. *Durkheimian Studies*, 9(1), 23–39.
- Schirato, T., & Roberts, M. (2020). *Bourdieu: A critical introduction*. Routledge.
- Simon Susen, & Turner, B. S. (2011). Introduction: Preliminary reflections on the legacy of Pierre Bourdieu. In S. Susen & B. S. Turner (Eds.), *The legacy of Pierre Bourdieu: Critical essays* (pp. xiii–xxix). Anthem Press.
- Sulkunen, P. (1982). Society made visible - on the cultural sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. *Acta Sociologica*, 25(2), 103–115.
- Susen, S. (2011). Afterword: Concluding reflections on the legacy of Pierre Bourdieu. In S. Susen & B. S. Turner (Eds.), *The legacy of Pierre Bourdieu: Critical essays* (pp. 367–409). Anthem Press.
- Swartz, D. (1997). *Culture and power: The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Swartz, D. (2013). Metaprinciples for sociological research in a bourdieusian perspective. In P. S. Gorski (Ed.), *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis* (pp. 19–35). Duke University Press.
- Ünsaldı, L. (2013). Takdim. In *Bilimin toplumsal kullanımları: bilimsel alanın klinik bir sosyolojisi için* (1st ed., pp. 11–51). Heretik Yayıncılık.
- Vandenberghe, F. (1999). “The real is relational”: An epistemological analysis of Pierre Bourdieu’s generative structuralism. *Sociological Theory*, 17(1), 32–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0735-2751.00064>
- Wacquant, L. (2011). Durkheim and Bourdieu: The common plinth and its cracks. In S. Susen & B. S. Turner (Eds.), *The legacy of Pierre Bourdieu: Critical essays* (pp. 91–109). Anthem Press.
- Webb, J., Schirato, T., & Danaher, G. (2002). *Understanding Bourdieu* (1st ed.). Allen & Unwin.
- Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology*. University of California Press.
- Yair, G. (2009). *Pierre Bourdieu: The last musketeer of the French revolution*. Lexington Books.