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Towards a Dialogue between Pierre Bourdieu's 'Critical Sociology' and Luc Boltanski's 'Pragmatic Sociology of Critique'¹

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(Translated by Simon Susen)

Introduction

One of the most fruitful sources of controversy in the contemporary sociological literature, notably in France, is the debate on the relationship between two prominent paradigmatic programmes, which are often regarded as diametrically opposed: on the one hand, Pierre Bourdieu's *critical sociology*, which has been increasingly influential since the 1970s; on the other hand, Luc Boltanski's *pragmatic sociology of critique*, which has become widely known since the late 1980s. Not only in recent Francophone² intellectual discussions, but also in current Germanophone³ and Anglophone⁴ sociological disputes, the writings of both Bourdieu and Boltanski are commonly considered as major contributions to the social sciences.

Although their works have attained a remarkable degree of recognition in contemporary academic fields, and despite the fact that the intellectual connections between 'critical sociology' and the 'pragmatic sociology of critique' have been explored by various commentators,⁵ the key points of convergence and divergence between Bourdieu and Boltanski have hardly been examined in a systematic fashion.⁶ To the extent that most studies concerned with the important insights provided by these two thinkers emphasize the profound differences between their sociological frameworks, it appears difficult – or, perhaps, even inconceivable – to suggest that it is possible to reconcile, let alone integrate, Bourdieusian and Boltanskian modes of investigation. The main purpose of this chapter is to make a case for the 'reconciliation'⁷ between Bourdieu's 'critical sociology' and Boltanski's 'pragmatic sociology of critique'.

With the aim of demonstrating that it is not only viable but also desirable to ‘make them compatible’⁸ and thereby pursue ‘an objective of pacification’,⁹ the analysis will scrutinize the principal points of *convergence* and *divergence* between Bourdieu’s ‘critical sociology’ and Boltanski’s ‘pragmatic sociology of critique’. By way of conclusion, the chapter formulates eight hypotheses regarding the possibility of cross-fertilizing these two approaches.

I. Points of Convergence between Bourdieu and Boltanski

There are several points of convergence between Bourdieu’s ‘critical sociology’ and Boltanski’s ‘pragmatic sociology of critique’. In order to create a space of dialogue between these two approaches, this section shall focus on their most significant commonalities.

1. The Concept of ‘the Social’

A first point of convergence between ‘critical sociology’ and the ‘pragmatic sociology of critique’ stems from their ambition to comprehend the nature of ‘*the social*’. To be precise, both projects constitute, first and foremost, *sociological* – rather than philosophical, anthropological, historical, economic, or psychological – approaches. As such, they examine the constitution and evolution of reality in terms of the *social relations* established between human entities. Regardless of the specificity of the key conceptual tools by means of which they explore the *relational* configuration of the universe, both accounts aim to study human existence by shedding light on its social nature – that is, by insisting on the sociological significance of its collectively constructed constitution.¹⁰

2. The Concept of ‘Practice’

A second point of convergence between ‘critical sociology’ and the ‘pragmatic sociology of critique’ can be found in their common interest in the nature of ‘*practice*’. In light of this shared area of intellectual concern, both sociological frameworks can be described as *pragmatic* or *praxeological*, rather than as scholastic or transcendental, approaches. Stressing the practical constitution of human reality, the two research traditions consider the social universe as an ensemble of concrete actions accomplished by performative and embodied entities. On this view, social environments cannot be properly understood without taking into account the specific modes of functioning underlying particular forms of action. In both Bourdieu’s and Boltanski’s writings, the methodological privilege attributed to *human practices*

manifests itself not only in the numerous empirical studies¹¹ underpinning their conceptual architecture of the social, but also in the terminology employed by these two authors. Bourdieu proposes a 'theory of practice',¹² which is inspired by a critical reflection upon the sociological significance of 'practical reasons'¹³ and which seeks to uncover the structuring capacity of the '*sens pratique*'.¹⁴ In a similar vein, Boltanski puts forward the idea of a 'pragmatic sociology of critique',¹⁵ which does justice to the sociological centrality of 'practical justifications'¹⁶ and which aims to shed light on the normativizing capacity of 'practical criticism'.¹⁷ In short, highlighting the foundational importance of social actions in the daily construction of reality, both frameworks illustrate that the very possibility of society depends upon the unfolding of human practices.¹⁸

3. The Concept of 'Critique'

A third point of convergence between 'critical sociology' and the 'pragmatic sociology of critique' can be found in the pivotal role that the systematic exploration of the nature of '*critique*' plays in their analysis. As reflected in the respective names of these two programmes, both sociological projects can be described as profoundly *normative*, rather than simply descriptive, ventures. In the case of Bourdieu, the label 'critical sociology'¹⁹ suggests that we are dealing with an explicitly 'critical' and 'normative', rather than with an 'uncritical' and merely 'descriptive', endeavour. In the case of Boltanski, the formulation 'pragmatic sociology of critique'²⁰ places the emphasis on the sociological importance of the concept of critique, which is converted into its most fundamental object of study. For Boltanski, in order to grasp the socio-ontological, rather than metaphysical, status of critique, we need to scrutinize the ways in which critique is 'mobilized' and 'used' by ordinary people, rather than 'theorized' and 'systematized' by scholars and experts. Despite substantial epistemological differences between the two thinkers, Bourdieu and Boltanski converge in that they not only conceive of sociology as a normative undertaking but also attach paradigmatic significance to the concept of critique within this discipline.²¹

4. The Concept of 'Interest'

A fourth point of convergence between 'critical sociology' and the 'pragmatic sociology of critique' concerns the fact that both projects aim to comprehend the functioning of different modes of human coexistence in terms of '*social interests*'. Owing to the praxeological importance that they ascribe to social interests, especially to the multiple forms in which they

structure people's everyday activities, the two sociological frameworks can be characterized as *functionalist*, or at least as *quasi-functionalist*, rather than as intentionalist. To put it bluntly, Bourdieu and Boltanski are motivated by a *sociological interest in the nature of social interests*. Assuming that human actions are never 'disinterested' or 'neutral' but always 'interested' and 'biased', both approaches can be conceived of as functionalist, or quasi-functionalist, accounts of society. It is important to stress, however, that the realist view that all human practices are *permeated* and *influenced* by social interests is not tantamount to the fatalistic notion that all human actions are *motivated* and *determined* by these interests. According to the former perspective, social interests are largely implicit and manifest themselves in people's intentions, choices, and actions, without them necessarily being aware of the influence that the motivational background of their lives exercises on their behaviour. According to the latter interpretation, social interests – whether they are implicit or explicit – constitute the principal motivational driving force governing people's goals, preferences, and practices, irrespective of whether or not those who are actuated by them are conscious of, and able to reflect upon, their determining power. Bourdieu and Boltanski agree on the decisive role that social interests play in the daily construction of collective life. Thus, they both recognize that every individual or collective performance is, directly or indirectly, shaped by a series of explicit or implicit interests.²²

5. The Concept of 'Aporia'

A fifth point of convergence between 'critical sociology' and the 'pragmatic sociology of critique' is expressed in their attempt to overcome what may be conceived of as '*aporia*' or '*insoluble contradictions*' in rival intellectual traditions. In this sense, the two frameworks can be regarded as *reflexive*, and thus non-dogmatic, approaches. It is worth mentioning that their radical and overt opposition to other sociological and philosophical systems of analysis is so pronounced that they have led to the creation of new paradigms for studying the functioning of society. Bourdieu contests the epistemic validity of 'objectivist' and 'subjectivist' theories, whilst Boltanski is particularly critical of 'scientistic' and 'determinist' modes of thought. Given this sceptical stance, both Bourdieusian and Boltanskian models can be considered as normative projects aimed at *transcending* the 'aporia' and 'insoluble contradictions' inherent in reductive approaches in the social sciences. In other words, Bourdieu and Boltanski are united by their relentless critique of intellectual paradigms by which they have been influenced themselves, but whose weaknesses and limitations they seek to overcome.²³

6. The Concept of 'Background'

A sixth point of convergence between 'critical sociology' and the 'pragmatic sociology of critique' emanates from the presupposition that all human interactions are embedded in a '*structural background*' or, if one prefers, situated in a '*social grammar*'. Consequently, these two accounts may be characterized as *contextualist*, rather than as transcendentalist, approaches. Highlighting the sociological importance of the fact that there is no human interaction – that is, in effect, no human action – which escapes the power of the historical background permeating the spatio-temporal context in which it has emerged, both frameworks tend to examine the functioning of the social world in terms of its *grammatical structuration*. The increasing complexification of differentiated societies is illustrated in the pluralization of interactional grammars. In this regard, it is possible to focus on different levels of analysis: the individual or the collective, community or society, ephemeral or durable circumstances, spontaneous or ritualized interactions, formal or informal situations, official or unofficial spaces, codified or improvised behaviours – to mention only the most obvious domains of contextualist investigation in sociology. Irrespective of the specificity of a chosen exploratory focus, it is important to acknowledge that *all* human actions are embedded in particular grammars that impose – largely in implicit and subtle, but sometimes also in explicit and overt, ways – their logic upon the unfolding of social life. Regardless of whether we consider a 'field' (*champ*) – in the Bourdieusian sense – or a 'city' (*cit  *) – in the Boltanskian sense – as the foundational background setting of a given social action, or of a given set of social actions, we need to account for the fact that, in the human universe, there is no '*doing*' without '*framing*' – to borrow an insight from Goffman.²⁴ Bourdieu and Boltanski converge in that both insist upon the structuring influence of social contexts, which impose themselves as – implicit or explicit – points of reference upon different forms of human agency.²⁵

7. The Concept of 'Power'

A seventh point of convergence between 'critical sociology' and the 'pragmatic sociology of critique' can be discovered in their analysis of '*social power*' and, more specifically, of '*social domination*'. In light of this normative mission, the two accounts can be conceived of as *critical*, rather than *na  ve*, approaches. To be exact, they are committed to the thoroughgoing study of the multiple ways in which social relations are pervaded and sustained by power relations. To this end, they offer conceptual tools and methodological strategies capable of unmasking the constitution of power, notably in terms

of its ubiquity within different modes of coexistence. Of course, recognizing the *omnipresence* of power is not tantamount to believing in its *omnipotence*.²⁶ Put differently, the fact that power relations are omnipresent does not mean that they are omnipotent. We are all immersed in power relations without necessarily being determined by them. All social actions are *permeated* and *influenced* by power; this does not imply, however, that the former are inevitably *motivated* and *determined* by the latter. Notwithstanding the paradigmatic and ideological differences between Bourdieusian and Boltanskian thought, the two approaches share a fundamental interest in the multifaceted ways in which power asserts itself as a ubiquitous force in the daily construction of social relations.²⁷

8. The Concept of ‘Emancipation’

An eighth, and final, point of convergence between ‘critical sociology’ and the ‘pragmatic sociology of critique’ is the following: in both frameworks, the critique of power in general and of domination in particular is motivated by the conviction that sociology – insofar as it is aimed at problematizing the detrimental and pathological effects of the reproduction of vertical relations – needs to take on the challenge of analysing the material and symbolic conditions of ‘*human emancipation*’. Hence, both projects can be conceived of as two normatively *committed*, rather than neutral, endeavours. Surely, the idea of propagating utopian blueprints is as alien to Bourdieu as it is to Boltanski. Even if the left-leaning orientation underlying their approaches is beyond doubt, particularly in terms of their engagement with intellectual currents associated with the Marxist tradition, it would be erroneous to associate either Bourdieusian or Boltanskian thought with a monolithic ideological programme, let alone to accuse them of falling into the trap of historical reductionism or political proselytism.

Despite their scepticism vis-à-vis grand ideological projects and dogmatic slogans, both Bourdieu and Boltanski conceive of sociology as a ‘critical’ and ‘committed’ undertaking. Moreover, they share the view that the denunciation of domination must be accompanied by the willingness to envisage the creation of the social conditions that make emancipatory processes possible in the first place. In other words, the negation of repressive mechanisms has little value without the affirmation of emancipatory forces. At first glance, the theoretical task of reflecting upon the possibility of emancipation may appear relatively straightforward; the practical task of converting emancipation into a reality, however, could hardly be more challenging. Sociologists have categorized and interpreted the world in different ways; the point is to change and improve it.²⁸

II. Points of Divergence between Bourdieu and Boltanski

Having identified the main points of convergence between Bourdieu and Boltanski, it is no less important to reflect upon the several dimensions that separate these two sociologists from one another. Following the structure of the previous analysis, this section aims to demonstrate that, paradoxically, the key points of convergence between Bourdieu and Boltanski are, at the same time, the most significant points of divergence between these two thinkers. As shall be demonstrated here, in order to create a constructive dialogue between the sociological paradigms developed by these two scholars, it is essential to take into account both the commonalities *and* the differences between them. The project of cross-fertilizing their frameworks will fail if one is not prepared to accept that the two approaches are separated by profound – and, in some respects, irreconcilable – theoretical and methodological presuppositions.

1. The Concept of ‘the Social’

A first point of divergence can be located in their respective conceptions of ‘the social’. Whilst both approaches are *sociological* in terms of their disciplinary outlook, they are based on fundamentally different conceptions of the social. This can be illustrated by reference to various analytical levels.

First, they endorse different conceptions of *social action*. In Bourdieusian thought, the foundational mode of social action is ‘*homological action*’. According to this perspective, human action tends to unfold on the basis of the dialectic between *field and habitus* – that is, through the interplay between objective positions, situated within social spaces, and subjective dispositions, inscribed in social bodies. By contrast, in Boltanskian thought, the foundational mode of social action is ‘*pragmatic action*’. According to this view, human action tends to be realized on the basis of the dialectic between *cit  and justification* – that is, through the interplay between orders of worth (*grandeurs*), established within social regimes, and discursive practices of testing (* preuves*), undertaken by social actors.

Second, they put forward different conceptions of *social relations*. Following the Bourdieusian approach, all social relations are *power relations*: every field is a ‘*space of possibles*’ (*espace des possibles*) within which agents are exposed to underlying structural constraints. These constraints exist independently of people’s wills, they impose themselves as omnipresent forces upon any form of human agency, and they manifest themselves in the vertical structuration of social orders. Following the Boltanskian approach, all social relations are *normative relations*: every *cit * is a ‘*space of tests*’ (*espace des  preuves*), within which actors are able to

create implicit or explicit regulative principles. These principles are applied in accordance with people's wills, they are constantly evaluated as rules of performance, and they are negotiated through processes of justification oriented towards the construction of different regimes of action.

Third, they advocate different conceptions of *social competence*. For Bourdieu, social agents possess a '*homological competence*', which permits them to acquire bodily dispositions corresponding to the positions that they occupy within different relational spaces. On this account, ordinary people are, by and large, *unconscious agents*, whose heteronomy is due to the orchestrated functioning of their subjectivity and their imprisonment within a naturalized habitus. For Boltanski, on the other hand, social actors are equipped with a '*critical competence*', which gives them the capacity to develop and mobilize normative resources when engaging in disputes, which arise in different contexts. On this view, ordinary people need to be taken seriously as *conscious actors*, whose autonomy stems from their capacity to call their immersion within different regimes of action into question – a capacity that is expressed in the critical force of reflection and the discursive power of justification.

Fourth, they subscribe to different conceptions of *social development*. According to Bourdieu, the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of *struggles* between dominant and dominated groups. The evolution of society, understood as the ensemble of interconnected fields, is determined by structural conflicts between social groups, which are driven by specific interests and compete for material and symbolic resources in multiple historical fields. According to Boltanski, the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of *disputes* between critical actors capable of undertaking discursive tests (*épreuves*).²⁹ The evolution of society, understood as the ensemble of interwoven *cités*, is shaped by controversies between collective actors, who need to provide justifications in order to form different regimes of action and who are obliged to assess the legitimacy of the principles that govern the organization of their *cités*.

Fifth, they embrace different conceptions of *social order*. For Bourdieu, the construction of society is founded on the interdependence between *field and habitus*. For Boltanski, it is the interrelation between *cité and competence* which is vital to the possibility of human coexistence. From a Bourdieusian angle, the cornerstone of relational objectivity is the field, and the corpus maintaining our subjectivity is the habitus. From a Boltanskian point of view, the interactional basis of social objectivity is the *cité*, and what sustains our subjectivity is a set of normative capacities. In Bourdieu, the reproductive nature of the social is inextricably linked to the *positional* constitution of fields and to the *dispositional* composition of the habitus. In Boltanski, the transformative nature of the social is inherent in the *normative* construction of *cités* and the *reflexive* orientation

of our critical competence. For Bourdieu, within every system of domination, the field is the predominant relational space, and our homological competence is essential to mechanisms of social reproduction. For Boltanski, within every regime of action, the *cit  * is the preponderant discursive space, and our critical competence is crucial to processes of social transformation.

2. The Concept of ‘Practice’

A second point of divergence concerns their respective conceptions of ‘practice’. Even though both Bourdieu and Boltanski emphasize the processual constitution of reality, they have dissimilar understandings of ‘practice’. This conceptual discrepancy can be illustrated on three levels.

First, they defend different conceptions of *practical action*. In Bourdieu, practical action is, above all, a ‘*homological act*’: as human agents whose practices are situated in fields and realized through different forms of habitus, all our actions remain embedded within a structural homology between a relational objectivity, which is structured in accordance with fought-over positions, and an embodied subjectivity, which is organized in accordance with multiple naturalized dispositions. In Boltanski, practical action is a source of ‘*pragmatic engagement*’: as human actors whose practices either converge with or diverge from the particular orders of worth with which we find ourselves confronted, all our actions need to affirm their legitimacy in the face of the fragility inherent in reality, whose normativity is constantly at stake in the disputes taking place in different *cit  s*.

Second, they support different conceptions of *practical competence*. According to Bourdieu, people’s key practical competence is their *sens pratique* – that is, their intuitive capacity to perform in everyday life by coping with numerous codified imperatives with which they are confronted within different social fields. Bourdieu’s ‘theory of practice’ seeks to account for the sociological power of ‘practical reasons’, rather than for the scholastic power of ‘theoretical reasons’. For it is on the basis of their ‘practical and intuitive abilities’, rather than by virtue of their ‘theoretical and reflexive capacities’, that agents succeed in mastering the codes that enable them to participate in the game of reality. According to Boltanski, people’s most empowering practical competence is their *sens normatif* – that is, their reflexive capacity to justify their actions in everyday life by attributing value to the orders of worth that predominate within particular *cit  s* and whose legitimacy they need to prove and justify. Boltanski’s ‘pragmatic sociology of critique’ aims to account for the sociological power of ‘practical justifications’, rather than for the philosophical power of ‘theoretical justifications’. It is because of their ‘critical and moral capacities’, rather than due to their ‘doxic and misleading preconceptions’, that actors

are able to distance themselves from their immersion in reality and thereby assess the value of their performances in terms of the multiple orders of worth generated by different *cités*.

Third, they maintain different conceptions of *practical agency*. Following Bourdieu, people can be conceived of as '*agents*' – that is, as social entities whose practices are always relatively determined by the positions they occupy in different fields and by the dispositions they obtain through their habitus. To the extent that every field constitutes a '*relational space of possibles*' and every habitus represents a '*corporeal apparatus of possibles*', the possibilities with which agents are confronted are structured and limited by the positions they occupy within relational spaces and by the dispositions they carry within their embodied subjectivities. Put differently, the endogenous potential of people's practices is determined by the exogenous contingency of their existence. Following Boltanski, by contrast, people should be regarded as '*actors*' – that is, as social entities whose practices acquire meaning in relation to the orders of worth constructed in the *cités* within which they are situated. Confronted with the challenges arising from plural socialization and communicational justification processes, actors are obliged to mobilize their reflexive resources, which enable them to negotiate normative codes. To the extent that *cités* form '*grammars of worth*' and critical competences require '*judgements of worth*', people need to be taken seriously as discursive actors, who are able to negotiate normative principles established for the construction of collective realities. In other words, the normative constitution of reality emanates from the reflexive capacities of our subjectivity.

3. The Concept of 'Critique'

A third point of divergence relates to their respective conceptions of '*critique*'. Bourdieu and Boltanski concur in considering sociology as a normative tool that permits us to question the multifaceted ways in which social relations are permeated by power relations. Yet, their respective conceptions of critique differ from one another in several respects.

First, they endorse different conceptions of the *status of critique*. In Bourdieusian thought, critique tends to be conceived of as a *professional privilege* of researchers in the social sciences. The famous 'double epistemological break',³⁰ advocated by Bourdieu, concerns two forms of demarcation: (a) *the break of sociological knowledge with scholastic knowledge* is aimed at bypassing the pitfalls of theoretical reason, which fails to take into account the social conditions of production underlying epistemic acts; (b) *the break of sociological knowledge with ordinary knowledge* is aimed at overcoming the limitations of common sense, which remains trapped in the doxic categories constructed on the basis of everyday experiences. On this view, critical reason, which can

be used to deconstruct the misconceptions underlying both scholastic and ordinary knowledge, constitutes a professional privilege of experts, rather than a universal resource to which, in principle, everyone has access. By contrast, in Boltanskian thought, critique is explicitly interpreted as a *universal resource* of ordinary people. The pragmatic imperative according to which ‘ordinary actors need to be taken seriously’³¹ aims to do justice to the fact that critique, far from being reducible to an exclusive privilege of metaphysicians and experts, represents a structuring and transformative element of ordinary life. Critique is ‘always already’ present in everyday existence, to the extent that reflexive capacities constitute pragmatic competences of ordinary people. To assume that ‘we are all metaphysicians’³² means to suggest that we are equipped with reflexive capacities, enabling us to assess the state of affairs by which we are surrounded and the legitimacy of the practices through which we construct the world to which we belong. According to Boltanski, then, critical reason – which permits people to question the forms of normativity established in their society – is a universal resource to which, at least potentially, everybody has access, rather than a professional privilege of experts.

Second, they advocate different conceptions of the *function of critique*. On various occasions, Bourdieu insists on the *scientificity* of the social sciences in general and of sociology in particular, assigning critique the role of unmasking the underlying mechanisms that constitute reality. From this perspective, the key task of sociological critique is to *uncover* the structural mechanisms that are hidden behind the illusory and deceptive façade of everyday appearances. In this sense, the Bourdieusian conception of critique is firmly embedded in the Durkheimian paradigm of ‘explanation’ (*explication/Erklären*): critique permits the social scientist to shed light on the hidden determinants of society and to deconstruct false representations of reality. In this respect, Boltanski and Bourdieu seem to be diametrically opposed to one another. Emphasizing the *normativity* of social worlds in general and of different *cités* in particular, Boltanski implies that one essential function of critique is its capacity to assess validity claims necessary to justify the legitimacy of ‘tests of worth’ (*épreuves de grandeur*). On this account, the main task of social critique is to *assess* codes of legitimacy established within a given *cit*. The members of a *cit* are perfectly able to participate in processes of comprehension, reflection, and discussion; in fact, they seek to attribute legitimacy to their multiple forms of action on the basis of intersubjective practices of justification. In this sense, the Boltanskian conception of critique is intimately interrelated with the Weberian paradigm of ‘understanding’ (*compréhension/Verstehen*): critique enables rational actors to question established conventions and to assert themselves as creators of their own normativity.

Third, they embrace different conceptions of the *purpose of critique*. For Bourdieu, critique is oriented towards the *deconstruction of doxa*: in order to benefit

from the insights gained from critical capacity, it is necessary to overcome the illusions of common sense. To the extent that ordinary agents are doomed to be deluded by preconceptions and, consequently, contribute to the reproduction of social relations based on domination, sociological critique needs to draw upon epistemological tools and methodological strategies of science, in order to play a fruitful role in the construction of a social order shaped by emancipatory practices. In other words, the first step towards challenging mechanisms of domination through processes of emancipation is to shift from doxic illusion to critical insight, from intuitive belief to reflexive reasoning, from practical immersion to theoretical distance-taking, and from know-how to know-why. For Boltanski, by contrast, critique is oriented towards the *undertaking of 'tests' (épreuves)*: in order to legitimize the ensemble of relations established between actors, it is necessary to carry out 'tests of worth' (*épreuves de grandeur*). To the extent that human actors are able to call the validity of preconceptions into question and, in so doing, contribute to the consolidation of social relations based on coherent processes of justification, ordinary criticism can, and indeed should, draw upon the discursive force and normative value of disputes, in order to generate empowering realms that convert people into protagonists capable of reflecting upon their own socialization.

4. The Concept of 'Interest'

A fourth point of divergence derives from their respective conceptions of 'social interests'. Undoubtedly, both approaches remind us of the sociological significance of social interests, notably in terms of their influence upon the structuration of people's behaviour and upon the motivational backgrounds sustaining the construction of relational spaces. Given the emphasis Bourdieu and Boltanski place on the general function of social interests, it would be fair to suggest that the two thinkers share a *functionalist* conception of society. Despite this significant affinity, they offer radically different accounts of interest.

First, they put forward different conceptions of the *interests of social life*. From a Bourdieusian point of view, the multiple interests at stake in social life are determined by *power relations*: the interests underpinning agents' praxeological orientations and strategic behaviours are governed by the positions they occupy within social fields. From a Boltanskian point of view, the numerous interests at stake in social life are shaped by *normative relations*: the interests impacting upon actors' pragmatic alignments and reflexive performances are affected by the negotiations they are obliged to undertake within different regimes of action, in order to establish and justify normative arrangements.

Second, they subscribe to different conceptions of the *interests of social groups*. From a Bourdieusian perspective, not only individual interests but also

collective interests are structured in a *vertical* manner: to the extent that all social fields are characterized by the structural gap between dominant groups and dominated groups, they are marked by an opposition between orthodox interests, mobilized in order to defend the legitimacy of the established order, and heterodox interests, hinting at the possibility of an alternative order. From a Boltanskian perspective, despite the undeniable existence of various group-based divisions in society, all human actors share a series of interests in a *horizontal* manner: even if all *cités* constitute regimes of action whose normative grammar is potentially contentious, and thus unavoidably malleable, social groups engaging in disputes about the coordination of their practices are united by a common interest – that is, not only by the pragmatic interest in securing their participation within a *cit  *, but also by the ontological interest in expressing their belonging to humanity.

Third, they maintain different conceptions of *people’s interests*. Bourdieu stresses the preponderant role of strategic action within structuration processes of social fields, in such a way that people are portrayed as agents motivated – primarily – by *egoistic* interests. Ultimately, what counts is power: our position in society depends on our capacity to *affirm* and, if necessary, *impose* our legitimacy. Insofar as we are structurally separated agents, our personal interest resides in the maximization of our chances of occupying dominant positions within social fields, in the preservation of legitimate dispositions of our habitus, and in the accumulation of different forms of capital. To the extent that Boltanski places the emphasis on the decisive role of discursive practices within structuration processes of *cit  s*, people are conceived of as actors who are motivated not only by egoistic interests but also by *altruistic* ones. At the end of the day, what matters is responsibility: our position within the *cit  * depends on our capacity to *prove* and, if necessary, *justify* our legitimacy. As morally motivated entities, we have an interest in participating in the construction of regimes of action whose praxeological grammars are sustained by quotidian practices of justification.

Fourth, they support different conceptions of the *interests of social spaces*. Following Bourdieu, a social field is a ‘*space of possibles*’, a ‘*space of divisions*’, and a ‘*space of struggles*’:

- (a) As a ‘space of possibles’, the social field designates a *structuring* horizon, which sets the limits for what agents can and cannot do.
- (b) As a ‘space of divisions’, the social field represents a *stratifying* horizon, which divides agents between those who are dominant and those who are dominated.
- (c) As a ‘space of struggles’, the social field constitutes a *tension-laden* horizon, in which agents compete for access to dominant positions and resources.

Following Boltanski, a *cit  * is a ‘space of engagement’, a ‘space of worth’, and a ‘space of disputes’:

- (a) As a ‘space of engagement’, the *cit  * designates an *interactional* horizon, which forms the background against which actors are invested in the world.
- (b) As a ‘space of worth’, the *cit  * represents the *interpretive* horizon, through which actors attribute meaning to their practices in accordance with specific principles.
- (c) As a ‘space of disputes’, the *cit  * constitutes the *normative* horizon, which obliges actors to participate in processes of discussion oriented towards the justification of different modes of performance.

Fifth, they make a case for different conceptions of the ‘*raison d’  tre*’ of social interests. What is the *raison d’  tre* of social interests? To the extent that Bourdieu and Boltanski are concerned with exploring the general function of social interests, their respective sociological approaches can be characterized as functionalist frameworks. From a Bourdieusian point of view, the *raison d’  tre* of social interests is the *reproduction* of interests by interested agents: an interested agent has an interest in *pursuing* his or her interests, in order to better their position in the social space. From a Boltanskian point of view, the *raison d’  tre* of social interests is the *justification* of interests by interested actors: an interested actor has an interest in *justifying* his or her interests, in order to prove the validity of the principles by which he or she is guided, thereby illustrating their context-specific generalizability. Following Bourdieu, social interests remain largely *hidden* when pursued by agents, who are not necessarily conscious of their motivations. Following Boltanski, social interests are often *problematized* when justified by actors, whose normative orientations are made explicit every time the legitimacy of their actions is called into question by discursive tests (*  preuves*) undertaken within regimes of justification. In short, according to Bourdieu, social interests are maintained by the *reproduction* of their legitimacy through the *normalization* of their validity; according to Boltanski, social interests are defended by the *justification* of their acceptability through the *problematization* of their validity.

5. The Concept of ‘Aporia’

A fifth point of divergence arises from their interpretation of ‘*aporia*’ or ‘*insoluble contradictions*’ in rival intellectual frameworks. To be sure, the two sociological approaches in question can be regarded as *reflexive* endeavours to the extent that they aim to overcome the trap of reductionism in the social sciences. Despite this affinity, they differ in terms of their idiosyncratic criticisms of simplistic modes of social analysis. A central objective of the Bourdieusian project

consists in transcending the paradigmatic antinomy between ‘*objectivist*’ and ‘*subjectivist*’ approaches in the social sciences. A key ambition of Boltanski thought consists in challenging the fatalistic implications of ‘*determinist*’ theories, as well as the positivist pitfalls of ‘*scientific*’ presuppositions, in contemporary sociology. Bourdieu seeks to overcome all forms of sociological reductionism that fail to account for the homological dialectic between positionally structured objectivities and dispositionally constituted subjectivities. Boltanski rejects all forms of sociological reductionism that fail to recognize that the normative grounds of critical sociology emanate from actors’ reflexive capacities. For Bourdieu, sociological reductionism results – above all – from ‘the most fundamental, and the most ruinous’³³ opposition in the social sciences – namely from ‘the one that is set up between subjectivism and objectivism’.³⁴ For Boltanski, sociological reductionism results – primarily – from the ‘positivist’³⁵ idealization of the critical competences of social-scientific researchers, as well as from the ‘fatalistic’³⁶ suspicion vis-à-vis the critical competences of ordinary people.

6. The Concept of ‘Background’

A sixth point of divergence has to do with the sociological function of ‘*structural backgrounds*’ or, put differently, ‘*social grammars*’. It is possible to characterize the two programmes as *contextualist* approaches, in the sense that – following the later Wittgenstein – they attribute fundamental importance to the role of ‘life forms’ in which human beings find themselves situated. Our view of the world and our behaviour in the world always depend on our ability to develop a sense of belonging to society and occupy a particular position within reality. We cannot engage with, be invested in, and develop an appreciation of the world unless we are situated in it and able to relate to it. The social universe within which we find ourselves situated constitutes the ‘coexistential grammar’ – that is, the ‘relational background’ – of all our experiential practices. What is striking in this respect is the fact that, despite their concordant recognition of the socio-ontological significance of ‘coexistential grammars’, Bourdieu and Boltanski put forward divergent conceptions of ‘social backgrounds’, which can be regarded as a precondition for the possibility of human coexistence.

First, they endorse different conceptions of the *space of social grammar*. According to Bourdieu, the foundational space of human life is the *field*: all human interactions are situated in social fields, whose constitution and evolution determine the ways in which agents inhabit the world. From this perspective, people cannot be immersed in reality unless they participate in the construction of social fields. In fact, our ‘life-world’ (*monde vécu*) is an ensemble of ‘life-fields’ (*champs vécus*): our experience of the world depends on our access to social fields.

For, as interdependent beings, we establish a relationship with the world by forming a relationship with different interactional realms of our environment. The social field is the cradle of human action: we are situated in, and act upon, the world to the extent that we shape our existence within social fields. In brief, our world *is* the field. According to Boltanski, the foundational space of human life is the *cité*: all human interactions take place in *cités*, whose defining principles constitute the normative background against which ordinary people engage in processes of justification, in order to legitimize their place and role within different regimes of action. On this account, there is no normalization of the world without processes of justification within regimes of action. Indeed, our 'life-world' (*monde vécu*) is an ensemble of 'life-cities' (*cités vécus*): our experience of society is inconceivable without our participation in different *cités*. For, as interdependent beings, we are invested in the world insofar as we contribute to the normative structuration of our environment. The *cité* is the foundational regime of human action: we are immersed in, and attribute meaning to, the world to the extent that we construct our existence by negotiating principles of justice in accordance with orders of worth established in our *cités*. In short, our world *is* the *cité*.

Second, they advocate different conceptions of the *nature of social grammar*. Bourdieu conceives of social backgrounds as horizons of cognitive presuppositions and normative codes, the existence of which is largely implicit and escapes the consciousness of habitualized agents. People's unconscious is the coexistential force that lies at the heart of all forms of social cohesion. The underlying omnipresence of the unconscious precedes all reflexive movement towards consciousness. The *doxa* of every life form is largely unconscious, because every established mode of normativity depends on the blind reproduction of naturalized codes guaranteeing its legitimacy. Boltanski, on the other hand, interprets social backgrounds as horizons of orders of worth and normative codes, whose existence can be problematized by virtue of the critical consciousness of engaged actors. Critical consciousness is a coexistential force able to call everything that is normally taken for granted into question. The transformative force of critical consciousness is capable of undermining the reproductive power of the unconscious. Since *reflexivity* is inherent in every life form, the most established mode of normativity needs to justify its legitimacy through discursive tests (*épreuves*), which are necessary for the meaning-laden construction of *cités*.

Third, they embrace different conceptions of the *crisis of social grammar*. According to Bourdieu, social backgrounds enter into crisis every time agents are confronted with a *rupture of the homology established between field and habitus*. The contradiction between a given field and a misadjusted habitus is the principal source of a transformative crisis. To be exact, following the Bourdieusian

approach, there are three types of crisis affecting the internal functioning of a field:

- (a) *structural* crisis, which occurs when the positional power and the material domination of dominant groups lack, or begin to lack, stability;
- (b) *representational* crisis, which is caused by a lack of legitimacy of both the symbolic orthodoxy and the ideological hegemony of dominant groups; and
- (c) *circumstantial* crisis, which is due to the fact that an agent, or a group of agents, is confronted with a situation in which their habitus no longer corresponds to the habitus required within a positionally structured context.

According to Boltanski, by contrast, social backgrounds enter into crisis when actors succeed in *undermining the legitimacy of an established mode of normativity*, on the basis of tests (*épreuves*) enabling them to distance themselves from particular forms of immersion and to question specific modes of practical engagement. Consequently, an order of worth becomes fragile the moment the presence of its reality begins to lack legitimacy. The worth of a *cité* needs to be justified, or at least be justifiable, in order to assert the legitimacy of its reality, or at least of its realizability. The contradiction between a consolidated regime of action and a non-legitimized order of worth is the source of the sort of crisis that arises when the underlying grammar of a *cité* is called into question. To be precise, following the Boltanskian approach, we can distinguish three types of crisis concerning the internal functioning of a *cité*:

- (a) *confirmative* crisis, which is caused by ‘truth tests’ (*épreuves de vérité*) and which manifests itself in the conformist assertion of a given mode of action;
- (b) *alterative* crisis, which is provoked by ‘reality tests’ (*épreuves de réalité*) and which leads to the reformist modification of a particular mode of action; and
- (c) *transformative* crisis, which is triggered by ‘existential tests’ (*épreuves existentielles*) and which leads to the radical transformation of an existing mode of action.³⁷

In short, Bourdieu’s and Boltanski’s respective interpretations of social background crises diverge in the following sense: for the former, crisis is – above all – produced by conflicts over the structuration, representation, and delimitation of social space; for the latter, crisis results – first and foremost – from alternating processes of confirmation, modification, and transformation, whose dynamic force shapes the development of every regime of action.

7. The Concept of 'Power'

A seventh point of divergence stems from dissimilar understandings of the concept of 'social power' in general and the concept of 'social domination' in particular. To be sure, Bourdieusian and Boltanskian research programmes are united by the conviction that a comprehensive sociology needs to take on the challenge of exploring the constitution of social power by shedding light on its origins, functioning, and consequences. Yet, despite this common mission, they offer fundamentally different conceptions of power. This can be illustrated on various levels.

First, they put forward different conceptions of what may be described as the *space of power*. What is the foundational space in which power exercises its social function? Put differently, how does power succeed in structuring social action and, in some cases, even in determining it? According to Bourdieu, the foundational space of power is the *field*: agents' access to specific types of power depends on their positioning within their environment. The most differentiated habitus and the richest form capital have no value if they are not incorporated by an agent invested in a field. Social power without a field is tantamount to a human agent without an environment. Power games are intertwined with the stakes of the field in which they are embedded. According to Boltanski, by contrast, the foundational space of social power is the *cit  *: actors' access to specific types of power depends on their capacity to participate in pluralized modes of action. The most powerful human competences have no value unless they are mobilized by actors prepared to take part in the negotiation of principles and establish different normativities with particular *cit  s*. Social power without a *cit  * is equivalent to a human actor without a regime of action. The power games within every society need to be justified through tests (*  preuves*) undertaken within particular *cit  s*. In short, for Bourdieu, power relations are established by social struggles within and between different fields, and they are reproduced by agents capable of competition, contestation, and confrontation; for Boltanski, power relations are negotiated and problematized by controversies within and between *cit  s*, and they are called into question by actors capable of reflection, discussion, and justification.

Second, they subscribe to different conceptions of the *polycentric constitution of power*. Following Bourdieu, the polycentric constitution of power derives from the *plurality of fields*, which is reflected in a multiplicity of forms of habitus and types of capital. Regardless of what the predominant social field – which serves as the interactional background for the unfolding of a given practice – may be, social relations between agents are determined by power relations consolidated within and between fields. Different forms of field produce different kinds of habitus with different types of capital. Notwithstanding the

particular realm in question – that is, irrespective of whether it is cultural, linguistic, political, economic, scientific, religious, intellectual, or artistic³⁸ –, the differentiation of social relations manifests itself in a complexification of power relations. Every field distinguishes itself by a particular definition of stakes, implying that power games can challenge the imperatives ensuring its reproduction. Following Boltanski, by contrast, the polycentric constitution of power emanates from the *plurality of 'cités'*, which is illustrated in the existence of a multiplicity of regimes of action, regulated and contested by numerous forms of worth (*grandeur*). Regardless of what the predominant *cité* – which plays the role of an interactional grammar for the unfolding of a given practice – may be, normative relations between actors can always be called into question by inhabitants of the *cité*. Different forms of *cité* produce different regimes of action with different types of *grandeur*. Notwithstanding the particular realm in question – that is, irrespective of whether it is inspired, domestic, opinion-related, civic, market-based, or industrial³⁹ –, the differentiation of social worlds leads to a pluralization of disputes that challenge the legitimacy of different established orders. Every *cité* distinguishes itself by generating controversies oriented towards the justification of principles that either maintain or transform its regime of action.

Third, they defend different conceptions of the *realization of power*. The Bourdieusian approach is marked by 'anthropological pessimism', in the sense that it places the emphasis on the *reproduction of power*, which is founded on the socio-ontological preponderance of *teleological action*. From this perspective, social actions are not only *permeated* and *influenced* by power, but often they are also *motivated* and *determined* by it. Thus, agents are regarded not only as unconscious accomplices of an underlying structure, but also as producers of power-laden practices. The Boltanskian approach, by contrast, is marked by 'anthropological optimism', in the sense that it stresses the *transformation of power*, which is brought about by the socio-ontological preponderance of *discursive action*. On this view, social actions are not only embedded in the dialectical game between *domination and emancipation*, but, in addition, they depend on normative processes of *reflection and justification*. Hence, actors are considered to be critical negotiators of social arrangements, rather than blind reproducers of omnipotent power mechanisms.

Fourth, they support different conceptions of the *critique of power*. Within Bourdieu's theoretical framework, the critique of power is a *particular privilege of experts*: to the degree that the social mechanisms sustaining power relations operate as underlying structural processes, ordinary people are incapable of uncovering, let alone understanding, the multiple determinants of their environment. On this account, immediate immersion within social life is an obstacle to, rather than a facilitator of, reflexive comprehension. Within Boltanski's theoretical

framework, on the other hand, the critique of power is a *universal resource of human beings*: to the degree that the normative relations regulating power relations function as coordinating discursive processes, ordinary people are capable of justifying, and also of criticizing, the principles and conventions they have to take into account within the regimes of action established in their *cités*. On this view, immediate immersion within social life is a facilitator of, rather than an obstacle to, reflexive comprehension.

Fifth, they create different conceptions of the *power of power*. What is the power inherent in power? The Bourdieusian perspective is marked by ‘*socio-ontological fatalism*’, according to which power possesses the power to impose an unconscious complicity, which appears as the implicit condition necessary for the functioning of an environment structured by the relational spaces of fields. Put differently, the power of power results not only from its omnipresence but also from its omnipotence – that is, from its capacity to penetrate and determine all actions of a given society. The Boltanskian view, by contrast, is characterized by ‘*socio-ontological normativism*’, according to which power possesses the power to trigger the formation of critical reflexivity, understood as a practical resource capable of calling the legitimacy of material and symbolic arrangements into question. In other words, the power of power derives from its capacity to be justified and legitimized, thereby contributing to the stability of *cités*, which represent the referential framework of its own reality. In short, in Bourdieu, the power of power is rooted in its unconscious and ubiquitous constitution, contributing to its constant reproduction; in Boltanski, the power of power depends on its capacity to be accepted on the basis of its confrontation with tests (*épreuves*) undertaken by members of a *cit  *, whose discursive processes can cause its transformation.

8. The Concept of ‘Emancipation’

An eighth point of divergence concerns the concept of ‘*emancipation*’. Both Bourdieu and Boltanski regard sociology as a *committed* endeavour, in the sense that both thinkers aim to examine and denounce the negative consequences of systems of domination. Whilst Bourdieu and Boltanski agree on the importance of criticizing both the existence and the effects of domination, insisting on the possibility of a society capable of realizing its normative and creative potential, their conceptions of emancipation differ in various respects.

First, they endorse different conceptions of *emancipatory competence* – that is, of people’s capacity to understand the contingent conditions of their existence and of their ability to transform social arrangements in accordance with their needs. According to Bourdieu, emancipatory competence can be

conceived of as a privilege of experts: the capacity to contribute to processes of emancipation is, above all, a *scientific competence*, developed on the basis of theoretical reflection and oriented towards practical transformation. If ordinary agents remain confined by the limitations of predetermined schemes of action and comprehension, then common-sense knowledge is little more than a form of misrecognition based on *doxa*. *Doxa* cannot transcend the status of an erroneous representation, founded on a limited perception and a simplified understanding of reality. Scientific reflexivity allows for the development of a critical perspective, derived from a methodical and analytical grasp of reality. According to Boltanski, by contrast, emancipatory competence can be regarded as a privilege of ordinary people: the capacity to participate in processes of emancipation is an *ordinary competence*, to which, in principle, all human beings have access and which they need in order to assert themselves as creators of their own destiny. If ordinary actors are equipped with emancipatory capacities, notably with reflexive competences, then the knowledge they produce and the discussions in which they engage are a sign of their capacity to comprehend their own reality and to coordinate their actions in accordance with moral considerations, in order to legitimize particular regimes of action in their society. The capacity for reflection and the force of justification are crucial to processes of socialization, without which actors would not be able to construct regimes of action.

Second, they advocate different conceptions of *emancipatory resources* – that is, of liberating the human potential that can be mobilized in order to undermine mechanisms of domination. The Bourdieusian account of emancipatory resources is embedded in a *rationalist and scientific* understanding of emancipation.⁴⁰ On this view, the main instrument that permits us to transform social reality in a positive way is *critical rationality*: scientific distance-taking is inconceivable without the use of critical rationality, which is fundamental to sociological reflexivity. Bourdieusian sociology seeks to promote critical rationality, in order to replace immersive and doxic forms of misrecognition with reflexive and scientific modes of investigation. The Boltanskian conception of emancipatory resources, by contrast, rests on a *normativist and contextualist* interpretation of emancipation. From this point of view, the principal resource for structuring the material and symbolic dimensions of reality in accordance with the needs of a common humanity is our discursive and moral capacity, which enables us to construct and, if necessary, reconcile different dimensions of *practical normativity*: the everyday questioning of social arrangements is unthinkable without the human capacity to create and justify different modes of normativity. Boltanskian sociology reminds us that our participation in discursive processes of coordination and justification is vital to all collective projects oriented towards the possibility

of emancipation. In short, for Bourdieu, there is no human emancipation without *critical sociology*; for Boltanski, there is no human emancipation without a *critical society*.

Third, they embrace different conceptions of *emancipatory projects*. Undoubtedly, the two sociological programmes share a radical scepticism towards political projects that are motivated by ideological dogmatism. At the same time, these two intellectual frameworks endorse not only a theoretical questioning of socio-historical realities, but also a genuine engagement with their practical transformation. Paradoxically, this point of convergence is, at the same time, a point of divergence. Highlighting the explanatory capacity of science and its ability to intervene in public debates, Bourdieusian thought portrays social emancipation as an inexorable process, which is contingent upon modern societies' capacity to draw upon the unmasking power of scientific reasoning. In this sense, scientific knowledge is the source of relative *ontological certainty*. Insisting on the discursive and reflexive resources of ordinary social life, Boltanskian thought conceives of emancipation as a possibility, contingent upon the capacity of pluralized societies to cope with their own complexity, by recognizing the pivotal role played by regimes of action when generating regimes of justification. Put differently, the unavoidable is conceived of as something entirely avoidable, and the avoidable is treated as something utterly unavoidable. On this account, reflexive knowledge is the source of relative *ontological uncertainty*. In short, for Bourdieu, the pursuit of social emancipation results from the relative ontological certainty expressed by the critical rationality inherent in scientific knowledge; for Boltanski, the pursuit of social emancipation needs to face up to the radical ontological uncertainty problematized by critical reflexivity inherent in pragmatic knowledge.

Conclusion

To what extent can Bourdieu's 'critical sociology' and Boltanski's 'pragmatic sociology of critique' be reconciled? And to what extent does such an undertaking permit us to develop a conceptual framework capable of contributing to a better understanding of the complexity of social life? In order to respond to these questions, the previous analysis has examined the principal points of convergence and divergence between Bourdieusian and Boltanskian thought. As illustrated above, despite the considerable theoretical differences that separate the two intellectual currents from one another, they are far from incommensurable. In fact, a systematic comparison of their approaches demonstrates that Bourdieu and Boltanski share a series of theoretical concerns and that, more importantly, they concur on various normative issues, particularly with regard to their critique of relations of domination and their

insistence on the possibility of emancipation. Instead of recapitulating the key points of the preceding study, this chapter shall conclude by formulating eight hypotheses on the basis of which it may be possible to cross-fertilize Bourdieu's 'critical sociology' and Boltanski's 'pragmatic sociology of critique':

- (1) There is no scientific knowledge without everyday knowledge, for the reflexive positions of experts are rooted in the critical capacities of ordinary people.
- (2) Founded on the structural determination of social life, homological realities cannot do away with the unforced force of critique, which permits to convert every regime of action into a space of justification.
- (3) Just as every social field forms a space of action that requires processes of justification, every *cité* constitutes a relational regime marked by structural divisions.
- (4) To the extent that people are agents who are embedded in social relations governed by systemic mechanisms of competition and confrontation, they are actors capable of generating links founded on normative processes of justification and cooperation. Strategic action is inconceivable without reflexive action.
- (5) Critical competence, which enables us to convert reality into an object of reflection, is always situated in a doxic horizon, composed of preconceptions.
- (6) The normativity of every *cité*, sustained by principles of context-dependent generalizability, is determined by the legitimacy of fields, defined by the symbolic power of social positioning.
- (7) To the degree that normative configurations created within *cités* are impregnated with power relations generated within fields, the division between dominant groups and dominated groups within the social space can be called into question on the basis of debates focused on the distinction between justifiable and unjustifiable tests.
- (8) Critical sociology needs the sociology of critique, because the critique of society derives its normative resources from the society of critique. At the same time, the sociology of critique needs critical sociology, because the society of critique squanders its emancipatory resources without the critique of society.

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Notes

- 1 This chapter was originally published as Simon Susen (2014) ‘Une réconciliation entre Pierre Bourdieu et Luc Boltanski est-elle possible ? Pour un dialogue entre la sociologie critique et la sociologie pragmatique de la critique’, in Bruno Frère (ed.) *Le tournant de la théorie critique*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer. Printed in English with kind permission from Desclée de Brouwer. Translated from French into English by Simon Susen.
- 2 On the influence of Bourdieusian thought on Francophone sociology, see, for example: Bon and Schemeil (1980); Bonnewitz (1998); Bonnewitz (2002); Bouveresse (2003); Bouveresse and Roche (2004); Caro (1980); Champagne (2002); Chauviré and Fontaine (2003); Corcuff (1996); Corcuff (2003); Delsaut and Rivière (2002); Heilbron, Lenoir, and Sapiro (2004); Hong (1999); Lahire (1999); Mauger (2005); Mounier (2001); Pinto (1998); Pinto, Sapiro, and Champagne (2004); Verdès-Leroux (1996); Vincent (2002); Wacquant (1995); Wacquant (1996).
On the influence of Boltanskian thought on Francophone sociology, see, for example: Bénatouïl (1999a); Berten (1993); Bidet (2002); Caillé (1988); Corcuff (1996); de Blic (2000); de Blic and Mouchard (2000a); de Blic and Mouchard (2000b); Dodier (1991); Dodier (1993); Gadrey, Hatchuel, Boltanski, and Chiapello (2001); Gautier (2001); Nachi (2006); Negri (1994); Susen (2012); Thévenot (1990); Thévenot (1992); Thévenot (1998); Thévenot (2006).
- 3 On the influence of Bourdieusian thought on Germanophone sociology, see, for example: Bittlingmayer, Eickelpasch, Kastner, and Rademacher (2002); Blasius and Winkler (1989); Bohn (1991); Colliot-Thélène, François, and Gebauer (2005); Ebrecht and Hillebrandt (2002); Gebauer (2000); Habermas (2002); Herz (1996); Honneth (1984); Jurt (1995); Jurt (2003); Jurt (2004); König (2003); Nassehi and Nollmann (2004); Papilloud (2003); Raphael (1991); Rehbein, Saalmann, and Schwengel (2003); Steinrücke (2004).
On the influence of Boltanskian thought on Germanophone sociology, see, for example: Basaure, Reemtsma, and Willig (2009); Bogusz (2010); Boltanski and Honneth (2009); Celikates (2009: esp. 136–157); Dörre, Lessenich, and Rosa (2009); Forst, Hartmann, Jaeggi, and Saar (2009); Hartmann (2009: 526–527); Jaeggi (2009); Jaeggi and Wesche (2009: 14–15); Rehberg (2007); Schmidt (2007).
- 4 On the influence of Bourdieusian thought on Anglophone sociology, see, for example: Baert and Silva (2010 [1998]: 34–42); Benson and Neveu (2005); Boyne (2002); Brown and Szeman (2000); Brubaker (1985); Calhoun, LiPuma, and Postone (1993); Calhoun and Wacquant (2002); Fowler (1997); Fowler (2000); Fowler (2004); Gartman (2000); Harker, Mahar, and Wilkes (1990); Jenkins (1992); Lane (2000); Robbins (1991); Robbins (2000d); Robbins (2000b); Robbins (2000c); Robbins (2000a); Robbins (2000e); Robbins (2002); Shusterman (1999); Susen (2007: ch. 5–9); Susen (2011); Susen and Turner (2011); Swartz (1997); Vandenberghe (1999); Wacquant (1989); Wacquant (2003); Warde (2002); Webb, Schirato, and Danaher (2002).

On the influence of Boltanskian thought on Anglophone sociology, see, for example: Baert and Silva (2010 [1998]: 42–48); Bénatouïl (1999b); Callinicos (2006: 5, 15, 51–72, and 155–156); Chiapello and Fairclough (2002); Eulriet (2008); Frère (2004:

esp. 92–93 and 97n4); Stark (2009); Susen (2007: 7, 146n.8, 147n.31, 167n.5, 202n.89, 202n.93, 223–224, 227n.25, 228n.50, 229n.51, 229n.52, 271n.24, 319, 322, and 325); Wagner (1999); Wagner (2000).

- 5 See, for example: Bénatouïl (1999a); Bénatouïl (1999b); Callinicos (2006: 4–5, 15, 51–82, and 155–156); Celikates (2009: 136–157); de Blic and Mouchard (2000a); de Blic and Mouchard (2000b); Frère (2004: esp. 92–93 and 97n.4); Nachi (2006: 188–189); Susen (2007: 223–224, 227n.25, 228n.50, 229n.51, 229n.52, and 271n.24); Wagner (1999); Wagner (2000).

On this debate, see also: Boltanski (1990a: 9–134); Boltanski (1990b: 124–134); Boltanski (1998: esp. 248–253); Boltanski (1999–2000: 303–311); Boltanski (2002a: 276–281 and 281–284); Boltanski (2003: 153–161); Boltanski (2008); Boltanski (2009: esp. 39–82); Boltanski and Chiapello (1999: esp. 633–640); Boltanski and Honneth (2009: 81–86, 92–96, and 100–114); Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2010: 152–154 and 160–162); Boltanski and Thévenot (1991: 40, 41–43, 43–46, and 265–270); Boltanski and Thévenot (1999: 364–365).

- 6 See, for instance, Bénatouïl (1999a) and Bénatouïl (1999b).

- 7 See *ibid.*: 13 and 39–82.

- 8 See Boltanski (2011 [2009]: 43). [Boltanski (2009: 74): ‘[r]endre compatibles’.]

- 9 Boltanski (2011 [2009]: xi). [Boltanski (2009: 13): ‘un objectif de pacification’.]

- 10 On the Bourdieusian conception of *the social*, see, for example: Bourdieu (1980: 12–13, 139–140, 151, and 229); Bourdieu (1984c: 4); Bourdieu (1994a: 17 and 20); Bourdieu (1997b: 220); Bourdieu (2001a: 119, 146, 154–157, and 163); Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 71–90 and 196–206).

On the Boltanskian conception of *the social*, see, for example: Boltanski (1975a: 37–59); Boltanski (1982: 52–59, 244–249, 298–303, 427–438, and 472–474); Boltanski (1990a: 9–11, 15–27, 54–63, and 110–124); Boltanski (1990b: 124–134); Boltanski (1999–2000: 303–311); Boltanski (2003: 155–156 and 158–160); Boltanski (2009: 17, 18, 23, 25, 44, 46, 65, 83–128, 97, and 242); Boltanski and Chiapello (1999: 61–65, 154–230, and 631–640); Boltanski and Claverie (2007: 395–452); Boltanski and Honneth (2009: 82–86, 92–96, 100–111, and 113–114); Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2010: 153–164); Boltanski and Thévenot (1983: 631–680); Boltanski and Thévenot (1991: esp. 30–33, 39–59, 96–103, 107–157, 200–262, and 436–438); Boltanski and Thévenot (1999: 359–377); Boltanski and Thévenot (2000: 208–231).

- 11 See, for example: Boltanski (1969); Boltanski (1975a); Boltanski (1975b); Boltanski (1982); Boltanski (1993a); Boltanski (2002b); Boltanski (2004); Boltanski and Chiapello (1999); Boltanski, Claverie, Offenstadt, and Van Damme (2007); Boltanski, Darré, and Schiltz (1984); Boltanski and Thévenot (1983); Bourdieu (1972); Bourdieu (1977); Bourdieu (1979); Bourdieu (1980: 245–461, ‘Livre 2 – Logiques pratiques’); Bourdieu (1981); Bourdieu (1984b); Bourdieu (1993); Bourdieu (1996); Bourdieu (1998a); Bourdieu (2001b); Bourdieu (2004); Bourdieu and Boltanski (1975); Bourdieu and Darbel (1969); Bourdieu and Passeron (1964); Bourdieu and Passeron (1970).

- 12 See Bourdieu (1972).

- 13 See Bourdieu (1994a).

- 14 See Bourdieu (1976a) and Bourdieu (1980). See also Caillé (1988), Corcuff (1996), de Fornel (1993), as well as Ladrière, Pharo, and Quéré (1993).

- 15 See Boltanski and Thévenot (1983).

- 16 See Boltanski (1998), Boltanski (2002a), as well as Boltanski and Thévenot (1991).

- 17 See Boltanski and Thévenot (1999).

- 18 On the Bourdieusian conception of *practice*, see, for example: Bourdieu (1972); Bourdieu (1976a); Bourdieu (1980); Bourdieu (1994a: esp. 169–173); Bourdieu (1997b: 64, 66, 68, 75–76, 80, 97–98, 115, and 164–165); Bourdieu (2001a: 78); Bourdieu and Boltanski (2008: 9–14); Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 27–30 and 91–115).
On the Boltanskian conception of *practice*, see, for example: Boltanski (1990a: 9–134); Boltanski (1990b); Boltanski (1993a: 246–282); Boltanski (1993b); Boltanski (1999–2000); Boltanski (2002a); Boltanski (2003: esp. 156–160); Boltanski (2004: 28–29, 250–252, 308–310, and 329–332); Boltanski (2008: 137–148); Boltanski (2009: 33, 96, 98, 100–107, 124, 147, and 154); Boltanski and Chiapello (1999: 61–65, 73–76, 154–238, and 633–640); Boltanski and Claverie (2007); Boltanski and Honneth (2009: 82–86, 92–96, 100–111, and 113–114); Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2010: 153–164); Boltanski and Thévenot (1983); Boltanski and Thévenot (1991); Boltanski and Thévenot (1999); Bourdieu and Boltanski (2008: 9–14).
- 19 On the Bourdieusian conception of *critical sociology*, see, for example: Bourdieu (1978: 68); Bourdieu (1984a: 19–36, 37–66, 79–85, and 86–94); Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 34–37, 45–70, and 175–185).
- 20 On the Boltanskian conception of *sociology of critique/pragmatic sociology of critique*, see, for example: Boltanski (1990a: 9–134, esp. 54–63); Boltanski (1990b: 124–134); Boltanski (1993a: 16–17, 46, 85, 97–100, 105, 157, and 166); Boltanski (1993b: 235–259); Boltanski (1998: 248–273); Boltanski (1999–2000: 303–311); Boltanski (2004: 14–18, 215–216, 252–259, 292–294, 315, 318–319, and 360–361n.3); Boltanski (2009: 13, 15, 35–37, 39–82, 87, 100, 101, 193, 223, and 250); Boltanski and Chiapello (1999: 58–90 and 633–640); Boltanski and Honneth (2009: 82–86, 92–96, 100–111, and 113–114); Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2010: 153–164); Boltanski and Thévenot (1991: esp. 23–26, 30–33, 39–59, 265–334, 417–421, and 425–438); Boltanski and Thévenot (1999: 359–377); Boltanski and Thévenot (2000: 208–231).
- 21 On the Bourdieusian conception of *critique*, see, for example: Bourdieu (1980: 30, 40, 43, and 51–70); Bourdieu (1982b: 8–11, 23–24, 29, 32, and 54); Bourdieu (1997b: 12–13, 28–29, 43, 113, 140, and 158); Bourdieu (2001c: 7, 20, 30, and 57); Bourdieu (2001a: esp. 15–20, 154, and 167–220); Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron (1968: 14, 23, 31, 39, 46, 57, 62, 96, and 100–102); Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 34–37, 45–70, and 175–185).
On the Boltanskian conception of *critique*, see, for example: Boltanski (1990a: 9–134, esp. 54–63 and 64–77); Boltanski (1990b: 124–134); Boltanski (1993a: 16–17, 46, 85, 97–100, 105, 111–116, 157, and 166); Boltanski (1993b: 235–259); Boltanski (1998: 248–273); Boltanski (1999–2000: 303–311); Boltanski (2004: 14–18, 215–216, 252–259, 292–294, 315, 318–319, and 360–361n.3); Boltanski (2009: esp. 13–15, 19–22, 27–35, 35–37, 39–82, 84, 87, 91, 92, 93, 97, 100, 101, 112–113, 153, 156, 163–164, 184–185, 190, 193, 202, 223, 233, and 250); Boltanski and Chiapello (1999: 58–90, 241–290, 577–629, and 633–640); Boltanski and Honneth (2009: 82–86, 92–96, 100–111, and 113–114); Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2010: 153–164); Boltanski and Thévenot (1991: esp. 15–16, 21, 23–26, 30–33, 39–59, 80, 94, 101, 115, 136–137, 144, 172, 191–192, 207, 223, 242, 265–334, 343, 417–421, and 425–438); Boltanski and Thévenot (1999: 359–377); Boltanski and Thévenot (2000: 208–231).
- 22 On the Bourdieusian conception of *interest*, see, for example: Bourdieu (1984a: 20, 33–34, 41, 62, 70, 79, 113–115, 119, 138, 232, 234, and 95–112); Bourdieu (1997b: 11, 21, 84, 91, 113, 124, 126, 148, 168, 188, 199, 233–234, 252, and 254); Bourdieu (2001c: 14); Bourdieu (2001a: esp. 5–10 and 19); Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 71–174 and 196–206).

On the Boltanskian conception of *interest*, see, for example: Boltanski (1969: 52–56 and 135–139); Boltanski (1975a: 37–59); Boltanski (1982: esp. 49–52, 52–59, 219–223, 224–232, 242–243, 336–343, 343–354, and 485–489); Boltanski (1990a: 15–63, 110–124, 204–212, and 213–221); Boltanski (1990b: 124–134); Boltanski (1993: 275–282); Boltanski (1993b: 235–259); Boltanski (2002^o: 275–289); Boltanski (2004: 215–259); Boltanski (2008: 149–158, 159–171, and 173–178); Boltanski (2009: 21, 32, 123, 147, and 209); Boltanski and Chiapello (1999: 48, 58, 170, and 561); Boltanski and Thévenot (1991: 22, 24, 45, 56, 60, 66, 68, 77, 101–102, 105, 139, 142–147, 155, 237, 348, 352, 377, 404, 408, and 410).

- 23 On the Bourdieusian conception of *theoretical aporia* (particularly in terms of the Bourdieusian critique of ‘objectivist’ and ‘subjectivist’ approaches), see, for example: Bourdieu (1980: 43, 46, 78, 87, 103, 178, 202, 234, and 242); Bourdieu (1982b: 35–37); Bourdieu (1994b: 3); Bourdieu (1997b: 16–17, 43, 77, 122, 157, 159–160, 163–167, 185, and 225); Bourdieu (2002: 353); Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron (1968: 34, 93–94, and 101); Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 16–20).

On the Boltanskian conception of *theoretical aporia* (particularly in terms of the Boltanskian critique of ‘scientific’ and ‘determinist’ approaches), see, for example: Boltanski (1990a: 54–63); Boltanski (1990b: 124–134); Boltanski (1998: 248–273); Boltanski (1999–2000: 303–311); Boltanski (2002a: 276–281 and 281–284); Boltanski (2002b: 1–20); Boltanski (2003: 155, 159, and 160); Boltanski and Chiapello (1999: 633–640); Boltanski and Honneth (2009: 82–86); Boltanski and Thévenot (1991: 40, 41–43, 43–46, and 265–270); Boltanski and Thévenot (1999: 364–365).

- 24 See Goffman (1971 [1959]: 21–22).

- 25 On the Bourdieusian conception of *structural background* (particularly in terms of ‘field’), see, for example: Bourdieu (1972: 256–285); Bourdieu (1980: 113, 179, 188, 200, and 244); Bourdieu (1982b: 10 and 34); Bourdieu (1997b: 21–26, 44–46, 64–67, 118, 120, 123, 181, 184, and 206); Bourdieu (1998b: 89); Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron (1968: 30, 38, 46–47, 56, 58, 70, 77, 101, and 105); Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 119, 184, and 197).

On the Boltanskian conception of *social grammar* (particularly in terms of ‘regimes of action’ and ‘regimes of engagement’), see, for example: Boltanski (1975a: esp. 37–40); Boltanski (1982: 373–380 and 472–474); Boltanski (1990a: 110–124 and 125–134); Boltanski (1990b: esp. 130–134); Boltanski (1993a: 26–29, 76–80, and 215–219); Boltanski (1993b: 235–259); Boltanski (1998: 248–249, 251–259, and 268–269); Boltanski (1999–2000: 303–311); Boltanski (2002a: 285–286); Boltanski (2004: 16, 60, 87, and 308–310); Boltanski (2008: 173–178); Boltanski (2009: 52–53, 63–64, 95, 107–108, 224–225, 168–169); Boltanski and Chiapello (1999: 42–43, 50, 100, 134, 152, 160, 166–168, 179–180, 189, 325, 361, and 614); Boltanski and Claverie (2007: 412–414); Boltanski and Honneth (2009: 92–96 and 100–114); Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2010: 153–155, 157, 159–160, and 163–164); Boltanski and Thévenot (1983: 631–680); Boltanski and Thévenot (1991: esp. 61, 64, 86–96, 163, 168, 286–290, and 366).

- 26 On this point, see Susen (2008a: 71–72 and 73–75) and Susen (2008b: 167).

- 27 On the Bourdieusian conception of *power*, and on the Bourdieusian conception of *domination*, see, for example: Bourdieu (1976b: 122–132); Bourdieu (1982b: 7, 14, 16, 17, 19, 23, 25, and 56); Bourdieu (1982a: 99–161); Bourdieu (1984a: 13, 43, 75–76, 125, 128, and 131); Bourdieu (1994b: 3–12); Bourdieu (1997b: 9, 47, 81, 99, 116, 124–127, 132, 200–206, 211–212, 214, 222, 225, 236, 243–244, 256–258, 280–281, 284–285,

and 287); Bourdieu (1990: 2–31); Bourdieu (1998b: esp. 28–48 and 103–125); Bourdieu (2001a: 47, 54, 150, and 170); Bourdieu and Boltanski (1975: 2–32); Bourdieu and Boltanski (2008: esp. 104–106); Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 71–90, 116–149, and 196–206).

On the Boltanskian conception of *power*, and on the Boltanskian conception of *domination*, see, for example: Boltanski (1969: 34–36 and 52–56); Boltanski (1975a: 44–47); Boltanski (1982: 118–120, 289, 377, 417–419, and 437–438); Boltanski (1990a: 110–124 and 204–212); Boltanski (1990b: 124–127, 131, and 134); Boltanski (1998: 248–249 and 251); Boltanski (1999–2000: 303–311); Boltanski (2002a: 276, 278, 280, and 283); Boltanski (2004: 32–33, 79, 91–93, 182, 237, 253, 290, 350, 360, and 395); Boltanski (2008: 149–158); Boltanski (2009: esp. 175–221); Boltanski and Chiapello (1999: esp. 104, 186, 232, 241–290, 464, 557, 590, 676, and 740–741); Boltanski and Honneth (2009: 82–86, 92–96, 100–111, and 113–114); Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2010: 153 and 156–157); Boltanski and Thévenot (1991: 27, 58, 109, 128, 289–290, 414, 416, 417–421, and 433–434).

- 28 On the Bourdieusian conception of *emancipation*, see, for example: Bourdieu (1982b: 32); Bourdieu (1984a: 34–35); Bourdieu (1994a: 235–236); Bourdieu (1995: 10); Bourdieu (1997a: 60–62); Bourdieu (1997b: 88, 96, 150, and 218); Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 150–174).

On the Boltanskian conception of *emancipation*, see, for example: Boltanski (1990a: esp. 9–134, 159–191, 199–203, 204–212, and 223–252); Boltanski (1990b: esp. 130–134); Boltanski (1998: esp. 248–252, 255, and 259–262); Boltanski (1999–2000: 303–311); Boltanski (2004: 326–327); Boltanski (2002a: esp. 277–281 and 281–284); Boltanski (2009: esp. 20, 33–34, 40, 74–82, and 223–236); Boltanski and Chiapello (1999: esp. 501–576, 577–629, and 633–640); Boltanski and Honneth (2009: 82–86, 92–96, 100–111, and 113–114); Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2010: 160 and 166); Boltanski and Thévenot (1989); Boltanski and Thévenot (1991: 23–26, 46–59, 265–290, 417–421, and 425–438).

- 29 See Boltanski (1990a: 78–95).

- 30 See, for instance, Bourdieu (1990 [1980]: 36): ‘Only by means of a break with the theoretical vision, which is experienced as a break with ordinary vision, can the observer take account, in his description of ritual practice, of the fact of *participation* (and consequently of his own separation from this); [...] a critical awareness of the limits implied in the conditions of production of theory [...]’ (italics in original).

[Bourdieu (1980: 61): ‘C’est seulement par une rupture avec la vision savante, qui se vit elle-même comme une rupture avec la vision ordinaire, que l’observateur pourrait prendre en compte dans sa description de la pratique rituelle le fait de la *participation* (et du même coup le fait de sa propre rupture) : [...] une conscience critique des limites inscrites dans les conditions de production de la théorie [...]’ (italics in original).]

See also, for example, Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron (1991 [1968]: 28): ‘[...] the ritual denunciation of common prenotions [...] [and] any challenging of erudite prenotions [...]’.

[Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron (1968: 46): ‘[...] la dénonciation rituelle des prénotions communes [...] [et] la mise en question des prénotions savantes [...]’.]

- 31 On this point, see, for example, Boltanski and Thévenot (1999: 364): ‘The main problem of critical sociology is its inability to understand the *critical operations undertaken by the actors*. A sociology which wants to study the critical operations performed by actors – a sociology of criticism taken as a specific object – must therefore give up (if only temporarily)

the critical stance, in order to recognize the *normative principles* which *underlie* the *critical activity of ordinary persons*. If we want to *take seriously the claims of actors* when they denounce social injustice, criticize power relationships or unveil their foes' hidden motives, we must conceive of them as endowed with an *ability to differentiate* legitimate and illegitimate ways of rendering criticisms and justifications. It is, more precisely, this *competence* which characterizes the *ordinary sense of justice* which people implement in their disputes. [...] This approach thus departs from the task of moral philosophy, which is to discover some normative rules and procedures leading to justice, although one can *build a normative model of justice on the actor's sense of justice* which we made explicit.' (Italics added.)

- 32 See, for example, Boltanski (1990a: 60) as well as Boltanski and Thévenot (1991: 418). On this point, see also de Blic (2000: 157) and Hoarau (1996: 111).
- 33 Bourdieu (1990 [1980]: 25). [Bourdieu (1980: 43): '[...] la plus fondamentale, et la plus ruineuse [...].']
- 34 Bourdieu (1990 [1980]: 25) [Bourdieu (1980: 43): '[...] celle qui s'établit entre le subjectivisme et l'objectivisme [...].']
- 35 See, for instance, Boltanski (2002a: 276 and 280–28) as well as Boltanski and Honneth (2009: 82–84).
- 36 See, for instance, Boltanski and Chiapello (1999: 631–640).
- 37 See Boltanski (2009: 156).
- 38 On this point, see, for example: Bourdieu (1980: 93, 97, 112–113, and 226–227); Bourdieu (1997b: 23, 27, 29–32, 116–117, 119, 121, 123, 134, 140, and 150); Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 71–90).
- 39 On this point, see, for example: Boltanski (1998: 252–254); Boltanski and Thévenot (1991: 107–157, 200–262, and 291–334); Boltanski and Thévenot (1999: 369–373).
- 40 On this point, see, for instance, Bourdieu (1993 [1984]: 17): 'I too sometimes wonder if the completely transparent and disenchanted social universe that would be produced by a social science that was fully developed (and widely diffused, if that could ever be the case) would not be impossible to live in. I think, all the same, that social relations would be much less unhappy if people at least understood the mechanisms that lead them to contribute to their own deprivation.'

[Bourdieu (1984a: 33): 'Il m'arrive aussi de me demander si l'univers social complètement transparent et désenchanté que produirait une science sociale pleinement développée (et largement diffusée, si tant est que cela soit possible) ne serait pas invivable. Je crois, malgré tout, que les rapports sociaux seraient beaucoup moins malheureux si les gens maîtrisaient au moins les mécanismes qui les déterminent à contribuer à leur propre misère.']

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