



## City Research Online

### City, University of London Institutional Repository

---

**Citation:** Susen, S. (2014). Luc Boltanski: His Life and Work – An Overview. In: S. Susen & B. S. Turner (Eds.), *The Spirit of Luc Boltanski: Essays on the 'Pragmatic Sociology of Critique'*. (pp. 3-28). London, UK: Anthem Press. ISBN 9781783082964

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version.

---

**Permanent repository link:** <http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/18930/>

**Link to published version:**

**Copyright and reuse:** City Research Online aims to make research outputs of City, University of London available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. URLs from City Research Online may be freely distributed and linked to.

---

City Research Online:

<http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/>

[publications@city.ac.uk](mailto:publications@city.ac.uk)

---

# Luc Boltanski:

## His Life and Work – An Overview<sup>1</sup>

*Simon Susen*

### Biographical Facts

Luc Boltanski is widely regarded as one of the most influential French sociologists of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. He is one of the leading figures of the ‘pragmatic’ tradition within contemporary social and political thought. More specifically, he is – along with Laurent Thévenot – one of the founding figures of an approach that he himself characterizes as the ‘pragmatic sociology of critique’.

Boltanski was born in 1940. He is the brother of the artist Christian Boltanski and of the linguist Jean-Élie Boltanski. He studied social sciences at the University of Paris, La Sorbonne, and completed his *Thèse de troisième cycle* in 1968. This dissertation – entitled *Prime éducation et morale de classe* – was supervised by Raymond Aron; it was published by Mouton Publishing Company (152 pp.) in 1969 and subsequently translated into Italian (Guaraldi) and Spanish (Laia). Boltanski was awarded his *Doctorat d’État* in 1981 for his thesis entitled *Les cadres : La formation d’un groupe social*; this study, completed under the supervision of Pierre Ansart, was published by Éditions de Minuit (523 pp.) in 1982.

Throughout his career as a professional academic, Boltanski has been based at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris, France. At the EHESS, he has held three major academic positions: Chef de travaux (1965–69), Maître de conférences (1970–81), and Directeur d’études (since 1982).

Between 1965 and 1984, he was a member of the Centre de Sociologie Européenne (EHESS/CNRS), directed by Pierre Bourdieu. In 1985, he co-founded – together with Laurent Thévenot – the Groupe de Sociologie Politique et Morale (GSPM, EHESS/CNRS), of which he was the Director

between 1985 and 1992. At the GSPM, he carried out several research projects and led numerous research programmes until its closure in 2013. He has been a Visiting Professor at various universities, both in Europe and in the United States, and he was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University during the academic year 1991–92. Currently, he is a member of the Institut de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les Enjeux Sociaux (Sciences Sociales, Politique, Santé) (IRIS, EHESS).

In the early 1970s, Boltanski was involved in launching the journal *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, when his research was still profoundly influenced by the works of his academic mentor, Pierre Bourdieu. In the mid-1980s, however, Boltanski dissociated himself from Bourdieu's 'critical sociology' in order to create his own research programme, commonly described as the 'sociology of critique' or, more recently, as the 'pragmatic sociology of critique'.

Between 1965 and 1982, Boltanski's key research interests were directed towards the sociology of social classes and social stratification (mainly within the following areas: bodily and medical practices, education, social classifications, and moral norms). Between 1983 and 2009, his sociological investigations were concerned, primarily, with two areas of interest: first, *different notions of justice*, particularly in relation to disputes and critique; and, second, *transformations of capitalism*, especially those taking place between the early 1960s and the late 1990s. In relation to these research foci, Boltanski has sought to develop a 'sociology of critique', based on empirical fieldwork undertaken in a number of domains, such as the media, state policies, management, as well as new forms of work and organization.

In 2008, Boltanski delivered the Adorno Lectures at Frankfurt, which were subsequently published as *De la critique : Précis de sociologie de l'émancipation* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009) [English edition: *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation*, trans. Gregory Elliott, Cambridge: Polity, 2011]. In 2012, he was awarded the Lauréat du 1er prix Pétrarque de l'essai France Culture/*Le Monde* (2012) for his study *Énigmes et complots : Une enquête à propos d'enquêtes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012) [English edition: *Mysteries and Conspiracies: Detective Stories, Spy Novels and the Making of Modern Societies*, trans. Catherine Porter, Cambridge: Polity, 2014].

As reflected in the themes examined in *Énigmes et complots*, Boltanski has recently embarked upon a critical study of the construction of the modern European nation-state, notably in terms of its systemic capacity to reduce the multiple uncertainties permeating social life. One key issue with which he has been grappling in this context is the question of the extent to which the tension-laden project of the European nation-state has triggered the emergence of 'new forms of representation' in the humanities and social sciences.

## Major Works and Contributions

Boltanski has produced a large number of single-authored and co-authored books, edited and co-edited volumes, book chapters, and journal articles. In addition, he has written and published poetry as well as, more recently, theatre plays. For the sake of brevity, the summary provided in this section shall focus on his most influential sociological works.

### I.

*Les cadres : La formation d'un groupe social* (Paris: Minuit, 1982)

[*The Making of a Class: Cadres in French Society*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)]<sup>2</sup>

As mentioned above, this book is based on the thesis for which Boltanski – under the supervision of Pierre Ansart – was awarded his Doctorat d'État in 1981. It provides an in-depth study of *les cadres* – that is, of a powerful social group made up of business leaders, managers, directors, chiefs, supervisors, and executives. One of the defining features of this group is that it projects the image of *a new class*, which is neither bourgeois nor proletarian. Its members may be described as 'highly competent', 'highly skilled', 'highly motivated', and – both politically and economically – 'highly influential'. Yet, far from portraying them as a homogenous cluster of social actors, Boltanski stresses their *internal diversity*. He does so by drawing upon the information provided in numerous interviews conducted with representatives of this group, enabling him to deconstruct the myth that the emergence of *les cadres* can be regarded as a quasi-natural outcome of social, economic, and technological progress.

With respect to the development of *les cadres*, two historical phases are particularly important:

- The first stage can be traced back to the 1930s, a period in which members of increasingly influential socio-professional groups – such as engineers and owners of capital – sought official and institutional recognition. The emergence of the Confédération Générale des Syndicats des Classes Moyennes can be interpreted as symptomatic of the desire of these privileged groups to assert the existence of a link between their organizational structure and their social status.
- The second stage commenced in the post-1945 era, a period in which it became evident that French society was divided into three, rather than two, main classes: the proletariat, the middle class, and the bourgeoisie. One of

the distinctive ideological features of the middle class, largely associated with *les cadres*, is that most of its representatives endorse political developments associated with a Troisième Voie ('Third Way'), situated between individualism and collectivism, capitalism and communism, Manchester liberalism and Soviet-style socialism.

Members of *les cadres*, then, tend to advocate – implicitly or explicitly – the *ideology of meritocracy*. According to this belief system, holders of political, economic, institutional, or managerial power can legitimize their prominent position in society by reference to 'progressive' resources (such as 'merit', 'competence', and 'talent'), rather than 'regressive' dogmas (such as 'heritage', 'tradition', and 'custom'). Because of their increasing material and ideological influence between the 1950s and the 1970s, the normative agenda of *les cadres* cannot be divorced from *postindustrial* labels – such as 'late modernity', 'technology', 'productivity', 'efficiency', 'creativity', 'meritocracy', 'expertise', and 'dynamism' –, which are central to the consolidation of 'knowledge economies'. Considering the alleged triumph of the 'affluent society', illustrated by the rise of *les cadres*, it appears that, in the postindustrial era, 'class conflict' and 'class struggle' have been replaced by 'class cooperation' and 'class compromise'.

One of Boltanski's most significant achievements in this study, however, is to have demonstrated the immense internal heterogeneity, along with the profound structural fragility, characterizing *les cadres*. His fine-grained analysis illustrates that the portrayal of this social group as a uniform and homogenous collective force, as well as its triumphalist celebration as the protagonist of a new meritocratic era based on prosperity and progress, must be rejected as a reductive misrepresentation of what is – in reality – a highly complex, heterogeneous, and volatile assemblage of actors.

Critics may have plausible reservations about the Francocentric – and, hence, geographically and socio-politically limited – scope of this enquiry. Indeed, the English translation of the original French *La formation d'un groupe social* (The making of a social group) into *The Making of a Class* may – contrary to Boltanski's intentions – convey the misleading impression that *les cadres* form a social class, rather than a social group. Such an assumption seems untenable, given the fragmented and unstable constitution of their material and symbolic resources for action, of their internal organizational structure, and of their members' trajectories. In the contemporary era, a significant sociological challenge consists in exploring the extent to which *les cadres* continue to play a pivotal role in shaping social, economic, political, and ideological developments both in and beyond France.

## II.

*L'amour et la justice comme compétences : Trois essais de sociologie de l'action* (Paris: Métailié, 1990)

[*Love and Justice as Competences*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Polity, 2012)]<sup>3</sup>

This book is of crucial importance in that it is one of the first works marking Boltanski's unambiguous *rupture* with the sociological approach developed by his academic mentor, Pierre Bourdieu. To be precise, it is Boltanski's first major single-authored study to make an explicit attempt to challenge the arguably scientific, positivist, and fatalistic presuppositions underpinning Bourdieu's 'critical sociology'. In essence, this treatise accomplishes this by arguing that people care a great deal about justice. To be exact, Boltanski starts from the assumption that *ordinary actors engage – enthusiastically and critically – in everyday disputes over different – and, in many respects, competing – conceptions of justice*. It is particularly in situations in which people's sense of justice is challenged, affronted, or disturbed that they are likely to engage in subtle or open confrontations with others. Unlike Bourdieu, however, Boltanski posits that – instead of acting mainly in strategic, instrumental, utility-driven, or calculating ways – *subjects capable of reflection and justification* are able to engage in intersubjectively constituted processes of discourse and argumentation, thereby raising claims to validity in relation to different sets of normativity.

People's practical construction of, intuitive immersion in, and critical engagement with '*regimes of justice*' can be considered central to the value-laden unfolding of social life. No less important, in this respect, is the socio-ontological role of what Boltanski refers to as the '*regime of peace*' and the '*regime of love*' (*agapè*), whose existence is due to the fact that some actions are selfless and gratuitous. What all of these grammatically structured regimes of action – between which people, in their everyday lives, move back and forth – have in common is that they require their protagonists to refuse to draw on their *capacity for violence*, which can manifest itself in various – notably, physical, symbolic, and structural – forms of power.

The Boltanskian view that social life, far from being reducible to an interest-laden conglomerate of strategically driven actions and vertically structured power relations, is shaped by *people's need for love and justice* is founded on two key ideas:

- (1) The idea of a '*common humanity*', implying that, since human actors are members of one and the same species, their lives are comparable in terms

of normative codes of ‘*equivalence*’ from which, in principle, no individual can be excluded;

- (2) The idea of ‘*orders of worth*’, through which equivalences are established between individuals, permitting for the collective pursuit of the ‘*common good*’, notwithstanding the multiple – social, political, economic, ideological, symbolic, and physical – differences that separate human actors from one another.

In short, as members of a ‘common humanity’, we are equipped with the normative capacity to establish ‘orders of worth’ in the pursuit of the ‘common good’, which transcends the divisive logic of competitive position-taking and merely strategic performativity. One of the main contributions of Boltanski’s *Love and Justice as Competences*, therefore, is to have shed light on the *moral foundations of society* by taking seriously people’s ability to engage in the construction of *everyday forms of normativity*. In other words, this book is a powerful reminder that our capacity to mobilize the reflexive resources embedded in our critical capacity permits us to build meaningful social relations based on a genuine concern with justice, love, and reciprocity.

### **III.**

*De la justification : Les économies de la grandeur*, avec Laurent Thévenot (Paris: Gallimard, 1991)

[*On Justification: Economies of Worth*, with Laurent Thévenot, trans. Catherine Porter (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006)]<sup>4</sup>

This book grapples with one of the most vital, yet largely underappreciated, dimensions of social existence: processes of *justification*. Integral to the construction of all human life forms are the multiple ways in which individuals justify, or fail to justify, their actions to others by referring to normative principles they consider – contextually or universally – defensible. Yet, not only do subjects capable of action, reflection, and justification seek to *perceive*, *interpret*, *understand*, and *represent* the normative parameters by which their lives are shaped; in addition, they often *misperceive*, *misinterpret*, *misunderstand*, and *misrepresent* these parameters, especially when failing to realize that different situations, constructed by different actors, generate different normative criteria and expectations. Indeed, many disagreements and conflicts arise from the fact that people appeal – consciously or unconsciously, deliberately or unwittingly, implicitly or explicitly – to divergent principles of cognition, evaluation, and judgement.

This study provides numerous useful insights into the pivotal role that processes of justification play in the construction of social life. These can be synthesized in terms of the following levels of analysis:

- (1) *Ordinary actors are equipped with critical, moral, and judgemental capacities.* Owing to their ability to participate—actively and reflexively—in the meaning- and value-laden construction of different forms of sociality, their claims to objective, normative, or subjective validity are irreducible to mere epiphenomena of an interest- and power-laden struggle for legitimacy in field-specific—and, hence, positionally determined and dispositionally reproduced—realities.
- (2) *Any attempt to construct a hierarchy between ‘ordinary knowledge’ and ‘social-scientific knowledge’ is epistemologically erroneous, methodologically counterproductive, sociologically untenable, politically patronizing, and philosophically fatalistic.* To be sure, the point is not to deny that there are substantial qualitative differences between ‘scientific analysis’ and ‘common sense’. It is crucial, however, to concede that these two levels of epistemic engagement with specific aspects of reality are not as far apart as they may appear at first glance. Instead of undertaking a clear-cut ‘epistemological break’ with the doxic illusions of common sense, the challenge consists in exploring the extent to which ordinary people’s critical capacity constitutes a precondition for, rather than an obstacle to, the possibility of reflection and justification in all normatively codified settings of social interaction.
- (3) *All activities of justification have both grammatical and processual dimensions, which can be empirically studied and conceptually grasped.* Given their grammatical constitution, activities of justification are structured by context-specific logics of rationalization, argumentation, and valorization. Given their *processual* constitution, the underlying objective, normative, or subjective parameters mobilized in order to justify a belief or an action are not only in a constant state of flux but also contingent upon the changing sets of circumstances in which they are applied by those making claims to validity and aiming to obtain empowering degrees of legitimacy. Different *cités* (polities) may be regarded as idiosyncratic *mondes* (worlds) capable of establishing different *grandeurs* (orders of worth) with different conceptions of *bien comun* (common good), whose validity can be confirmed or undermined by means of different *épreuves* (tests). Irrespective of the spatio-temporal specificity of a social situation, there are no practices of meaning- and value-laden interaction without both grammars and processes of justification.
- (4) *There are multiple normative orders with corresponding regimes of justification and modes of evaluation.* Six ‘worlds’, with corresponding ‘orders of worth’, are particularly important: ‘the inspired world’, ‘the domestic world’, ‘the civic world’, ‘the world of opinion and fame’, ‘the world of the market’, and ‘the



industrial world'. These 'worlds' possess both a '*quotidian*' and a '*metaphysical*' dimension.

- Their '*quotidian*', and thus '*ordinary*', constitution is reflected in the fact that these 'worlds' permeate the normative structure of *people's everyday practices*, as they find themselves immersed in different *regimes of action and justification* when navigating their way through the social universe. The experiences of passion ('inspired'), trust ('domestic'), solidarity ('civic'), recognition ('fame'), exchange value ('market'), and productivity ('industry') are built into 'orders of worth' by means of which actors engage with, and attribute meaning to, reality on a day-to-day basis.
- Their '*metaphysical*', or simply '*philosophical*', constitution is expressed in the fact that the systematic concern with the ontological significance of these 'worlds' can be traced back to the writings of *classical social and political thinkers*: St. Augustine ('the inspired world'), Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet ('the domestic world'), Jean-Jacques Rousseau ('the civic world'), Thomas Hobbes ('the world of fame'), Adam Smith ('the world of the market'), and Henri de Saint-Simon ('the industrial world').

(5) *Social actors are obliged to possess a certain degree of realism when engaging in disputes.* Put differently, people's participation in the normative construction of social life is inconceivable without their competence to *assess* what is possible, and what is not possible, when faced with a given set of materially and symbolically organized circumstances. People's capacity to be *realistic* in terms of what they can, and cannot, achieve within particular situations is a praxeological precondition for their ability to make judgements about – and, if required, take decisions in relation to – specific issues at stake in changing settings of interaction. Just as they are obliged to make compromises, they are expected to be able to cope with the fact that overt or hidden conflicts form an ineluctable component of social existence. Since, in their everyday lives, they are constantly required to position themselves in relation to normatively codified forms of action, they cannot escape the need to engage in processes of justification.

#### IV.

*La souffrance à distance : Morale humanitaire, medias et politique* (Paris: Métailié, 1993; Paris: Gallimard, 2007 [extended version])

[*Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*, trans. Graham D. Burchell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)]<sup>5</sup>

This book provides an interdisciplinary analysis of ‘distant suffering’ – that is, of the experience and effects of perceiving processes of human grief and misery ‘from a distance’. Perhaps, the most fundamental sociological issue with which Boltanski grapples in this study is the question of how human actors react when exposed to spectacles of suffering, whilst being geographically remote from the locations in which tragic or catastrophic events occur. Seeking to respond to this question, Boltanski unearths various sociological, political, moral, psychological, and fictional accounts concerned with the impact of ‘distant suffering’ upon those who experience it.

The book comprises three main parts. In Part I, entitled ‘The Question of the Spectator’, Boltanski explores the normative issues arising from a set of principles and practices to which he refers as ‘the politics of pity’. In Part II, entitled ‘The Topics of Suffering’, Boltanski draws on literary sources to examine several intermediary elements that influence the spectator’s rational and emotional reactions to gruesome media portrayals. In Part III, entitled ‘The Crisis of Pity’, Boltanski reflects on the implications of the fact that spectators can be converted into moral and political actors, particularly when passing value judgements on the alleged facts and happenings to which they are exposed via the media.

One of the most interesting and tension-laden phenomena examined by Boltanski in *Distant Suffering* can be described as follows: members of affluent societies, especially those of ‘the privileged West’, may express different degrees of *empathy and compassion* towards faraway actors whose lives are negatively affected by deeply unfortunate circumstances, *despite* the fact that the former lack any kind of *direct* personal, communal, or societal attachment to the latter. Given the rise of highly advanced communication and information technologies, epitomized in the increasing influence of the mass media, the advantaged sectors of world society tend to *consume* distant forms of suffering as sensationistically reconstructed spectacles, which are experienced within the comfort zones of people’s living rooms and generated within the technological parameters of digitally produced hyperrealities. Spectators are moral and political actors to the extent that their exposure to distant suffering triggers emotional reactions in them, which will require them to make normative judgements about the remote occurrences with which they find themselves confronted.

In practice, it appears that spectators whose perception of reality is colonized by mediated images of human misery are faced with a dilemma: namely, ‘*abstract universalism*’ versus ‘*local particularism*’. The former designates people’s capacity to develop a sense of *global solidarity* with other members of a *common humanity*. The latter describes people’s capacity to develop a sense of *local solidarity* with other members of a *specific community*. The problem with the former position is that it tends to remain *too broad*, demanding spectators, too readily, to identify with all those who experience human suffering. In

this case, the danger consists in misperceiving or misrepresenting the sorrow of others as one's own, thereby undervaluing the specificity and potential incommensurability of local issues. The problem with the latter stance is that it tends to remain *too narrow*, effectively disregarding those who live outside their immediate lifeworlds and, furthermore, implying that assistance should be offered to those to whom they can refer within the boundaries of a reduced sense of historical, cultural, or geographical proximity. In this case, the danger consists in overlooking the potentially global scope of locally specific developments by limiting oneself to a parochial understanding of reality, in which there is little – if any – scope for making sense of the increasing interconnectedness between different individual and collective forms of agency.

In the digital age, then, those who have direct and regular access to the mass media are habitually exposed to horrific images – such as starving children, bombed villages, war, genocide, and mass graves. It is far from clear, however, what it means to respond accurately and responsibly to such scenarios. For Boltanski, there is no doubt that, in order to overcome a paralysing state of sensationalism and voyeurism, spectators must rise above mere feelings of empathy and compassion. The 'politics of pity' is unsatisfactory in the sense that it encourages consumers of mediated misery to focus on the spectacle of suffering, thereby requiring them to observe the unfortunate, rather than to scrutinize – let alone to act upon – the socio-historical roots behind their deprivation. Boltanski, therefore, urges his readers to imagine possibilities of action and thereby challenge the constraining limitations, and detrimental consequences, of the largely passive consumption of information. Granted, the shift from a potentially disempowering 'world of representation' to a genuinely empowering 'world of action' is complex. Yet, the Boltanskian idea of a political and moral sociology cannot be dissociated from the conviction that subjects capable of reflection and justification are able to mobilize their critical resources in order to engage in normatively defensible and performatively empowering forms of action.

## V.

*Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, avec Ève Chiapello (Paris: Gallimard, 1999)  
[*The New Spirit of Capitalism*, with Ève Chiapello, trans. Gregory Elliott  
(London: Verso, 2005)]<sup>6</sup>

This book provides a cutting-edge analysis of the emergence of what Boltanski and Chiapello describe as the 'new spirit of capitalism' in the late twentieth century. Shortly after its original publication in 1999, this study became a

bestseller in France. There are several reasons why *The New Spirit of Capitalism* can be considered a major contribution to contemporary sociology:

- (1) It offers a comprehensive account of the *transformation of capitalist modes of organization* in Western Europe, notably in France, since the 1960s. Its empirically informed and conceptually sophisticated examination is indicative of a timely understanding of fundamental economic, political, cultural, demographic, and ideological changes that have led to the gradual consolidation of a ‘new spirit’ permeating capitalism in recent decades.
- (2) It contains a persuasive proposal to revise Max Weber’s conception of ‘the spirit of capitalism’, based on substantial evidence confirming the emergence of *new mechanisms of legitimization*. The discourses created in order to reinforce the legitimacy of capitalist social orders have fundamentally changed in the late twentieth century, celebrating vital neo-managerial ideals—such as ‘flexibility’, ‘adaptability’, ‘creativity’, and ‘mobility’—and thereby converting capitalism into an ever-more elastic, and seemingly forward-looking, system of economic organization.
- (3) It illustrates the theoretical contributions and intellectual merits of Boltanski’s sociological framework in that it sheds light on the *role of critical capacity* in bringing about socio-political change and shaping the direction of large-scale socio-historical developments.
- (4) It forms an integral part of Boltanski’s attempt to develop a ‘*pragmatic sociology of critique*’, aimed at taking ordinary actors seriously, notably in terms of their readiness to engage in disputes concerning issues of justice. For Boltanski and Chiapello, *processes of justification* are irreducible to an ideological smokescreen, since they exert discursively negotiated constraints upon systems of domination, thereby potentially undermining processes of alienation, exploitation, and discrimination. On this account, *public spheres* constitute discursive realms shaped by open debates between different ‘*orders of value*’, and by a ceaseless undertaking of ‘*tests*’ (*épreuves*), which either confirm or undermine the legitimacy of a given set of normative arrangements and practices.

According to Boltanski and Chiapello’s analysis, we can distinguish *three ‘spirits’ of capitalism*:

- The *first spirit*, prevalent in early modern societies, can be characterized as ‘*family capitalism*’, in the sense that it prioritizes the individual figure of the bourgeois proprietor and finds its ideological justification, above all, in the ‘domestic city’. It is intimately interrelated with the *productive ethos* of Weber’s famous Protestant Ethic. Sweeping away the rigid social, political, and economic structures of feudal-absolutist formations, the constitutive

component of the ‘first spirit of capitalism’ is *productivism*.

- The *second spirit* can be referred to as ‘*industrial or organizational capitalism*’, epitomized in the protagonist role of ‘the manager’, whose societal function is associated with ‘organization man’. Emerging in response to the crisis of 1929–30, it is composed of a *combination of Fordist industrialism and Keynesian interventionism*, which may be interpreted as a trade-off between Rousseau’s ‘civic city’ and Saint-Simon’s ‘industrial city’. The societal constellation generated by this historic settlement had two major consequences: (a) it contributed to enhancing the acquisitive power of the working classes in particular and people’s chances to benefit from upward social mobility in general; (b) it contributed to the rise of a relatively autonomous salaried professional labour force, especially in the liberal professions, arts and sciences, and public sector.
- The *third spirit* manifests itself, most clearly, in the ‘*city of projects*’, in which market-driven principles – such as ‘flexibility’, ‘adaptability’, ‘creativity’, and ‘mobility’ – play a pivotal role in developing an ever-more elastic, and seemingly forward-looking, capitalist system. Also described as the ‘*new spirit of capitalism*’, it is inextricably linked to the rise of neo-liberalism and neo-managerialism, especially from the 1970s onwards, indicating the restoration of large-scale *market discipline* along with a shift towards the increasing *financialization* of capital flows. One of the paradoxical achievements of this ‘new spirit’ is to have succeeded in appropriating the subversive forces that sought to undermine the legitimacy of capitalism for its own purposes. The elastic and flexible nature of this ‘new spirit’ emanates from capitalism’s capacity to promote and integrate discursive processes of debate and critique, thereby ensuring that, as a politico-economic system, it is both structurally and ideologically highly adaptable. The idea of ‘*dominating by change*’ is essential to contemporary forms of social domination.

The neo-managerialist ideology permeating the ‘third spirit of capitalism’ has proved able to incorporate the social and artistic critiques that thrived in May 1968, whilst large parts of the political radicals belonging to the 1968 generation – notably the *soixante-huitards* in France and the *Achtundsechziger* in Germany – have themselves, more or less actively and wittingly, joined the European establishment. Whatever one makes of their legacy, it is hard to deny that the increasing influence of *flexible global networks* – created and sustained by actors working cooperatively on multiple projects – as well as the notion of *personal empowerment at the workplace* – expressed in the gradual relegation of bureaucratic, hierarchical, and top-down organizations to an obsolete past – reflect a profound shift in capitalist culture, which has been taking place in most Western countries from the 1960s onwards.

Yet, the rise of the ‘network man’ illustrates not only the emergence of a new systemic and ideological *modus operandi* of capitalism, but also its new spirit’s capacity to take seriously *four sources of indignation: inauthenticity, oppression, misery and inequality, and egoism*. The former two were central objects of different versions of *artistic critique*; the latter two were principal matters of concern under the umbrella of *social critique*. It is one of Boltanski and Chiapello’s noteworthy achievements to have demonstrated, with considerable empirical evidence and conceptual precision, that most contemporary forms of capitalism possess the capacity to *incorporate* normative processes based on critical discourse into their mode of functioning. In this sense, categorical openness to debate, controversy, and constant reassessment has been converted into one of the normative cornerstones underlying the ‘new spirit of capitalism’.

## VI.

*La condition fœtale : Une sociologie de l’engendrement et de l’avortement* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004)

[*The Foetal Condition: A Sociology of Engendering and Abortion*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Polity, 2013)]<sup>7</sup>

Undoubtedly, this is one of Boltanski’s most controversial books – possibly, because it deals with one of the most contentious issues in contemporary society: *abortion*. Given that this topic has hardly been scrutinized with sufficient rigour in the social sciences, this treatise may be regarded as one of Boltanski’s greatest contributions to sociology. Debates concerning the moral and political questions arising from abortion form an integral component of public spheres in liberal societies. Despite the increasing openness about this subject in most pluralistic cultures, abortion remains not only a source of controversy but also a sensitive issue, whose normative implications cannot be reduced to an ideological division between ‘religious’ and ‘secular’, ‘regressive’ and ‘progressive’, ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’, or ‘traditionalist’ and ‘open-minded’ citizens.

In this study, Boltanski draws upon accounts and statements collected from hospital settings as well as upon in-depth interviews conducted with women who have undergone abortions. In his insightful socio-philosophical interpretation of the discursive data upon which this enquiry is based, he directs his readers’ attention to the profound *ambivalence* that appears to be built into abortion as a social practice. To be precise, for Boltanski, abortion exposes a contradiction that is inherent in all human life forms: on the one hand, we assume that individual human beings are *unique* and *distinctive*; on the other hand, we are confronted with their *replaceable* and *disposable* nature, without which there would be no demographic renewal and no societal regeneration.

Boltanski, therefore, proposes to examine the ways in which human beings are engendered by dissecting the symbolically mediated controls and constraints that are imposed upon them by society, of which they can become fully fledged members only to the extent that they are both willing and able to share its – normatively charged – conception of species-constitutive existence. On this view, a foetus is not a human being ‘in itself’, ensconced within the female body, but rather a human being ‘for itself’, to the degree that it is *symbolically constructed and discursively considered* as such by the members of a given society. For Boltanski, one twofold categorization is particularly important in this regard: the ‘*project foetus*’ and the ‘*tumoral foetus*’. The former is desired by its parents, who attribute positive characteristics – such as ‘meaningfulness’, ‘fulfilment’, ‘love’, and ‘life plans’ – to its existence. The latter is deprived of the privilege of forming an integral element of a parental endeavour and, in extreme-case scenarios, may be reducible to a nameless, replaceable, and undesired form of being, whose non-existence is preferred to its existence by those who have the power to decide over its future.

In the human world, then, sexual reproduction is never simply a *biological* affair but always also a process of *social* construction, especially in terms of how it is both interpreted and regulated by members of particular cultural life forms. Boltanski demonstrates, in a neo-Durkheimian fashion, that every *social order* constitutes a *moral order* – that is, a set of interrelated practices performed by ethically responsible actors whose decisions, irrespective of whether these are made consciously and unconsciously, have normative implications both for those who undertake them and for those who are, directly or indirectly, affected by them. Whatever one makes of Boltanski’s analysis, owing to the contentious nature of this subject, *The Foetal Condition* cannot fail to challenge – and, in some cases, irritate – those contributing to contemporary controversies concerning abortion.

## VII.

*De la critique : Précis de sociologie de l’émancipation* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009) [On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation, trans. Gregory Elliott (Cambridge: Polity, 2011)]<sup>8</sup>

Arguably, *On Critique* is Boltanski’s most philosophical book. It provides an in-depth analysis of the conceptual underpinnings of the ‘pragmatic sociology of critique’, focusing on the following six key dimensions.

(1) Boltanski reflects on the task of *critical theories*. One of their vital concerns is the sustained effort to scrutinize the causes, symptoms, and consequences of *power relations* within particular historical contexts, especially those that are

entrenched in societal systems of domination. In this respect, a fundamental difference between Bourdieu and Boltanski becomes evident. According to the former, ordinary people are largely *unconscious* of the workings, and essentially *naïve* about the implications, of power relations. According to the latter, ordinary people are not only *conscious* of, and *realistic* about, power relations but also able to problematize the tangible implications of their existence. For Bourdieu, it is the task of ‘critical sociologists’ to uncover the underlying mechanisms that determine the asymmetrical structures permeating the interest-laden practices of *strategic agents*, who compete for material and symbolic resources. For Boltanski, by contrast, it is the mission of ‘sociologists of critique’ to recognize that human beings are *moral and reflexive actors*, whose critical capacity permits them to assess – and, if necessary, justify – the normative validity of their performances.

(2) Boltanski aims to *reconcile Bourdieu’s ‘critical sociology’ with his own ‘pragmatic sociology of critique’*. Thus, he seeks to combine and cross-fertilize two seemingly antagonistic approaches. The former appears to advocate *social determinism* and *positivist scientism*, favouring the epistemic capacities of scientists over those of everyday actors, who seem to be deluded by doxic preconceptions based on common sense. The latter appears to endorse *social pragmatism* and *interpretivist normativism*, proposing to take ordinary people seriously in terms of both their performative capacity to shape the world and their discursive capacity to provide reasonable justifications for their beliefs and actions. Rather than conceiving of these two sociological approaches as diametrically opposed and irreconcilable, Boltanski aims to demonstrate that useful insights can be gained not only from comparing and contrasting, but also from combining and integrating, these two paradigmatic frameworks.

(3) Boltanski grapples with the principal functions of *social institutions*. Their most essential task, it seems, consists in producing solidified – or, at least, seemingly solidified – realms of social interaction, enabling humans to cope with the uncertainty inherent in all worldly life forms. According to Boltanski, three analytical distinctions are particularly important for the sociological study of institutions: (a) the *epistemological* distinction between ‘exteriority’ and ‘interiority’, (b) the *methodological* distinction between ‘explanation’ and ‘justification’, and (c) the *socio-ontological* distinction between ‘distance-taking’ and ‘immersion’. Bourdieu’s ‘critical sociology’ tends to focus on the investigative levels of *exteriority*, *explanation*, and *distance-taking*. Boltanski’s ‘pragmatic sociology of critique’, on the other hand, tends to place the emphasis on the explorative levels of *interiority*, *justification*, and *immersion*. Bourdieusians aim to scrutinize the functional logic of institutions ‘from without’ – that is, from the external viewpoint of objective and objectifying social scientists. Conversely, Boltanskians seek to study institutional realities ‘from within’ – that is, from the perspective of bodily equipped and spatio-temporally situated social actors.



In a more fundamental sense, Boltanski suggests that ‘the institutional’ and ‘the social’ represent two interdependent – if not equivalent – aspects of reality. One of the key features distinguishing ‘social facts’ from ‘natural facts’ is that they are not simply ‘given’ but always ‘instituted’ – that is, fabricated on the basis of habitualized and habituating human practices. In this respect, Boltanski draws an important distinction between ‘world’ (*monde*) and ‘reality’ (*réalité*). Whereas the former encompasses ‘everything that is the case’, the latter comprises ‘everything that is constructed’. Put differently, the world is ‘everything that happens to people’, whilst reality is ‘everything that is constructed by people’.

To the extent that institutions convert our encounter with the world into an experience founded on the illusion of relative certainty, they can be regarded as a *conditio sine qua non* of the material and symbolic construction of reality. Institutions, therefore, constitute ‘bodiless beings’ that fulfil the task of defining what Boltanski calls ‘the whatness of what is’ or, to be exact, ‘the whatness of what appears to be’. Due to their *symbolic* power, institutions have the interpretive capacity to determine the semantic resources mobilized by members of society when attributing meaning to reality. Due to their *material* power, institutions have the regulative capacity to set the parameters for performative operations embedded in specific grammars of interaction. It is owing to the existential centrality of this double function that institutions can be conceived of as a socio-ontological precondition for the construction of human life forms.

(4) Boltanski examines the role of *critique* in the normative consolidation of social life. Critique constitutes a driving force of historical change: it permits both individual and collective actors to shape the development of society in accordance with their discursively articulated search for principles that are defensible in terms of their practical worth and normative validity. For Boltanski, two registers of action are crucial in this respect. On the one hand, the ‘*practical register*’ is characterized by relatively *weak and rudimentary levels of reflexivity*, presupposing a considerable tolerance for differences and discrepancies, as well as sustaining a set of codified arrangements that guarantee the reproduction of society. On the other hand, the ‘*metapragmatic register*’ is marked by rather *elevated and differentiated levels of reflexivity*, involving an implicit or explicit reference to the normative force of critique and, at the same time, allowing for the articulation of two metapragmatic forces: *confirmation* and *justification*. People’s ability to confirm and justify the legitimacy of their actions is central to their capacity to participate in the construction of normatively regulated constellations.

Confronted with ‘*hermeneutic contradictions*’ emanating from the potential discrepancies between ‘world’ and ‘reality’ – that is, between ‘everything

that is the case' and 'everything that is constructed' –, human actors, insofar as they are equipped with a critical competence, are in a position to question the apparent givenness of objectivity by facing up to the genuine arbitrariness of all forms of normativity. Illustrating the 'pragmatic' dimension of Boltanski's framework, it is crucial to recognize that processes of critique cannot be dissociated from three types of 'test' (*épreuve*) undertaken either to *reinforce* or to *undermine* the legitimacy of a specific ensemble of social constellations: (a) 'truth tests' (*épreuves de vérité*) are *symbolic* in the sense that they are supposed to assess the validity of signs and interpretations; (b) 'reality tests' (*épreuves de réalité*) are *material* in the sense that they are meant to evaluate the acceptability of bodily performances and actions; (c) 'existential tests' (*épreuves existentielles*) are *experienced* in the sense that they are intended to expose the spatio-temporal contingency permeating all forms of lived reality. From a Boltanskian perspective, the emancipatory transformation of society is inconceivable without a critical engagement with the normative constitution of reality.

(5) Boltanski discusses the concept of *domination*. More specifically, he draws a distinction between two fundamental types of domination: '*simple domination*' or '*primitive domination*', on the one hand, and '*complex domination*' or '*managerial domination*', on the other.

'*Simple*' forms of domination are *monolithic* in the sense that, under their authority, control over a particular population is monopolized by a state or overarching institution. Here, people are deprived of fundamental liberties (such as freedom of speech, expression, and communication) as well as of basic rights (such as civil, political, social, economic, and human rights). Under regimes of 'simple domination', the exercise of power is relatively *arbitrary* and unambiguously *asymmetrical*. Obvious historical examples of this type of domination include absolutism, fascism, and any kind of dictatorial government whose exercise of power is motivated by normative principles based on political authoritarianism.

'*Complex*' forms of domination are *polycentric* – or, in a more radical sense, even *centreless* – in the sense that, under their influence, power structures are circular, amorphous, volatile, and in a constant state of flux, lacking an institutional or ideological epicentre. Here, people's essential liberties and rights are not only largely respected, or even defended, but also instrumentalized in order to foster the legitimacy of the hegemonic political and economic system in place. Under regimes of 'complex domination', the exercise of power is – at least in principle – *democratic* and – albeit, admittedly, to varying degrees – *criticizable*. Contemporary scenarios that can be described in these terms are *democratic-capitalist societies*, shaped by cultures and institutions based on political pluralism and, hence, by the fact that critique is incorporated into the

routines of everyday life. For Boltanski, then, the emergence of the ‘new spirit of capitalism’ is inextricably linked to the possibility of ‘*dominating by change*’, which is based on categorical openness to criticism and, thus, on the capacity to obtain legitimacy by advocating the aforementioned neo-managerial ideals, such as ‘flexibility’, ‘adaptability’, ‘creativity’, and ‘mobility’.

(6) Boltanski expresses his own view of the conditions underlying processes of human *emancipation*. In his eyes, these processes are based on individual or collective practices that *promote the critical project of a reduction in the material and symbolic privileges of dominant social groups* and thereby *contribute to a more balanced distribution of capacities for action*. On this account, emancipatory practices designate purposive processes oriented towards individual or collective empowerment, based on its protagonists’ belonging to and identification with a common humanity, which is irreducible to the limited scope of group-specific stakes and interests. From a Boltanskian perspective, there are no emancipatory life forms without open processes of dispute and justification – that is, without criticism. One of the key socio-ontological functions of criticism is to foster experimentation with human practices in which the risk of *disempowerment* – based on implicit or explicit mechanisms of segregation, exclusion, and discrimination – is minimized, whilst the possibility of *empowerment* – emanating from individual and collective processes of integration, inclusion, and self-realization – is maximized. To be sure, Boltanski does not propose a utopian blueprint envisaging the construction of a perfect society. Owing to the anthropological optimism that undergirds his writings, however, he dares to believe that the construction of a world based on emancipatory life forms is both desirable and possible. Such a world would not be determined by constraining sources of social domination, such as privilege, status, and authority. Rather, it would be shaped, above all, by people’s purposive, cooperative, and creative capacities that allow for individual and collective experiences of self-realization.

### VIII.

*Énigmes et complots : Une enquête à propos d’enquêtes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012)  
[*Mysteries and Conspiracies: Detective Stories, Spy Novels and the Making of Modern Societies*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Polity, 2014)]<sup>9</sup>

In this book, Boltanski draws an analogy between two domains of modern writing, which, at first glance, do not appear to have anything significant in common: on the one hand, the development of two *literary genres*, namely *detective stories*, which are based on methodical enquiries, as well as *spy novels*, which are built around plots and conspiracies; on the other hand, the development

of the *human and social sciences*, which are founded not only on systematic investigations but also on what may be described as the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’. Particularly important, in this regard, are the following three scientific disciplines: *psychiatry*, known for fabricating seemingly evidence-based conceptions of paranoia; *sociology*, inspired by the enlightening mission to uncover the underlying causal forces that determine both the constitution and the evolution of the social world; and *political science*, seeking to explain the origins of major historical events by reference to conspiracy theories.

Thus, what *detective stories* and *spy novels* have in common with the *human and social sciences* is not only the fact that they emerged – and underwent profound paradigmatic transitions – in the same *historical context* – that is, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; what they share, in addition, is the fact that they are driven by the ambition to shed light on the *mysteries and conspiracies* whose existence escapes people’s ordinary perception of reality. Hence, they seek to call taken-for-granted assumptions about the world into question, by providing logically coherent accounts, and evidence-based explanations, of the multiple factors influencing different patterns of human action.

According to Boltanski, the most powerful institutional expression of the attempt to organize and unify reality by regulating and controlling the behaviour of a population living within a given territory is the modern nation-state. Central to his socio-historical analysis in this book is the assumption that, in the modern age, speculations and suspicions about *conspiracies* became a motivational driving force behind both popular and academic conceptions of the exercise of power. Inevitably, the search for hidden sources of influence involved the ideological construction of a dichotomously constituted reality: on the one hand, an *official reality*, based on appearances, public performances, and superficial impressions; on the other hand, an *unofficial reality*, founded on underlying structures, hidden causal mechanisms, and concealed social forces. What crime and spy fiction have in common with positivist conceptions of science, then, is that they presuppose a *discrepancy* between these two levels of reality: ‘appearance’ versus ‘substance’, ‘interpretation’ versus ‘explanation’, ‘imagination’ versus ‘observation’, ‘fiction’ versus ‘authenticity’.

By putting the works of major detective and spy novelists – such as G. K. Chesterton, Arthur Conan Doyle, John le Carré, and Graham Greene – under sociological scrutiny, Boltanski demonstrates that their writings reveal fundamental features not only of fiction-based genre, but also of modern society, especially with respect to the reciprocal relationship between modern institutions and modern science. According to Boltanski, the nation-state’s ambition to exercise unlimited control over the reality constructed within the boundaries of its territory is aimed at the *stabilization* of volatile sets of social relations. The binary distinction between ‘normal’ and ‘deviant’, which

undergirds this socio-political project of the state, is as central to detective and spy novels as it is to the functionalist spirit permeating the works of the founding figures of sociology – that is, the writings of Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber.

There are significant differences between national traditions of fiction-based genres. In this book, Boltanski focuses on two emblematic representatives of detective novels: one English, Sherlock Holmes, and the other one French, Jules Maigret.

- Within the *English* tradition of Sherlock Holmes, the detective represents an exceptionally perceptive and skilled actor with the *moral* capacity to distinguish between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, as well as with the *performative* capacity to move back and forth between his ‘public’ and his ‘private’ persona. It is due to his or her highly developed moral and performative competences that the detective is not only able to put himself or herself in the skin of the criminal but also authorized to represent the order of the state: ‘The detective is the State in the state of exception.’
- Within the *French* tradition of Jules Maigret, the detective is embodied in the apolitical figure of the civil servant (*fonctionnaire*). According to this conception, civil servants do not simply represent the state, but they *are* the state. It is because of their procedural function that they, as part of the administrative powers of the state apparatus, can claim to be *neutral* and *impartial*. Jules Maigret is both an ordinary citizen *and* a civil servant, whose competences are comparable to those of the sociologist: on the one hand, he is equipped with a basic *social* competence, which permits him to relate to other citizens as ‘one of them’; on the other hand, he is equipped with a special *reflexive* competence, which enables him to conduct investigations and distance himself from common-sense assumptions about reality. Since he is an ordinary human being with basic social skills, the detective has an indigenous understanding of people’s everyday interactions. At the same time, because he is equipped with the conceptual and methodological tools of the inquisitive expert, the detective has the capacity to distance himself from his object of study.

Boltanski emphasizes that *detective stories* and *spy novels* are fundamentally different in the following sense: within the former, the state tends to be portrayed as essentially ‘apolitical’; within the latter, the state tends to be conceived of as deeply ‘political’ or even as a ‘war state’. Given the profound uncertainty permeating capitalist societies, which are characterized by processes of constant and rapid technological and demographic transformation, spy novels and the social sciences serve a complementary

function: in the early modern era, the widespread diffusion of the term ‘paranoia’ is inextricably linked to the paradigms of ‘conspiracy’ and ‘suspicion’, which inform the exploratory spirit pervading both spy novels and positivistically inspired social science – especially psychiatry, sociology, and political science. Boltanski has illustrated – with great skill and considerable eloquence – that the ‘*hermeneutics of investigation*’, which one encounters in detective stories, and the ‘*hermeneutics of conspiracy*’, which is central to most spy novels, contain significant historical and presuppositional similarities with the ‘*hermeneutics of suspicion*’, which lies at the heart of the founding disciplines of the human and social sciences.

## Conclusion

Given the wide-ranging scope and scholarly originality of Boltanski’s writings,<sup>10</sup> it may hardly be surprising that he is generally regarded as one of the most prominent contemporary French sociologists. In fact, his considerable influence manifests itself in the emergence of an extensive secondary literature concerned with the multifaceted aspects of his oeuvre. His influence spans far beyond Francophone<sup>11</sup> spheres of social and political thought. Indeed, his international impact on current academic debates is reflected, particularly, in recent and ongoing Germanophone<sup>12</sup> and Anglophone<sup>13</sup> controversies concerned with both the empirical and the conceptual significance of his various contributions to the humanities and social sciences. Whilst it would be erroneous to reduce Boltanski’s project to a mere – albeit sophisticated – response to the work of his academic *patron*, Bourdieu, there is no doubt that his proposed paradigm shift from ‘critical sociology’ to a ‘pragmatic sociology of critique’ has opened hitherto unexplored intellectual avenues in the attempt to do justice to the pivotal role that critical capacity plays not only in the pursuit of sociology but also, more fundamentally, in the daily construction of society.

## Notes

- 1 An abridged version of this chapter will be published as Simon Susen (2014) ‘Luc Boltanski’, in James D. Wright (ed.) *The International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences* (2nd Edition, Oxford: Elsevier).
- 2 Boltanski (1982). See also Boltanski (1987 [1982]).
- 3 Boltanski (1990a). See also Boltanski (2012 [1990]).
- 4 Boltanski and Thévenot (1991). See also Boltanski and Thévenot (2006 [1991]).
- 5 Boltanski (1993). See also Boltanski (1999 [1993]).
- 6 Boltanski and Chiapello (1999). See also Boltanski and Chiapello (2005 [1999]).
- 7 Boltanski (2004). See also Boltanski (2013 [2004]).
- 8 Boltanski (2009a). See also Boltanski (2011 [2009]).
- 9 Boltanski (2012). See also Boltanski (2014 [2012]).

- 10 Other important publications by him include the following: Boltanski (1966); Boltanski (1969a); Boltanski (1969b); Boltanski (1970); Boltanski (1973a); Boltanski (1973b); Boltanski (1975); Boltanski (1990b); Boltanski (1998); Boltanski (1999–2000); Boltanski (2002); Boltanski (2006); Boltanski (2008c); Boltanski (2009b); Boltanski, Darré, and Schiltz (1984); Boltanski and Honneth (2009); Boltanski and Maldidier (1970); Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2010); Boltanski and Thévenot (1983); Boltanski and Thévenot (1999); Bourdieu and Boltanski (1975a); Bourdieu and Boltanski (1975b); Bourdieu and Boltanski (1976); Bourdieu and Boltanski (2008 [1976]); Bourdieu, Boltanski, Castel, and Chamboredon (1965); Bourdieu, Boltanski, and de Saint Martin (1973); Gadrey, Hatchuel, Boltanski, and Chiapello (2001). Two examples of his non-academic writings are Boltanski (2008a) and Boltanski (2008b).
- 11 See, for example: Bénatouïl (1999a); Berten (1993); Bidet (2002); Caillé (1988); Corcuff (1996); Corcuff (1998); Corcuff (2000); 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); Stavo-Debaugue (2011); Susen (2012); Thévenot (1990); Thévenot (1998); Thévenot (2006).
- 12 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), esp. 526–527; Jaeggi (2009); Jaeggi and Wesche (2009), esp. 14–15; Rehberg (2007); Schmidt (2007).
- 13 See, for example: Baert and Silva (2010 [1998]), 42–48; Basaure (2011); Bénatouïl (1999b); Blokker (2011); Blokker and Brighenti (2011); Borghi (2011); Callinicos (2006), esp. 5, 15, 51–72, and 155–156; Chiapello and Fairclough (2002); Delanty (2011); Eulriet (2008); Fabiani (2011); Frère (2004), esp. 92–93 and 97n.4; Honneth (2010); Jagd (2011); Silber (2003); Silber (2011); Stark (2009); Susen (2007), esp. 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; Susen (2011a), esp. 447–450, 453–456, and 459–461; Susen (2011b), esp. 370; Turner (2007); Wagner (1994); Wagner (1999); Wagner (2010).

## References

- Baert, Patrick and Filipe Carreira da Silva (2010 [1998]) *Social Theory in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, 2nd Edition, Cambridge: Polity.
- Basaure, Mauro (2011) 'An Interview with Luc Boltanski: Criticism and the Expansion of Knowledge', *European Journal of Social Theory* 14(3): 361–381.
- Basaure, Mauro, Jan-Philip Reemtsma, and Rasmus Willig (eds.) (2009) *Erneuerung der Kritik: Axel Honneth im Gespräch*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
- Bénatouïl, Thomas (1999a) 'Critique et pragmatique en sociologie : Quelques principes de lecture', *Annales HSS* 2, Mars–Avril: 281–317.
- Bénatouïl, Thomas (1999b) 'A Tale of Two Sociologies: The Critical and the Pragmatic Stance in Contemporary French Sociology', *European Journal of Social Theory* 2(3): 379–396.
- Berten, André (1993) 'D'une sociologie de la justice à une sociologie du droit : À propos des travaux de L. Boltanski et L. Thévenot', *Recherches sociologiques* 24(1–2): 69–89.
- Bidet, Jacques (2002) 'L'esprit du capitalisme : Questions à Luc Boltanski et Ève Chiapello', in Jean Lojkine (ed.) *Les sociologues critiques du capitalisme : En hommage à Pierre Bourdieu*, Paris: Collection Actuel Marx Confrontation, Presses Universitaires de France, pp. 215–233.

- Blokker, Paul (2011) 'Pragmatic Sociology: Theoretical Evolvement and Empirical Application', *European Journal of Social Theory* 14(3): 251–261.
- Blokker, Paul and Andrea Brighenti (2011) 'Politics between Justification and Defiance', *European Journal of Social Theory* 14(3): 359–377.
- Bogusz, Tanja (2010) *Zur Aktualität von Luc Boltanski: Einleitung in sein Werk*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Boltanski, Luc (1966) *Le bonheur suisse*, Paris: Minit.
- Boltanski, Luc (1969a) *La découverte de la maladie*, Paris: CSE.
- Boltanski, Luc (1969b) *Prime éducation et morale de classe*, Paris: Mouton.
- Boltanski, Luc (1970) 'Taxinomies populaires, taxinomies savantes: Les objets de consommation et leur classement', *Revue française de sociologie* 11: 34–44.
- Boltanski, Luc (1973a) 'Erving Goffman et le temps du soupçon', *Information sur les sciences sociales* 12(3): 127–147.
- Boltanski, Luc (1973b) 'L'espace positionnel: Multiplicité des positions institutionnelles et habits de classe', *Revue française de sociologie* 14: 3–26.
- Boltanski, Luc (1975) 'La constitution du champ de la bande dessinée', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 1: 37–59.
- Boltanski, Luc (1982) *Les cadres: La formation d'un groupe social*, Paris: Minit.
- Boltanski, Luc (1987 [1982]) *The Making of a Class: Cadres in French Society*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boltanski, Luc (1990a) *L'amour et la justice comme compétences*, Paris: Métailié.
- Boltanski, Luc (1990b) 'Sociologie critique et sociologie de la critique', *Politix* 10–11: 124–134.
- Boltanski, Luc (1993) *La souffrance à distance*, Paris: Métailié.
- Boltanski, Luc (1998) 'Critique sociale et sens moral: Pour une sociologie du jugement', in Tetsuji Yamamoto (ed.) *Philosophical Designs for a Socio-cultural Transformation: Beyond Violence and the Modern Era*, Tokyo; Boulder, CO: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Culturelles; Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 248–273.
- Boltanski, Luc (1999–2000) 'Une sociologie sans société?', *Le genre humain* (Hiver–Printemps): 303–311.
- Boltanski, Luc (1999 [1993]) *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*, trans. Graham Burchell, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boltanski, Luc (2002) 'Nécessité et justification', *Revue économique* 53(2): 275–289.
- Boltanski, Luc (2004) *La condition fatale: Une sociologie de l'engendrement et de l'avortement*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Boltanski, Luc (2006) Preface to Mohamed Nachi (ed.) *Introduction à la sociologie pragmatique*, Paris: Armand Colin, pp. 9–16.
- Boltanski, Luc (2008a) *Nuits*, Lyon: ENS Éditions.
- Boltanski, Luc (2008b) *Lieder*, Paris: MF.
- Boltanski, Luc (2008c) *Rendre la réalité inacceptable: À propos de 'La production de l'idéologie dominante'*, Paris: Demopolis.
- Boltanski, Luc (2009a) *De la critique: Précis de sociologie de l'émancipation*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Boltanski, Luc (2009b) 'Autour de *De la justification*: Un parcours dans le domaine de la sociologie morale', in Marc Breviglieri, Claudette Lafaye, and Danny Trom (eds.) *Compétences critiques et sens de la justice*, Paris: Economica, pp. 15–35.
- Boltanski, Luc (2011 [2009]) *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation*, trans. Gregory Elliott, Cambridge: Polity.
- Boltanski, Luc (2012) *Énigmes et complots: Une enquête à propos d'enquêtes*, Paris: Gallimard.



- Boltanski, Luc (2012 [1990]) *Love and Justice as Competences*, trans. Catherine Porter, Cambridge: Polity.
- Boltanski, Luc (2013 [2004]) *The Foetal Condition: A Sociology of Engendering and Abortion*, trans. Catherine Porter, Cambridge: Polity.
- Boltanski, Luc (2014 [2012]) *Mysteries and Conspiracies: Detective Stories, Spy Novels and the Making of Modern Societies*, trans. Catherine Porter, Cambridge: Polity.
- Boltanski, Luc and Ève Chiapello (1999) *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Boltanski, Luc and Ève Chiapello (2005 [1999]) *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott, London: Verso.
- Boltanski, Luc, Yann Darré, and Marie-Ange Schiltz (1984) 'La dénonciation', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 51: 3–40.
- Boltanski, Luc and Axel Honneth (2009) 'Soziologie der Kritik oder Kritische Theorie? Ein Gespräch mit Robin Celikates', in Rahel Jaeggi and Tilo Wesche (eds.) *Was ist Kritik?*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, pp. 81–114.
- Boltanski, Luc and Pascale Maldidier (1970) 'Carrière scientifique, morale scientifique et vulgarisation', *Information sur les sciences sociales* 9(3): 99–118.
- Boltanski, Luc, Juliette Rennes, and Simon Susen (2010) 'La fragilité de la réalité. Entretien avec Luc Boltanski. Propos recueillis par Juliette Rennes et Simon Susen', *Mouvements* 64: 151–166.
- Boltanski, Luc and Laurent Thévenot (1983) 'Finding One's Way in Social Space: A Study Based on Games', *Social Science Information* 22(4/5): 631–680.
- Boltanski, Luc and Laurent Thévenot (1991) *De la justification : Les économies de la grandeur*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Boltanski, Luc and Laurent Thévenot (1999) 'The Sociology of Critical Capacity', *European Journal of Social Theory* 2(3): 359–377.
- Boltanski, Luc and Laurent Thévenot (2006 [1991]) *On Justification: Economies of Worth*, trans. Catherine Porter, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Borggi, Vando (2011) 'One-Way Europe? Institutional Guidelines, Emerging Regimes of Justification, and Paradoxical Turns in European Welfare Capitalism', *European Journal of Social Theory* 14(3): 321–341.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Luc Boltanski (1975a) 'Le titre et le poste : Rapports entre le système de production et le système de reproduction', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 2: 95–107.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Luc Boltanski (1975b) 'Le fétichisme de la langue', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 4: 2–32.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Luc Boltanski (1976) 'La production de l'idéologie dominante', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 2–3: 4–73.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Luc Boltanski (2008 [1976]) *La production de l'idéologie dominante*, Paris: Demopolis/Raisons d'Agir.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, Luc Boltanski, Robert Castel, and Jean-Claude Chamboredon (1965) *Un art moyen : Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*, Paris: Minuit.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, Luc Boltanski, and Monique de Saint Martin (1973) 'Les stratégies de reconversion : Les classes sociales et le système d'enseignement', *Information sur les sciences sociales* 12(5): 61–113.
- Caillé, Alain (1988) 'Esquisse d'une critique de l'économie générale de la pratique', *Cahiers du LASA* 'Lectures de Pierre Bourdieu', Université de Caen, no. 8–9.
- Callinicos, Alex (2006) *The Resources of Critique*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Celikates, Robin (2009) *Kritik als soziale Praxis. Gesellschaftliche Selbstverständigung und kritische Theorie*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus.

- Chiapello, Ève and Norman L. Fairclough (2002) 'Understanding the New Management Ideology: A Transdisciplinary Contribution from Critical Discourse Analysis and New Sociology of Capitalism', *Discourse and Society* 13(2): 185–208.
- Corcuff, Philippe (1996) 'Théorie de la pratique et sociologies de l'action: Anciens problèmes et nouveaux horizons à partir de Bourdieu', *Actuel Marx* 20, Deuxième Semestre: 27–38.
- Corcuff, Philippe (1998) 'Justification, stratégie et compassion: Apports de la sociologie des régimes d'action', *Correspondances: Bulletin d'information scientifique de l'Institut de Recherche sur le Maghreb Contemporain* (Tunis) 51: 1–9.
- Corcuff, Philippe (2000) 'Tâtonnements d'une nouvelle critique sociale', *Mouvements* 9–10: 222–225.
- de Blic, Damien (2000) 'La sociologie politique et morale de Luc Boltanski', *Raisons politiques* 3: 149–158.
- de Blic, Damien and Daniel Mouchard (2000a) 'La cause de la critique (I) – Entretien avec Luc Boltanski', *Raisons politiques* 3: 159–184.
- de Blic, Damien and Daniel Mouchard (2000b) 'La cause de la critique (II) – Entretien avec Luc Boltanski', *Raisons politiques* 4: 135–159.
- Delanty, Gerard (2011) 'Varieties of Critique in Sociological Theory and Their Methodological Implications for Social Research', *Irish Journal of Sociology* 19(1): 68–92.
- Dodier, Nicolas (1991) 'Agir dans plusieurs mondes', *Critique* 529–530: 427–458.
- Dodier, Nicolas (1993) 'Les appuis conventionnels de l'action: Éléments de pragmatique sociologique', *Réseaux* 62: 63–85.
- Dörre, Klaus, Stephan Lessenich, and Hartmut Rosa (2009) *Soziologie – Kapitalismus – Kritik: Eine Debatte*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Eulriet, Irène (2008) 'Analysing Political Ideas and Political Action', *Economy and Society* 37(1): 135–150.
- Fabiani, Jean-Louis (2011) 'Book Review: Luc Boltanski, *De la critique: Précis de sociologie de l'émancipation* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009)', *European Journal of Social Theory* 14(3): 401–406.
- Forst, Rainer, Martin Hartmann, Rahel Jaeggi, and Martin Saar (eds.) (2009) *Sozialphilosophie und Kritik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Frère, Bruno (2004) 'Genetic Structuralism, Psychological Sociology and Pragmatic Social Actor Theory: Proposals for a Convergence of French Sociologies', *Theory, Culture & Society* 21(3): 85–99.
- Gadrey, Jean, Armand Hatchuel, Luc Boltanski, and Ève Chiapello (2001) 'Symposium sur *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme* de Luc Boltanski et Ève Chiapello', *Sociologie du travail* 43(3): 389–421.
- Gautier, Claude (2001) 'La sociologie de l'accord: Justification contre déterminisme et domination', *Politix* 54: 197–220.
- Hartmann, Martin (2009) 'Vorstellungskraft, Mitgefühl und Kritik: Überlegungen im Anschluss an Adam Smith', in Rainer Forst, Martin Hartmann, Rahel Jaeggi, and Martin Saar (eds.) *Sozialphilosophie und Kritik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, pp. 506–527.
- Honneth, Axel (2010) 'Dissolutions of the Social: On the Social Theory of Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot', *Constellations* 17(3): 376–389.
- Jaeggi, Rahel (2009) 'Was ist eine (gute) Institution?', in Rainer Forst, Martin Hartmann, Rahel Jaeggi, and Martin Saar (eds.) *Sozialphilosophie und Kritik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, pp. 528–544.
- Jaeggi, Rahel and Tilo Wesche (eds.) (2009) *Was ist Kritik?*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Jagd, Søren (2011) 'Pragmatic Sociology and Competing Orders of Worth in Organizations', *European Journal of Social Theory* 14(3): 343–359.

- Nachi, Mohamed (2006) *Introduction à la sociologie pragmatique*, Paris: Armand Colin.
- Negri, Toni (1994) 'Relire Boltanski et Thévenot : Sociologie et philosophie politique', *Multitudes* (Janvier).
- Rehberg, Merle (2007) *Auf dem Prüfstein der Künstlerkritik: Zu Kapitel VII aus dem Werk 'Der neue Geist des Kapitalismus' von Luc Boltanski und Ève Chiapello*, München: GRIN Verlag.
- Schmidt, Philipp (2007) *New Management – Der neue Geist des Kapitalismus: Eine kurze Analyse der Theorie Boltanskis und Chiapellos*, München: GRIN Verlag.
- Silber, Ilana F. (2003) 'Pragmatic Sociology as Cultural Sociology: Beyond Repertoire Theory?', *European Journal of Social Theory* 6(4): 427–449.
- Silber, Ilana F. (2011) 'Emotions as Regime of Justification? The Case of Civic Anger', *European Journal of Social Theory* 14(3): 301–320.
- Stark, David (2009) *The Sense of Dissonance: Accounts of Worth in Economic Life*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Stavo-Debauge, Joan (2011) 'Delacritique, unecritique. Surlegeste "radical" de Luc Boltanski', *Espaces Temps.net*, 7 March 2011. Online: <http://www.espacestems.net/articles/de-la-critique-une-critique-sur-le-geste-radical-de-luc-boltanski-2/> and <http://www.espacestems.net/articles/de-la-critique-une-critique-sur-le-geste-radical-de-luc-boltanski/> (accessed 20 May 2014).
- Susen, Simon (2007) *The Foundations of the Social: Between Critical Theory and Reflexive Sociology*, Oxford: Bardwell Press.
- Susen, Simon (2011a) 'Kritische Gesellschaftstheorie or kritische Gesellschaftspraxis? Robin Celikates, Kritik als soziale Praxis. Gesellschaftliche Selbstverständigung und kritische Theorie (Frankfurt am Main, Campus Verlag, 2009)', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie/European Journal of Sociology* 52(3): 447–463.
- Susen, Simon (2011b) 'Afterword: Concluding Reflections on the Legacy of Pierre Bourdieu', in Simon Susen and Bryan S. Turner (eds.) *The Legacy of Pierre Bourdieu: Critical Essays*, London: Anthem Press, pp. 367–409.
- Susen, Simon (2012) 'Une sociologie pragmatique de la critique est-elle possible ? Quelques réflexions sur *De la critique* de Luc Boltanski', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 110(4): 685–728.
- Thévenot, Laurent (1990) 'L'action qui convient', in Patrick Pharo and Louis Quéré (eds.) *Les formes de l'action*, Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, pp. 39–69.
- Thévenot, Laurent (1998) 'À l'épreuve des grands principes', *Sciences humaines* 79: 20–23.
- Thévenot, Laurent (2006) *L'action au pluriel: Sociologie des régimes d'engagement*, Paris: La Découverte.
- Turner, Bryan S. (2007) 'Justification, the City and Late Capitalism: An Extended Review of *The New Spirit of Capitalism*', *Sociological Review* 55(2): 410–415.
- Wagner, Peter (1994) 'Dispute, Uncertainty and Institution in Recent French Debates', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 2(3): 270–289.
- Wagner, Peter (1999) 'After *Justification*: Repertoires of Evaluation and the Sociology of Modernity', *European Journal of Social Theory* 2(3): 341–357.
- Wagner, Peter (2010) 'Critique and Crisis Reconsidered, Reflections on Luc Boltanski's *De la critique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009)', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie/European Journal of Sociology* 51(3): 473–478.