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- Pérez, Amín** (2022) *Combattre en Sociologues: Pierre Bourdieu et Abdelmalek Sayad dans une guerre de libération (Algérie, 1958-1964)*. Marseille: Agone (L’ordre des choses).

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Response to My Readers

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Each of the discussants brings out a distinct and difficult set of issues, to which I will try to respond. Anne Kwaschik’s own work (e.g., Kwaschik 2020) calls attention to colonial regimes’ increasing reliance on science, which I also find borne out in my own research. Kwaschik also discusses disciplinarity, including the possibility that a focus on disciplines may be less apt in colonial contexts. This problem has several different dimensions. The first is rooted in the fact that colonial institutions preferred interdisciplinarity “team” research; this preference is a theme in my book. Insisting on disciplinary specificity was sometimes a version of field-level resistance against external, contextual pressures. The second dimension relates to her point that “sociology was constituted together and against anthropology.” This mutual constitution was an important aspect of the French and British postwar scientific spheres. Scholars moved back and forth across disciplinary boundaries, which remained fluid. I identify two collective movements. The first, starting immediately after the Second World War, was a movement from anthropology into sociology. Sociology was widely seen at the time as being more politically progressive, more anticolonial and antiracist, and better able to deal analytically with the massive changes occurring in the colonies. A countermovement from sociology into anthropology began in the 1960s, as French sociology became more focused on the metropolitan homeland and lost some of its earlier epistemic and methodological openness. The permeability of the boundaries between disciplines made it possible for scholars to migrate or to keep a foot in two disciplines, as was the case for scholars such as Georges Balandier, Peter Worsley, Michael Banton, and even Pierre Bourdieu. Balandier’s views were widely echoed and emulated by many of his students.

The third point is that disciplinary frontiers gradually became less open in this period. There were several sources of scientific pillarization, including external agencies (UNESCO and CNRS). In addition to critiques of anthropology as

complicit with colonialism, Durkheimian arguments for sociology's analytic supremacy over ethnography still held some sway. There were also ongoing struggles between sociologists and anthropologists over ontological ownership of the colonies and the global South. According to one sociologist, both disciplines tried to curry favor with colonial administrators, arguing that "theirs is the right, the best, the only method of approach" (Kaye, 1956: 176). The sociologist's status in the colonial field of power was sometimes diminished by "his statistical apparatus, his inquisitorial approach, his finicky insistence on exactness, and his lack of genial charm" (Kaye, 1956: 177–178).

Alexander White makes a related point about the place of disciplines and disciplinary history in the historical sociology of science. I see two distinct issues here. The first issue is an analytic one, asking about the extent to which science is shaped by disciplines, rather than other forces. The second question is normative, focused on how we would like social life, including scientific life, to be organized.

Analytically, I demonstrate that French social sciences were increasingly configured as semi-distinct and semi-autonomous social fields in the two postwar decades (see also Heilbron 2015). At the same time, as noted above, there were constant struggles around the definition of disciplines and circulation of individuals in and out of disciplinary fields. I address the question of defining field membership. This begins with a critique of presentism and disciplinary bias, rejecting the method of "I know it" – that is, a sociologist – "when I see it." To avoid this form of methodological arbitrariness, I define members of any field as including only those who were perceived as field members by existing field members at the time. This approach means that we need to reconstruct any field genealogically, tracing its membership and other features back to its origins and its *nomothés*. We can then track the field's membership forward in time, paying attention to ongoing decisions to admit new members and changes in the definition of insiders and outsiders. This approach to defining a discipline or any other field of social practice may seem circular, but this is inherent in the interactional, processual, and dialectic character of social life.¹ This painstaking method can only be avoided where a field's dynamic limits "are converted into a juridical frontier, protected by a right of entry which is explicitly codified, such as the possession of scholarly titles, success in a competition, etc., or by measures of exclusion and discrimination, such as laws intended to assure a *numerus clausus*" (Bourdieu 1996: 226). In scientific fields, a juridical frontier (or measures of exclusion and discrimination) usually consists of a specific diploma or academic certification. Using this method can make an enormous empirical difference in the definition of a disciplinary field at a specific moment. Historians of French and British social science typically identify many of the figures I discuss in this book as anthropologists, even though they were self-identified and defined institutionally and by others in the field as sociologists. The reason for this is the commonsense definition of anthropology as the science of the non-western Other (Trouillot 1991) and of sociology as the science of the contemporary modern Self or the sociologist's "homeland."²

¹The tradition of modern processual, relational social science reaches from Dilthey (1883) and Max Weber to Freyer (1930), Elias (1997), and beyond.

²In the US, this definition of sociology is enforced by the preferences of university and social science department administrators; see Stevens, Miller-Idriss, and Shami (2018).

The period I am discussing is particularly interesting for the normative question about disciplinarity. I believe that the distinctions between sociology and anthropology, or sociology and history, are indefensible in ontological terms (Steinmetz 2005). One way to approach this question is via a philosophy of science focused on ontological features of reality; another is via an imminent critique of existing social practices. The latter approach argues that the standards it employs are in some way internal to the practices it criticizes and believes that “only then . . . do these standards lead to more than to a condemnation that merely shows that these practices do not live up to our conception of the good and the right, but to an argument that establishes that our society fails also on its own terms” (Stahl 2013: 1–2). I am suggesting that these Francophone intellectuals were provided with the resources and freedom to develop their ideas, relatively unconstrained by restrictive ideas about disciplinary definitions. They were able to draw upon a rich archive of previous social scientific writing (the Durkheimian and post-Durkheimian interwar legacies), surrealism, existentialism, and linguistic structuralism. The result was a corpus of brilliant social science.

Alexandre White also brings up the crucial issue of publishing and censorship. Some of the people I discuss, including Alioune Diop, Georges Gurvitch, Georges Balandier, Eric de Dampierre, Raymond Aron, and Pierre Bourdieu, created innovative journals and book series that provided venues for publishing on colonial processes. Censorship was a problem for anticolonial movements and intellectuals in France and the colonies, especially before 1944. Scientific and press freedom flourished after 1945. There was a resurgence of censorship with the passage of a law in 1956 that allowed suppression of publications seen as threatening national security, in the context of the Algerian war.³ This censorship was unsystematic and sporadic, however (Harrison 1964: 282), and critical accounts could be published if they referred to the war as “the events” (Winock 2004; Lustick 1993: 527, n 41). The most prominent journal of anticolonial writing, *Présence africaine*, was never censored, as far as I can tell.

White also mentions the issue of how race and racism operates across the French empire or how it is understood by different thinkers. In previous work, I analyzed the evolution and contours of racist discourse in the centuries leading up to the Scramble for Africa and traced the ways these discourses shaped colonial policy.⁴ The present book, however, is focused on French sociology in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Here, racism plays a different role: all of the leading sociologists I discuss here argue that racism is the centerpiece of the French colonial state. Indeed, I discuss francophone sociologists such as Albert Memmi who were born as colonial subjects and were therefore subjected personally to the racism inherent in all colonial states. I also emphasize the central role of *anti-racism* in French sociology, starting with the Dreyfusard origins of Durkheimian sociology. I discuss the interactions between French sociologists such as Georges Balandier and the crucial journal *Présence africaine*, led by Alioune Diop. Thinkers such as Aimé Césaire were less central to sociology, but I discuss Fanon, Césaire’s student

³One study found 586 incidents of journals seized in Algeria and 269 in the metropole (Harrison 1964: 177).

⁴George Steinmetz, *The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

and protégé, in some detail, in the context of the sciences of the psyche, which were adjacent to sociology (Fanon practiced and published as a psychiatrist before becoming a full-time revolutionary anticolonialist). Earlier scientific racists such as Gobineau are not discussed here because they had been completely discredited by Durkheim and the other founders of the “French school of sociology” and were taken seriously only on the right-wing margins of the discipline during the twentieth century. I briefly discuss the handful of sociologists who were explicit racists during the Vichy regime, including Marcel Déat, René Maunier, and George Montandon (who issued certificates of membership in the “Jewish race”), but none of them had any influence on the postwar intellectual formation, my main theme.

Christian Dayé calls attention to the issue of the repression of this colonial research in the historiography of sociology. Dayé calls attention to additional reasons scholars may have for suppressing this research, including what he calls reciprocal disregard (*wechselseitige Nichtbeachtung*; Dayé 2019). He then turns to the fascinating question of *strangeness* and the *étranger proche* – the close stranger. This is an apt word – much better than “area specialist” – to describe the position of colonial social scientists, and, indeed, my own position, as a nonnative analyzing French intellectual life.

Chas Camic’s brilliant work on the history of social science, including his most recent study of Thorstein Veblen (Camic 2020), have been an inspiration for me. I am therefore very pleased that he raises such a crucial theoretical and methodological point: the relationship between scientific fields and other social contexts. I am tempted to agree that fields are just another kind of context located at an intermediate scale between epochal, society-engulfing processes (war, climate change, capitalist crisis, etc.), and highly proximate sites such as a specific scientific laboratory or library, or a relationship between partners, friends, colleagues, or a specific teacher and student. I disagree that contexts can be construed as “as an amalgam of many different fields.” Bourdieu insisted that that by no means does the social consist entirely of social fields. There are countless social practices, processes, and events that do not have the relative closure and other features required of fields. Bourdieusian social scientists argue, for example, that social movements do not take the form of a field, given the absence of effective gate-keeping mechanisms or field-specific forms of symbolic capital valid across all social movements (Mathieu 2007). Similarly, empires cannot be constructed as Bourdieusian fields, since they were not organized around struggles over particular forms of symbolic capital. Instead, modern empires contained a congeries of different practices, fields, and non-fielded social spaces, each with a differing spatial reach. Only some of these colonial practices, such as sociology, spanned metropole, and colony, link them in a single disciplinary field.⁵

I also completely agree with Camic that wider contexts cannot be seen as shaping knowledge only via the mediation of fields. In that respect I concur that my account may be post-Bourdieuian rather than neo-Bourdieuian. But this hinges on whether we prioritize Bourdieu’s empirical case studies or his more apodictic theoretical statements, such as the ones Camic quotes. Bourdieu anathemized “theoretical theory,” and it is this Bourdieu who is closer to my approach.

⁵Certain specific fields, such as the postwar field of French sociology, had colonial extensions. For more on the uses, extensions, and limits of Bourdieusian field theory for analyzing imperial and colonial politics, see Steinmetz (2017).

This Bourdieu *does* allow nonfield contexts to shape practices directly, without the mediation of fields. All social practices are shaped by the society-wide distribution of different forms of capital (Bourdieu 1984), yet only some social practices are configured in field-like ways. Moreover, Bourdieu's analysis of specific historical processes such as the crisis of May 1968 in France (Bourdieu 1988: 159–193) emphasizes the temporary erosion of autonomy and nonsynchronicity among several fields, bringing them into harmony. Finally, for Bourdieu, human subjectivity emerged outside fields in the guise of the primary habitus, which is then continuously reworked over the course of a lifetime, partly within fields. Bourdieu thus recognized that practices were shaped within and outside of fields. At the same time, I agree with Camic that Bourdieu did not adequately theorize nonfielded social practices and contexts. This is one of the many discussions, along with Bourdieu's brief comments on the idea of "socioanalysis," his exploratory lectures on the theory of the state, his call to decolonize sociology (1976), and his tentative rapprochement with psychoanalysis (Mâitre 1994), that remained incomplete at the moment of his death, inviting further reflection and work by others.

Johan Heilbron, whose work has also been crucially important for me, provides a very complete summary of my book's argument. He asks whether my proclaimed socioanalytic approach is missing in the chapter on Aron, and whether my analysis of Bourdieu might have benefited from paying more attention to his early research on his native village in the Béarn region (Heilbron and Issenhuth 2022). It is correct that I devoted more attention to the personal and psychic aspects of Berque's and Balandier's oeuvres than to Aron's and Bourdieu's.

Three issues come into play here. First, for Aron, the questions about context raised by Camic are centrally important. Although much of the secondary literature on Aron has emphasized his bourgeois background and his secular Jewishness, these do not explain his unique orientation toward German thinkers, both in his path-breaking book on the philosophy of history (Aron 1938; see Knöbl 2022) and in his non-Marxist analyses of imperialism and geopolitics (Steinmetz 2021). What was especially important for these elements of Aron's thought in conjunction with the individual biographic experiences (especially exile and war) were the global intellectual context of his youth: he was part of the "non-conformist" crisis generation that came of age in France in the 1920s and 1930s, who rejected the conventional polarizations of Third Republic politics (Loubet del Bayle 2001; Merlio 1995). One red thread running through all of Aron's intellectual works and moves over the course of his career is non-conformism vis-à-vis dominant trends in sociology, politics, and journalism. This was essentially a field strategy: within the journalistic, political, and social scientific fields, Aron always staked out singular positions. In the political field, Aron was able to play a key, if largely hidden role, in moving key conservative political actors toward accepting Algerian independence. Aron ascended to an even more powerful position in the sociological field, where he became one of the most powerful figures starting in the late 1950s. Aron was comparable to Flaubert in Bourdieu's (1996) analysis of the nineteenth century French literary field, or to Sartre in postwar French philosophy: he defined a singular position against which others were compelled to define their own positions.

Bourdieu came to play a comparably unique role in the French sociology field, but not until after the period discussed in the book. My argument is that his mature

intellectual tools were forged in the colonial Algerian workshop. I would make two points in response to Heilbron's important argument about the Béarn research. First, I use the terms "adumbrate" and "anticipate," quoting Merton (1968), rather than arguing that the concepts were already present in their mature forms in Bourdieu's Algerian writing. I also suggest that there are different forms of conceptual anticipation. Bourdieu was exposed to the idea of *habitus* in his philosophical training before he even left for Algeria. His attunement to the idea of a *cleft* habitus was related to his own "doubled" experience of social class, which was reinforced by the intense doubling of social life in Algeria. *Habitus* is an example of a social scientific concept that was generated in a colonial setting and reimported back into the study of metropolitan society. In reversing the standard direction of the circulation of ideas (turning the arrow from North to South to South to North), Bourdieu was part of a wider tendency in postwar colonial social science. Some sociologists, such as Charles Le Coeur (1939), spoke explicitly about "anthropologizing" or "primitivizing" the European or North American self. Arriving on the colonial scene when these discussions were already well under way, Bourdieu did not hesitate to redeploy concepts back to Europe in a counter-imperial direction. Heilbron's comment about Béarn demonstrates that conceptual development involved something like a constant looping between colony and metropole, rather than a movement in one direction or the other. Counterintuitively, it was late colonialism that began to overcome analytical divisions as well as political ones, leading French intellectuals to seek to cross the "global color line" in search of collaborators and interlocutors, as in the pages of *Présence africaine* or the joint research of Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad (Pérez 2022). Late colonialism made such dialectics possible, before these fruitful dynamics were shut down and social science was rechanneled back into "northern" and "southern" streams.

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