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Legacies

Pierre Bourdieu and Social Transformation : Lessons from Algeria

Craig Calhoun

Pierre Bourdieu is not usually considered a development theorist. Yet Bourdieu's sociological perspective is deeply rooted in his studies of Algeria. The most famous of these are read largely for their insights into the logic of practice — including prominently Bourdieu's development of the notion of *habitus* as a way of integrating structural and phenomenological analysis, his effort to incorporate subjective and objective perspectives into a single analytic orientation, and his accounts of symbolic violence and cultural capital.¹ But it is worthwhile also to recognize how much they reflect his engagement with the economic and social transformations attendant on Algeria's colonization by France and incorporation into capitalist economic relations. One misunderstands his studies of France as well as Algeria if one does not recognize that, for all their attention to the reproduction of inequalities and social structures, they are grounded in an attempt to understand just how wrenching the deep transformation of such structures is. This situates Bourdieu directly in the sociology of development, with reference to Algeria and also to his native Béarn region of France (Bourdieu, 1972a, 2002a). Bourdieu also conducted major studies directly on such key development themes as the transformation of agriculture and the interaction between urban labour markets and village life (see Bourdieu and Sayad, 1964; Bourdieu et al., 1995). These in turn informed his examination of the experience of poverty amid the wealth of modern societies, not least among immigrants from those same formerly colonial and still underdeveloped societies.²

¹ For some insight into Bourdieu in Algeria see the special issue of *Ethnography* (2004).

² Bourdieu et al. (2000). Bourdieu and Sayad (2004) also address the ways in which displacement produced a 'traditionalism of despair'. While they were talking about the displacements in Algeria intended largely to make resistance to colonial rule harder, their point applies also to contemporary migrants.

ALGERIA

In 1955, Bourdieu was sent to do national service in Algeria during that French colony's struggle for independence — and Republican France's horrific repression of it. The bloody battle of Algiers was a formative experience for a generation of French intellectuals who saw their state betray what it had always claimed was a mission of liberation and civilization, revealing the sheer power that lay behind colonialism, despite its legitimation in terms of progress.³ Bourdieu addressed this both with direct opposition and with research into the nature of domination itself.

Confrontation with the Algerian war, and with the transformations wrought by French colonialism and capitalism, left a searing personal mark on Bourdieu, solidifying his commitment to the principle that research must matter for the lives of others. Scarred but also toughened, he stayed on to teach at the University of Algiers and became a self-taught ethnographer. He proved himself an extraordinarily keen observer of the interpenetration of large-scale social change and the struggles and solidarities of daily life. Among other reasons, his native familiarity with the peasant society of Béarn gave him an affinity with the traditional agrarian societies of rural Algeria that were being destroyed by French colonialism.

Bourdieu did not simply study Algeria as such, but rather sought out its internal variants, regional and 'minority' communities that were stigmatized and marginalized by both French colonialism and the construction of Algerian national identity as modern and Arab in opposition to rural, tribal, and traditional. His *Sociologie d'Algérie* (1958) describes in some detail not only 'Arabic-speaking peoples' but Kabyles, Shawia, and Mozabites, each of which had its own distinct culture and traditional social order. Nevertheless, both colonialism and market transformations were disrupting these groups and — along with opposition to French rule — pulling members of each into a new, more unified 'Algerian' system of social relations (ibid.). Indeed, the very term 'Kabyle' (to name the group Bourdieu studied most) is derived from the Arabic word for tribe, and is at once a claimed identity and a reminder of marginalization.

³ See Le Seuer (2002), including Bourdieu's foreword (Bourdieu, 2002b). See also Yacine (2004).

This double domination informed both his analyses of Algeria specifically and his development of a theory of symbolic violence. Conducting research in Kabyle villages and with Berber-speaking labour migrants to the fast-growing cities of Algeria's coastal regions, Bourdieu addressed themes from the introduction of money into marriage negotiations to cosmology and the agricultural calendar, and the economic crisis facing those who are forced into market relations for which they are not prepared.⁴ He studied the difficult situation of those who chose to work in the modern economy and found themselves transformed into its 'underclass', not even able to gain the full status of proletarians because of the ethno-national biases of the French colonialists (Bourdieu, 1958; Bourdieu et al., 1995). He wrote on why the veiling of women grew more prominent in the context of colonization and development (even while it was viewed as 'traditional').⁵

Behind the studies of social change was an account of the traditional 'other' to modernization, the less rapidly changing peasant culture and economy. It is informative to recall that the Kabyle were Durkheim's primary exemplars of traditional, segmentary social organization in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* and thus already had a role as representative of a certain 'type' of the premodern (Durkheim, 1997).

Bourdieu initially represented the lives of the 'original' inhabitants of Algeria in fairly conventional terms, echoing many aspects of the more critical end of the modernization theories of the day. Increasingly, though, he began to develop not only a challenge to the idea of benign modernization, but a much richer and more sophisticated analysis of how a traditional order could reproduce itself without the conscious intention to do so, any explicit template for the reproduction, or the direct exercise of power. This was made possible, Bourdieu argued, by the very organization of social practices, combining the symbolic and the material seamlessly in a 'polythetic' consciousness, and inculcating practical orientations to actions in the young through experiences repeated in everyday life. The spatial organization of the

⁴ See, perhaps most importantly, Bourdieu and Sayad (1964).

⁵ Touched on in his early studies, including *Algeria 1960* (Bourdieu, 1977a), gender became a central theme in *Masculine Domination* (2001a). More recently, feminist engagements with Bourdieu's work have become prominent; see Nalia Kabeer's effort to rethink doxa, awareness, and agency (Kabeer, 2000) and Deniz Kandiyoti's analyses of gender relations and segregation (1988, 1994).

household and the calendar of agricultural production, thus, were not only ‘cultural’ choices or responses to material conditions, they were media of instruction organizing the ways in which the world appeared to members of the society and the ways in which each could imagine himself and improvise action. This social order did not admit of divisions into different fields of activity with different specific forms of value or claims on the loyalties of members. Kinship, poetry, religion and agriculture were not distinct, as family, art, religion and the economy were in more ‘modern’ societies. Kabyle could thus live in a *doxic* attitude, reproducing understanding of the world as simply the taken-for-granted way it must be, while the development of discrete fields was linked to the production of orthodoxies and heterodoxies, competing claims to right knowledge and true value.

Recognizing that the traditional order was sustained not by simple inertia or the force of cultural rules, Bourdieu turned attention to the ways in which continuous human effort, vigilance towards ‘proper’ action that was simultaneously an aspect of effective play of the game, achieved reproduction. This was a game peasants could play effectively in their villages. They were prepared for it not only by explicit teaching but by all their practical experiences — embodied as ‘second nature’ or ‘habitus’. The same people who could play the games of honour with consummate subtlety in peasant villages were incapacitated by the games of rationalized exchange in the cities. Labour migration and integration into the larger state and market thus stripped peasant habituses of their efficacy and indeed made the very efforts that previously had sustained village life and traditional culture potentially counterproductive.

From this it was a short step to problems posed by declining efficacy of the traditional order and the weakness of preparation the Berbers had for participation in the ‘modern’ society of Algeria — notably the fields of economy and politics. Traditional culture discouraged the kind of ‘rationality’ rooted in projecting a distant time horizon and cause and effect analysis of investments and events that would shape it. Experience constantly taught the lesson that there was no way for ‘people like us’ to succeed. Occasional exceptions were more easily explained away than the ubiquitous reinforcement that inculcated pessimism as habitus. Feeling fundamentally unequipped for the undertakings of Algeria’s new ‘modern’ sector, they transformed a fact of discrimination into a principle of self-exclusion and reduced ambition.

THEORIES OF PRACTICE AND THE REPRODUCTION OF INEQUALITY

These studies helped forge Bourdieu's theory of practice and informed his entire intellectual trajectory, including both academic endeavours and his later political critique of neoliberalism. Near the end of his life, he wrote:

As I was able to observe in Algeria, the unification of the economic field tends, especially through monetary unification and the generalization of monetary exchanges that follow, to hurl all social agents into an economic game for which they are not equally prepared and equipped, culturally and economically. It tends by the same token to submit them to standards objectively imposed by competition from more efficient productive forces and modes of production, as can readily be seen with small rural producers who are more and more completely torn away from self-sufficiency. In short, *unification benefits the dominant*. (Bourdieu, 2003: 93)

Unification, of course, could be a project not only of the colonial state but also of national states, the European community, and the World Trade Organization.

As a self-taught researcher in Algeria, Bourdieu fused ethnography and statistics, theory and observation, to begin crafting a distinctive approach to social inquiry aimed at informing progressive politics through scientific production. In some ways, it may have helped to be self-taught because it encouraged Bourdieu to ignore some of the artificial oppositions structuring the social sciences, such as that between quantitative and qualitative inquiry. Research also gave Bourdieu an approach to practical action at a time when he felt caught uncertainly between political camps. He both drew heavily on Fanon, for example, and then vehemently rejected the revolutionary politics that attracted him, seeing it as naively and sometimes dangerously romantic.⁶ Convinced that total revolution was impossible, but also that the French state was insupportable, Bourdieu sought — without complete success — an approach that would give adequate weight to the power of social reproduction without simply affirming it.

The resulting studies, developing through *Esquisse d'une théorie la pratique*, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and *The Logic of Practice* (not to mention a host of

⁶ See Bourdieu, "Révolution dans la révolution." There is useful discussion in Lane (2000).

articles) are among the most influential efforts to overcome the reified oppositions between subjective and objective, agency and structure.⁷ In studies like his analysis of the Kabyle house, Bourdieu produced some of the classic works of structuralism.⁸ He broke with conventional structuralism, however, as he sought a way to move beyond the dualisms of structure and action, objective and subjective, social physics and social semiotics and especially to inject a stronger account of temporality (and temporal contingency) into social analysis.⁹ Bourdieu's effort was not merely to forge a theoretical synthesis, but to develop the capacity to overcome some of the opposition between theoretical knowledge based on objectification of social life and phenomenological efforts to grasp its embodied experience and (re)production in action. Human social action is at once 'structured' and 'structuring', Bourdieu argued, indeed structuring *because* it is structured, with the socialized body as 'analogical operator of practice'. Peasant men, thus, literally embodied the contradictions of social change as they came to judge their own bodies as rough and clumsy by urban standards, not least the standards of women they might have wished to marry but who embraced new opportunities as well as new cultural styles (Bourdieu, 2002a).

Bourdieu's analyses thus lay the basis for an empirical science that would address the practices of knowledge at the same time as it produced knowledge of social practice. The issue remained central in his challenge to neoliberalism: 'The implicit philosophy of the economy, and of the rapport between economy and politics, is a political vision that leads to the establishment of an unbreachable frontier between the economic, regulated by the fluid and efficient mechanisms of the market, and the social, home to the unpredictable arbitrariness of tradition, power, and passions'

⁷ See Bourdieu (1972, 1977b, 1990). *Outline* is often described as a translation of *Esquisse*, but in fact it represents a substantial rewriting and incorporates not only a changed order of presentation and relation between theoretical and ethnographic text, but some significant changes in theory. The 1990 volume, *Logic (Le Sens Pratique*, a more evocative title), reworked the same texts, with further additions and deletions. Robbins' account of the relations among the three is the most detailed in English; see Robbins (1991: Ch.7).

⁸ Originally written in 1963–4, this was first published in 1969 in a homage to Lévi-Strauss and republished as part of the French edition of the *Outline* (Bourdieu, 1972b). In the same sense, many of Michel Foucault's works of the mid-1960s are arguably classics of structuralism and not yet in any strong sense 'poststructuralist', for example *The Order of Things*, originally published in 1966 (Foucault, 1970).

⁹ Bridget Fowler (1977: 16) rather strangely sees the concept of practice as 'associated with [Bourdieu's] conversion to structuralism', thus missing some of the other sources on which it drew — most notably Marx and marxism — and the extent to which it marked an effort to transcend limits of structuralism.

(Bourdieu, 2001b: 29–30). This ‘frontier’ is reinforced by both academic preconceptions and folk understandings, and structures the apparently objective categories and findings of economic analysis.¹⁰ The production of knowledge structured by such presupposed categories undergirds the failure to take seriously the social costs of neoliberalism, the social conditions on which such an economy depends, and the possibilities of developing less damaging alternatives.

Bourdieu’s engagement with ‘the social’ was not simply a theoretical position but the product of an acute interest in social inequality and the ways in which it is masked and perpetuated. At once personal and political as well as scientific, this concern was appropriately evident in his studies of intellectual production and its hidden determinations. More generally, it underpins his account of the forging, conversion and communication of ‘cultural capital’ and the operation of ‘symbolic power’ — a central theme of his career. Already there in his work on Algeria, this concern became even more prominent when he turned his attention to France. The links to Algeria are manifest in Bourdieu’s studies of matrimonial strategies and gender relations in his native Béarn during the early 1960s.¹¹ But the perspective developed in regard to Algeria also informs Bourdieu’s accounts of the ways in which the ‘opening up’ of the French educational system during the post-war period (*les trente glorieuses*) failed to deliver a genuinely egalitarian society but instead reproduced inequalities in new forms (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, 1979). Read in English narrowly as texts in the sociology or anthropology of education, they were also more general challenges to the French state, which embraced education more centrally than its counterparts in the English-language countries. The national education system stood as perhaps the supreme exemplar of the pretended seamless unity and neutrality of the state in simultaneous roles as representative of the nation and embodiment of reason and progress. Bourdieu showed not merely that it was biased (a fact potentially corrigible) but that it was in principle biased — not unlike the way global market hierarchies are in principle biased.

¹⁰ Bourdieu’s understanding of the historical process by which this tacit understanding of market society was established was close to — and indebted to — that of Karl Polanyi (see, for example, Polanyi, 1944).

¹¹ Bourdieu published several articles on these themes, and left a more extended, book-length treatment, in press at his death (Bourdieu, 2002a).

In his early work on Algeria, in fact, Bourdieu looked to schools as potential vehicles for remedying the poor preparation of ex-peasants for the new commercial society and post-colonial politics. If only they could be organized to provide fair, open, and effective access to high value cultural goods, he implied in concert with many educational reformers, then educational institutions could be the crucial means for improving society. As Bourdieu continued to think about Algeria, though, and even more as he began to analyse French schooling, he became dubious about the potential.¹² Increasingly, he saw the issue not as the failure of schools to perform their manifest function — to use Merton’s phrase — but rather as their success in fulfilling various latent functions. Of the latter, maintaining and simultaneously disguising the class structure was central. Also important, though, was providing an institutionally specific field for educators and intellectuals themselves — together with field-specific capital over which these could struggle. The very engagement of the educators in this field and in the pursuit of standing within it made it very unlikely that they could become the force for change Bourdieu had previously hoped.¹³

Educational institutions were central to Bourdieu’s concern, but his sense of disappointment and his critical analyses both reached widely. All the institutions of modernity, including the capitalist market and the state itself, share in a tendency to promise far more than they deliver. They present themselves as working for the common good, but in fact reproduce social inequalities. They present themselves as agents of freedom, but in fact are organizations of power. They inspire devotion from

¹² Though disillusioned about education, Bourdieu continued quietly for decades to support students from Kabylia in the pursuit of higher education, a fact that speaks not only to his private generosity and sense of obligation, but to his faith that, for all their complicity in social reproduction, education and science remained the best hope for loosening the yoke of domination. He also helped Berber emigrants in Paris to found a research centre, CERAM (Centre de Recherches et d’Etudes Amazighes), and was a founder of a prominent support group for imprisoned and threatened Algerian intellectuals, CISIA (Comité de soutien aux intellectuels algériens).

¹³ Failure to take Bourdieu’s work in Algeria seriously enough has impeded many sociologists’ grasp of the trajectory of his views on education. A prominent recent American book on Bourdieu, thus, never connects the two (Swartz, 1997). The issue is even more acute in the sketchier accounts of Jenkins (1992) and Fowler (1997). Harker (1990) points to the problem; Robbins (1991) and Lane (2000) give a fuller account. This is due to the fact that Bourdieu’s early work is not all available in English and his work was received into different English-language fields at different times. Sociologists also tended to assume his work on Algeria was somehow of a different, ‘anthropological’ genre, and of interest mainly with regard to ‘traditional society’ (an impression perhaps encouraged by the way in which it was represented in *Outline*, Bourdieu 1997b). See also discussion in Postone et al. (1993) and Loïc Wacquant, “Toward a Social Praxeology,” Ch. 1 in Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992).

those who want richer, freer lives, and they disappoint them with the limits they impose and the violence they deploy. Simply to attack modernity, however, is to engage in the ‘self-destructive resentment’ Bourdieu sought to avoid. Rather, the best way forward lies through the struggle to understand, to win deeper truths, and to remove legitimacy from the practices by which power mystifies itself. In this way, one can challenge the myths and deceptions of modernity, enlightenment and civilization without becoming the enemy of the hopes they offer.

FIELDS AND FORMS OF CAPITAL

Bourdieu did not develop any detailed account of ‘the economy’ as such, partly because his concerns lay elsewhere and partly because he questioned whether any such object existed with the degree of autonomy from the rest of social life that conventional economics implied.¹⁴ His account of the different forms of capital involved no account of capitalism as a distinctive, historically specific system of production and distribution. This was perhaps implied by his treatment of the corrosive force of markets in Algeria and by his critique of neoliberal economic policies. In each case the more inclusive, larger-scale organization of economic life also entailed a greater reduction of other values to economic ones (and a specification of economic values as those of private property). ‘Economism is a form of ethnocentrism’, Bourdieu wrote. It removes the elements of time and uncertainty from symbolically organized exchange; it desocializes transactions leaving, as Bourdieu follows Marx (and Carlyle) in saying, no other nexus between man and man than ‘callous cash payment’. It treats pre-capitalist economies through the categories and concepts proper to capitalism (Bourdieu, 1990: 112–13). Among other things, this means introducing what Bourdieu calls ‘monothetic’ reason, in which analysts imagine that ‘social’ can only mean, or actors only intend, one thing at a time. Precapitalist thought in general, and much ordinary thought even in capitalist societies is, Bourdieu suggests, polythetic, constantly deploying multiple meanings of the same

¹⁴ See Bourdieu (2000), which takes up but moves well beyond arguments about ‘embeddedness’ following Polanyi.

object. 'Practice has a logic which is not that of the logician' (ibid.: 86).¹⁵ It puts symbols and knowledge together 'practically', that is, in a philosophically unrigorous but convenient way for practical use.

Bourdieu devoted a good deal of effort to challenging such economism. But he did this not to suggest an alternative view of human nature in which competition did not matter so much as an alternative view of the social world in which other kinds of 'goods' and relationships were the objects of investment and accumulation. This led him into the influential idea of different partially convertible forms of capital: notably cultural, social, and symbolic.

The social world can be conceived as a multi-dimensional space that can be constructed empirically by discovering the main factors of differentiation which account for the differences observed in a given social universe, or, in other words, by discovering the powers or forms of *capital* which are or can become efficient, like aces in a game of cards, in this particular universe, that is, in the struggle (or competition) for the appropriation of scarce goods of which this universe is the site. It follows that the structure of this space is given by the distribution of the various forms of capital, that is, by the distribution of the properties which are active within the universe under study — those properties capable of conferring strength, power and consequently profit on their holder. ...these fundamental social powers are, according to my empirical investigations, firstly *economic* capital, in its various kinds; secondly *cultural* capital or better, informational capital, again in its different kinds; and thirdly two forms of capital that are very strongly correlated, *social* capital, which consists of resources based on connections and group membership, and *symbolic* capital, which is the form the different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognized as legitimate.¹⁶

Economic capital is that which is 'immediately and directly convertible into money' (Bourdieu, 1986: 243). Educational credentials (cultural capital) or social connections

¹⁵ Compare Pascal's most famous line, 'The heart has its reasons, of which reason is ignorant'; *Pensees*, 97.

¹⁶ Bourdieu (1987: 3–4). Bourdieu's notion of social capital influenced the theoretically thinner treatments lately made influential by James Coleman and Robert Putnam. Bourdieu's differs, though, in his analysis of this as one form of capital related to others, and of all forms of capital as intrinsically social — a recognition that has not yet been taken up in, say, the World Bank.

(social capital) can only be converted indirectly, through engagement in activities that involve longer-term relationships such as employment, family and marriage. Different social fields create and value specific kinds of capital, and if economic capital has a certain primacy for Bourdieu, it is not dominant in all fields and its role may in varying degree be denied or misrecognized.

ECONOMISM AND NEOLIBERALISM

Bourdieu's analytic focus is more on showing that what economism takes as the universal characteristic of human nature — material, individual self-interest — is in fact historically arbitrary, a particular historical construction. 'A general science of the economy of practices', thus, would 'not artificially limit itself to those practices that are socially recognized as economic'. It would 'endeavor to grasp capital, that "energy of social physics" in all of its different forms, and to uncover the laws that regulate their conversion from one into another'.¹⁷ Capital is thus analogous to energy, and both to power. But:

The existence of symbolic capital, that is, of 'material' capital misrecognized and thus recognized, though it does not invalidate the analogy between capital and energy, does remind us that social science is not a social physics; that the acts of cognition that are implied in misrecognition and recognition are part of social reality and that the socially constituted subjectivity that produces them belongs to objective reality. (Bourdieu, 1990: 122).

Basic to Bourdieu's interventions as a public intellectual, in this sense, was the importance of creating the possibility of collective choice where the dominant discourse described only the impositions of necessity. In the context of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, for example, Bourdieu challenged the idea that the choices of European citizens were limited to passivity before the horrors of ethnic cleansing or support for the American-led NATO policy of high-altitude bombing (Bourdieu, 2002c: 279–80). More prominently, especially from the early 1990s, Bourdieu

¹⁷ Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 118). The reference inside the quote is to Bourdieu (1990: 122): 'the capital accumulated by groups, which can be regarded as the energy of social physics, can exist in different kinds'.

worked to protect the achievements of the social struggles of the twentieth century — pensions, job security, open access to higher education and other provisions of the social state — against budget cuts and other attacks in the name of free markets and international competition. In the process, he became one of the world’s most famous critics of neoliberal globalization.¹⁸ He challenged the neoliberal idea that a specific model of reduction in state action, enhancement of private property, and freedom for capital was a necessary response to globalization (itself conceived as a quasi-natural force).

Calling this the ‘American model’ annoyed Americans who wished to distance themselves from government and corporate policies. The label nonetheless captured a worldwide trend toward commodification, state deregulation, and competitive individualism exemplified and aggressively promoted by the dominant class of the United States at the end of the twentieth century. Bourdieu identified this American model with five features of American culture and society which were widely proposed as necessary to successful globalization in other contexts: (1) a weak state; (2) an extreme development of the spirit of capitalism, and (3) the cult of individualism; (4) exaltation of dynamism for its own sake; and (5) neo-Darwinism with its notion of self-help (Bourdieu, 2001b).

Whatever the label, Bourdieu meant that the view that institutions developed out of a long century of social struggles should be scrapped if they could not meet the test of market viability. Many of these, including schools and universities, are state institutions. As he demonstrated in much of his work, they are far from perfect. Nonetheless, collective struggles have grudgingly and gradually opened them to a degree to the dominated, workers, women, ethnic minorities and others. These institutions and this openness are fragile social achievements that allow the possibility of more equality and justice, and to sacrifice them is to step backwards, whether this step is masked by a deterministic analysis of the ‘market’ or a naked assertion of self-interest by the wealthy and powerful. This does not mean that defence must be blind, but it does mean that resistance to neoliberal globalization, even when couched in the

¹⁸ Bourdieu published a host of essays collected in *Acts of Resistance, Firing Back* and *Interventions* (1998a, 2002c, 2003). Bourdieu’s essays were only a part of his struggle ‘against the tyranny of the market’. He gave speeches and interviews, appeared on the radio and at public demonstrations, launched a non-party network of progressive social scientists called *Raisons d’agir* (Reasons to act), and helped to forge links among intellectuals, cultural producers and trade-union activists.

apparently backward-looking rhetoric of nationalism, can be a protection of genuine gains and indeed, a protection of the public space for further progressive struggles.

Neoliberal reforms, therefore, not only threaten some people with material economic harms; they threaten social institutions that enable people to make sense of their lives. That these institutions are flawed is a reason to transform them (and the classificatory schemes central to their operation and reproduction). It is not a basis for imagining that people can live without them, especially in the absence of some suitable replacements. Moreover, the dismantling of such institutions is specifically disempowering, not only economically depriving. That is, it not only takes away material goods in which people have an 'interest', it also undercuts their ability to make sense of their social situation and create solidarities with others.

A central strength of global capitalism is its ability to control the terms of discourse, and most especially, to present the specific emerging forms of globalization as both inevitable and progressive. Consider the force of this message in the rhetoric of the European Union and the advocates of a common currency. Globalization appears as a determinant force, an inevitable necessity to which Europeans must adapt; capitalism appears as its essential character; the American model is commonly presented as the 'normal' if not the only model. Yet European unification is held to be liberal, cosmopolitan, and progressive (Bourdieu, 1998b; see also Calhoun 2002 and forthcoming). To assert as Bourdieu did that the specific pattern of international relations — like relations within nations — is the result of the exercise of power is to open up the game, to remove the illusion of necessity. To reveal the power being wielded and reproduced when apparently open political choices are structured by a symbolic order organized to the benefit of those in dominant positions, whether or not they are fully aware of what they do, is to challenge the efficacy of doxic understandings. These are basic acts of critical theory, and both consistent with and informed by Bourdieu's work since his early Algerian studies.

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