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(Re)Reading the Classics

## (Re)reading *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*. The relevance of one of Pierre Bourdieu's lesser-known books

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**Abstract.** Twenty years after the death of Pierre Bourdieu, his vast corpus continues to fuel lively debates on an international level. Over the last few years, several scholars have been interested in the link between Bourdieu and the sociology of work and the legacy of his conceptual apparatus for the sociological study of Labor. In 2021, in France, one of his lesser-known books, *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*, was republished in an updated version. This critical reading pursues a triple objective: to highlight how, firstly, already in this early phase of his career, Bourdieu began to define some of the methodological and epistemological assumptions of his sociology: the relevance of reflexivity; a methodological approach that combines ethnography and statistics, overcoming the sterile contrast between objectivism and subjectivism; an idea of sociology that crosses the frontiers between the social sciences and disciplinary specializations. Secondly, the analysis of this book allows us to retrace the genesis of the concept of habitus, starting from the influence exercised on Bourdieu by Weber's study on the link between Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism. Finally, the re(reading) of *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* consent to describe the substantially positive meaning that Bourdieu attributes to work, as an activity, and even more to employment in contemporary capitalist societies.

**Keywords:** relationship with work, ethos/habitus, Algeria, unemployment, rationalization of behaviors and attitudes.

### INTRODUCTION

Although Pierre Bourdieu is one of the most cited and influential social scientists on a planetary level (Sapiro 2013), some aspects of his vast corpus are still little known, especially in Italy. In 2021 the publishing house *Raisons d'agir* published a new version of one of its lesser-known books entitled *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (1963), written in collaboration with a team of statisticians (composed by A. Darbel, J.-P. Rivet, C. Seibel). The

new edition proposes what was originally the second volume of the book, that is, the sociological study edited by Bourdieu himself. Bourdieu's general introduction and his preface to the sociological<sup>1</sup> part have been maintained with the addition of two annexes: an unpublished monograph on artisans and the essay on the "double truth of work," already published in the *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* in the 1996 and within the book *Méditations pascaliennes* (1997).

In addition, a series of documents make it possible to contextualize historically and geographically Bourdieu's experience in the field during the war in Algeria (1954-1962): the questionnaire administered to the interviewees, numerous photographs taken during the research, a map extrapolated from a volume recently published in Italy (Schultheirs *et alii* 2012), a review appeared in the newspaper *Le Monde* in 1964 and a testimony by the statistician Claude Seibel about the collaboration with Bourdieu. Finally, the volume closes with the afterword by anthropologist Yacine Tassadit on the bodily dimension of relations of domination in the colonial context in Algeria.

Long unavailable, recently rediscovered by critics (Quijoux, 2015), *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* is a book that Bourdieu considered highly topical in a historical context, that of the 1990s, dominated by a neoliberal ideology that supported a series of policies that have favored the ever-greater precariousness of the world of work, in conjunction with budgetary austerity and the contraction of public services (Pérez 2021). To accompany the reader in the discovery of this little-known dimension of Bourdieu's corpus, we will present the contents of the book, showing how, in the first place, Bourdieu delineates the epistemological and methodological outlines of his conception of sociology, which he will strive to refine and consolidate continuously during the following decades. Secondly, this book is a privileged point of observation for analyzing the genesis of his thought and, above all, one of the most famous and controversial concepts he forged, that of habitus (Bourdieu 1980). Finally, *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* provides abundant food for thought on the topicality of the Bourdieusian theoretical framework for the sociological study of work in contemporary societies.

In the background is the liminal positioning of the transalpine sociologist in the Italian sociological field. After being labeled as a neo-Marxist, presumed to inspire deterministic sociology and not very attentive to individual action, Bourdieu, as shown by Marco Santoro (2009), was ostracized in the Italian academic world, considered poor guest regard (Salento 2010). The link between Bourdieu and Marx certainly cannot be denied (Paolucci 2018), but it must be read within his wide-ranging and very ambitious scientific program, both from an epistemological and a methodological point of view, thanks to which Bourdieu is now considered as the principal heir of the classical European sociological tradition, and who is therefore credited with having conceived an original synthesis of the thought of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim (Sallaz, Zavisca 2007).

In line with the Marxian sociological perspective, Bourdieu is interested in the struggle between individuals and social groups, competing to grab resources in terms of economic, cultural, social, symbolic capital, and ultimately to impose, also through the control of the judge supreme, the State (Bourdieu 2012), a vision of the world, a doxa, which legitimizes its domination in the whole of the social space or a specific field. However, the identification of his theoretical framework with the neo-Marxist theory is a patent forcing on which we do not intend to dwell, referring to the many contributions that allow us to dismantle these prejudices and familiarize ourselves with the complexity and depth of his theoretical apparatus (De Feo, Pitzalis, 2015; De Feo *et alii* 2019; Paolucci 2010, 2018; Susca 2017).

We will limit to underlining how, in the book *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*, the influence of Durkheim emerges, but also of other French classics less known in Italy, such as Maurice Halbwachs, evoked in connection with his study on consumption and lifestyles of the class worker (1912), and above all of Max Weber's theses on Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism (1905). Bourdieu, in effect, mobilizing the work of Weber and the historians of capitalism (especially Sombart), is interested in the formation of a modern economic and work ethic in a society, the Algerian one, where the genesis of capitalism does not take place, unlike of Weber's research, as a function of endogenous but exogenous development, heterodirected by the colonial power. Bourdieu tries to put forward the congruence or discrepancy between the cultural structures incorporated during the sociali-

<sup>1</sup> Published in Italy by the review *Cultural Studies*, with translation and presentation by Marco Santoro (2006).

zation process and on which the attitude of Algerians towards economic activities and work depends, and the logic imposed by the labor market, defined as an economic and cultural invention of the West, imported and imposed by colonization.

The effects of a market economy development are real and disruptive for Algerians as they face the threat of unemployment and the urgent need for a monetary income for their subsistence in an urban economy. However, these effects do not mechanically act on individual consciences. The Algerians interpret them through an economic ethos inherited from tradition, which is part of a complex and articulated global cultural system on which the relationship with society, time, and the family ultimately depends. Since the dawn of his career, Bourdieu's historical and relational sociological approach has been characterized by the simultaneous and integrated study of individual action and macro-sociological transformations, caused in this case by colonization and war (with forced transfers of the population and the acceleration of the migratory process from rural areas).

Bourdieu, as we will see later, does not ignore the reflective component of individual action; on the contrary, he repeatedly highlights how this can lead, under certain conditions, to a "creative reinvention" of attitudes towards work and economy. He tries to overcome the classic dichotomies of sociology (objectivism vs. subjectivism, theory vs. empirical research, qualitative vs. quantitative methods, macro-sociology vs. micro-sociology, structuralism vs. culturalism, etc.) This objective will be clearly explained over time but always starting from a theoretical reflection based on the analysis of the data collected during the Algerian experience (Bourdieu, 1980), which will gradually be compared with those coming from other research fields, such as his native region in southwestern France, Béarn (Bourdieu 2002).

Over the last 20 years, the legitimacy of Pierre Bourdieu has undoubtedly grown in Italy. However, the mobilization of his conceptual instrumentation appears to be limited to some disciplinary fields (the sociology of cultural processes and education mainly). At the same time, it is substantially detached from the sociology of work and economic sociology. While there are signs of openness, such as the publication of a manual of economic sociology (Barbera, Pais 2017), which contains, in line with what is happening at the international level (Smelser, Swedberg 2005), a chapter dedicated to the economic sociology of Bourdieu (Santoro 2017), his contribution to the debates of the Italian sociology of work is irrelevant. This probably also depends on how Bourdieu's study of Labor did not give rise to a significant number of publications. An almost underground vein has undoubtedly contributed to shaping his thought, but whose heuristic potential needs to be fully understood by an analytical work. We will try to lay the foundations through this critical presentation of the book *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*.

## A SOCIOLOGICAL CONVERSION

A philosopher by training, during the Algerian period, Bourdieu made a conversion to sociology (2006), elaborating some of the epistemological and methodological principles deepened in the following decades, in a theoretical perspective that from the beginning tries to overcome the borders between the different social sciences and sociological specializations. In the general introduction and in what was initially the preface to the sociological part<sup>2</sup>, entitled respectively "Statistics and sociology" and "The conditions for a decolonized social science," Bourdieu questions himself on the relationship between ethnography and statistics and on reflexivity (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992) as a methodological tool necessary to objectify data (Bourdieu 2003) and research results.

First, Bourdieu intends to go beyond the sterile dichotomies between quantitative and qualitative methodologies and between objectivism and subjectivism (Pitzalis 2010). At the same time, he criticizes the drifts of both methods, which can degenerate towards, on the one hand, a fetish for numbers and statistics, on the other, ethnographic intuitionism. Bourdieu stresses that the collaboration between the sociologist and the statistician is necessary, a fortiori when one decides to study society in complete transformation, such as the Algerian one in the 1950s

<sup>2</sup> Volume II of the first edition.

and 1960s. If ethnography would risk producing impressionistic monographs that do not capture the underlying logic of complex and changing social processes, in that case, it is nevertheless indispensable to guarantee knowledge of traditional cultural models or understand the meaning of social practices, which could appear irrational or inconsistent in the eyes of the European observer. This is because workers have incorporated traditional cultural models and refer to them implicitly or explicitly, even when they betray them, transform them or recreate them according to the new social configurations.

On the other hand, statistics is, for Bourdieu, both a tool for verifying the hypotheses formulated through ethnography and a brake against the risk of intuitionism and hasty and superficial inductive reasoning. Therefore, sociological understanding is generated by the continuous coming and going between what Bourdieu defines as the evidence of familiarity or the blinding evidence of ethnography, and the evidence of statistics, blind evidence that must be deciphered.

Secondly, Bourdieu defines some principles of ethnographic research. He rejects the idea that the sociologist cannot devote himself to an “impure” research object, as was colonial society. Many believed that researchers were necessarily involved in the faults of the French society to which they belonged and did not have the right to transform a colony, even more so during a war of liberation, into an object of study. According to Bourdieu, these considerations are of a moral and unscientific nature. Instead, it is essential to describe and understand the social practices in Algeria, the attitudes and ideologies of Algerians starting from their existential conditions, shaped by the economic and social logic of the colonial system. The researcher must bear in mind that, even more so during a war, relationships between people always have as their background the hostility that separates the groups, which can emerge during the research by altering the sense of communication. Society is fragmented due to many institutional or spontaneous barriers, and communication between groups is reduced to the bare minimum. The French researcher must consider the historical, social, and communicative conditions in which the research takes place, and the data is collected and interpreted.

Having acknowledged these structural constraints, the team coordinated by Bourdieu, made up of Algerian and French students (including the young Abdelmalek Sayad), developed a series of techniques to negotiate access to the field and objectify how scientific knowledge is produced. By way of example, the use of the binomials composed of an Algerian and a French researcher allows, on the one hand, to benefit from the advantages deriving from the fact that a French researcher takes an interest in the life of Algerians, which arouses their amazement and satisfaction. On the other hand, the presence of an Algerian researcher, more familiar with the local culture, makes it possible to avoid inappropriate questions being asked.

Concerning gender relations, situations are identified in which the presence of a female researcher could cause resistance or, conversely, would be considered legitimate (as during interviews with women inside homes). The team coordinated by Bourdieu elaborates a series of strategies for interacting with the most challenging groups to interview, usually those with an intermediate level of cultural capital, who, by their social position, do not accept being considered the object of investigation: the members of the white-collar petty bourgeoisie or the teachers themselves are afraid of appearing stupid, they think that they know better than the researcher the pros and cons of the investigation and, in general, they perceive that they have something to lose during the interview. Furthermore, about access to the field and the relationship with the interviewees, it is highlighted how their trust can be earned differently in the rural (where it is more global and collective) and urban (partial and individual).

These methodological measures testify to the importance accorded to the ability to act of social agents, whose reactions must and can be foreseen to ensure the success of the research. It is a repertoire of “tricks of the trade” (Becker 2007) that impact how data is collected and interpreted and which all researchers use, often implicitly, but to which few pay the necessary attention. From an epistemological and methodological point of view, the study of work in Algeria, therefore, appears as the first stage of a coherent scientific path whose assumptions will be reaffirmed during Bourdieu’s career, developed and perfected starting above all in the 1990s by a line of research that continued and enriched the Bourdieusian reflective perspective in France (Beaud 1996; Chamboredon *et alii* 1994; Heilbron *et alii* 2004).



## THE DISCOVERY OF UNEMPLOYMENT: THE PROBLEMATIC ADAPTATION OF ALGERIANS TO THE MARKET ECONOMY

The first part of the book, entitled "Economic needs and cultural models," is devoted to studying the effects of the market economy on Algerian society. The development of a capitalist economic model is accelerated by forced population transfers (decided by the French army) that amplify immigration from the countryside to urban areas, leading to the formation of vast shantytowns on the fringes of major Algerian cities.

Consequently, at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, the vast majority of the Algerian population, without school diplomas and professional qualifications, lived in a situation of extreme precariousness, alternating periods of temporary employment (mainly in construction and public works), unemployment and makeshift jobs in trade and craftsmanship. Bourdieu highlights how social practices are conditioned by the threat posed by mass unemployment and the awareness of being part of a labor force exceeding the demand for labor.

However, adaptation to the capitalist labor market does not occur mechanically but starts from an economic ethos inherited from traditional rural culture. The set of attitudes towards work is therefore shaped by a culture typical of a poorly differentiated society, in which the distinction between the social and economic spheres is meaningless as the family represents at the same time the basic economic and social unit.

We add that in this first phase of his career, Bourdieu has not yet elaborated on the concept of habitus and uses that of ethos, demonstrating how his analyzes are greatly influenced by Max Weber's study on the relationship between Protestant ethics and the development of the capitalist economy. The continuity between the two concepts is quite evident, and this, therefore, allows us to re-evaluate the genesis of the concept of habitus in a non-Marxist key.

Based on the analysis of this economic ethos, Bourdieu emphasizes that in Algeria, work and economic activities, in general, lend themselves to a double interpretation: as a legacy of tradition and as an adaptation to the capitalist economy. Even if the traditional economic and cultural system is unraveling, the socialized individuals within this universe continue to possess its ethos: a global attitude towards work inconsistent with the new logic of the market economy. At the same time, most Algerians cannot acquire and internalize the cognitive and behavioral patterns of the modern economy. This step would require a complete conversion of the ethos, a creative reinvention made impossible by the situation of need. Subsistence is a constant source of concern and structures the daily life of a large part of Algerians, especially those who have poured into the cities. It effectively prevents that detachment, that intellectualistic break, as introduced by Bourdieu during his career (1997), is considered indispensable to developing a rational and harmonious life project with the new capitalist cultural and economic universe.

Indeed, due to mass unemployment, the work search is a ruthless, daily lottery for workers, a sort of Russian roulette. Their room for maneuver and their ability to influence the laws of the market is minimal. A symbolic image, still topical, could be that of the laborers in the movie *Bicycle Thieves* (*Ladri di biciclette*) crowded at dawn at the gates of construction sites hoping to snatch a working day or of the same laborers gathered in the squares of rural villages waiting for the arrival of a "caporale." According to Bourdieu, these Algerian workers are therefore aware that they are part of an army of supernumerary unemployed; they limit themselves to living for the day without being able to project themselves into the future by developing a professional and rational life plan.

The only form of protection they can aspire to depends on their social capital: relationships (cousin, friend, neighbor) can facilitate entry into the labor market. The networks of relationships intersect with a recruitment system based on cooptation. However, for those who are outside these networks, the burden of unemployment is more significant: there is no other choice than the daily search for work, experienced as a game of chance. Workers must abide by the rules imposed by supervisors, who often require bribes or a portion of the salary in exchange for temporary employment. In most cases of European origin, the supervisors are French, Italian, and Spanish, embodying in the eyes of the Algerians a social order perceived as the emanation of an evil divinity, as opposed to the merciful God of tradition.

On the other hand, the daily job search can also become routine, followed by a resigned, fatalistic or apathetic attitude. It also frequently leaves room for what Bourdieu defines as "simulacra of occupation." Typical of the ille-

gal trade sector, these are work activities that appear irrational when analyzed through the schemes of the modern economy. In the face of a very high number of working hours, often the whole day, they report poor earnings. They are mainly carried out by the unemployed, underclass, who do not have economic resources and prefer to engage in this activity rather than accept the unemployed status. What are the reasons for this choice?

Bourdieu stresses that this is not the simple transposition of a traditional cultural trait (unemployment did not exist and did not make sense in rural communities). In reality, in the new economic and cultural configuration, Algerians are aware that the meaning of their activity is different from what works in the traditional community had. In the urban context, the aim of itinerant trade should be to provide them with an income. Nevertheless, its meaning is symbolically mutilated precisely because the revenues are scarce. The purpose of these simulacra of activities is to demonstrate to their own eyes and those of the reference group that they are endowed with goodwill and that, in a certain sense, they are victims of an unfair and incomprehensible relentless labor market.

Finally, Bourdieu is more generally interested in workers' relationships with their work. On the one hand, it highlights how, especially the elderly, are nostalgic for paternalistic relationships, which are still widespread in small firms. The paternalistic, hierarchical relationships reproduce family ties, demanding from the worker a higher commitment, especially in terms of hours, but at the same time guaranteeing in the eyes of the Algerians a fair and humane treatment of the worker, based on that between father and son. The expansion of the market economy changes hierarchical relationships that become more anonymous and informal, making adaptation more difficult for Algerian workers.

On the other hand, the relationship with work appears to be of a purely instrumental type. Workers do not give practically importance to the content of the activity, to the working environment, to the quality of relations with colleagues but, aware of being privileged, as they are employed in a society afflicted by mass unemployment, they feel that they have no hope of finding better employment, not least because they have neither school diplomas nor professional qualifications. Therefore, the work is evaluated positively only based on salary, a source of income that allows them to survive in an urban market economy.

## THE FORMATION OF A MODERN ECONOMIC ETHOS

In the second part of the book, entitled "From traditionalism to the rationalization of behavior," Bourdieu describes the processes that can lead to a creative reinvention of the economic ethos, which is indispensable since traditional culture does not provide Algerians with the essential tools for adapting to a market economy. As we have seen, economic necessity, embodied by the threat of unemployment, does not guarantee the genesis of a new economic ethos. An attitude towards work congruent with the market economy should be accompanied by a new relationship with time, the future, all spheres of existence, and the propensity to rationally calculate the costs and benefits of one's actions, not only in a working environment.

Nonetheless, the vast majority of Algerian workers, trapped in a present fraught with anguish and tensions, cannot develop those "scholastic" reflexive faculties without which, according to Bourdieu, intellectualistic detachment from the current contingencies is impossible (Bourdieu 1997). Therefore, the research question that Bourdieu tries to answer is to identify the social conditions, paying particular attention to family income, from which a creative reinvention of the economic ethos can be achieved. According to Bourdieu, a medium-high income level and job security are the necessary conditions for detachment from the current situation and the creative reinvention of attitudes and behaviors.

The transalpine sociologist identifies four income categories (from lowest to highest). Based on statistical data collected through the administration of a questionnaire, he highlights how the different levels of income are associated with other uses of money by households (the poorest are used exclusively to cover subsistence costs), the choices of families regarding the participation of members in the labor market (only the father as the head of the family, or even the mother, children, etc.), to the types of employment carried out or sought, and, finally, in general, to the purpose attributed by households to economic activity.

Most Algerians earn a meager income, used for basic livelihoods. Members of these families, including women, have precarious and low-paying jobs. The goal of the work activity is to maximize the effort, especially in terms of working hours, which, however, does not correspond to an increase in income. Therefore, these workers cannot make that break with the contingencies of the present, which could result in a new relationship with work and the genesis of the modern economic ethos. The opposite case, which corresponds to a minority of Algerians, is that of permanent and skilled workers.

They are usually bilingual and have some qualifications. In the case of families of workers and technicians, often only the head of the family works. The woman usually takes care of the house. Economic activity is oriented towards maximizing effort, which, unlike in the underclass, corresponds to an increase in wages (this implies the ability to analyze and calculate one's use of time rationally). These trends are even more marked among middle-class families where both spouses work in well-paid or skilled professions that allow them to take advantage of substantial incomes more dedicated to consumption.

In any case, Bourdieu notes that a new economic ethos emerges among the families of skilled workers and technicians. They project themselves differently into the future, which is testified by the importance attributed to the education of children for whom rational projects are drawn up. Aspirations change profoundly: the higher one rises in the social hierarchy, the more realistic and congruent aspirations become, coherent with objective chances (Bourdieu 1974). On the contrary, the aspirations of the underclass oscillate between reverie and fatalistic resignation, as they are profoundly shaped by the contrast between the desire to escape from a precarious situation and the poor understanding of the social processes that would allow them to succeed (the functioning of the educational system and the skilled labor market).

Bourdieu, however, underlines how the new economic ethos, not generated within a dynamic of endogenous development, is nourished by the desire to imitate the French, whose consumption and lifestyles, or the outward signs of existence, are envied. For this reason, the new rational and modern economic ethos seems to be strengthened not so much by the internalization of the principles of the capitalist work ethic as by the contagion of consumer needs.

Indeed, achieving a new step in the social pyramid goes hand in hand with new needs like the one to live in a modern house (where only the nuclear family lives and not the extended family as in the slums). Consumption, however, is never isolated; in reality, according to Bourdieu, these spread in clusters: acquiring a modern home implies a series of new needs (furniture, appliances, expenses for water and electricity, etc.) Paradoxically, this new necessity frequently distances Algerian workers from the French way of life so coveted just when they thought they had finally achieved it.

## SOCIAL CLASSES, ECONOMICAL ETHOS, POLITICS

In the concluding chapter, Bourdieu sketched a fresco of the social classes in Algeria and analyzed the factors that may or may not favor rationalizing their behaviors and attitudes. After showing the link between income levels and the transformation of the economic ethos, Bourdieu highlights how this can happen more quickly if four conditions are met: 1) to be employed in a modern urban economic sector; 2) benefit from a permanent contract; 3) carry out an intellectual or otherwise qualified job; 4) have a school diploma or a professional qualification. A factor that can determine these conditions, but which can be positively influenced by them, is bilingualism, or the ability to speak correctly in Arabic or Tamazight and French.

Based on this conceptual grid, Bourdieu focuses his attention on the various social classes: the underclass, the proletariat, the white-collar petty bourgeoisie, the modern bourgeoisie and members of the liberal professions, and, finally, traders and artisans.

### *The underclass*

This social class includes the unemployed, precarious workers in the itinerant trade or crafts (the so-called *simulacra* of employment, par. 2), unskilled workers occasionally employed in the construction industry, and public works. They are a product of the modernization of agriculture and forced displacements of the population. These individuals have abandoned the community safety nets they could count on and, as we have seen, are concentrated on the edge of cities. Without school diplomas and professional qualifications, they live in poverty, which prevents them from conceiving a future project and acquiring the capitalist economic ethos.

### *The proletariat*

The proletariat is very small in terms of numbers, essentially comprising the skilled workers and technicians of the modern industrial sector. Urbanized for longer than the underclass, they represent an exception in a country where most of the population is illiterate; they are often bilingual. They have acquired the ability to respect the rational logic of the production processes of the capitalist firm. Although they are increasingly permeated by consumerism, their economic ethos is characterized by the ability to detach themselves from the present to conceptualize a potentially different but realistic future. According to Bourdieu, they constitute one of the social classes least influenced by populist demagogy.

### *The petty bourgeoisie*

The white-collar petty bourgeoisie of the modern sector (public or private) occupies a privileged and, at the same time, ambiguous position. It comprises office workers, accountants, minor public officials, etc. If, on the one hand, they benefit from stable and intellectual work, on the other, they suffer the daily domination of the Europeans they interact with. They, therefore, coexist with the *pieds-noirs* whose lifestyles and consumption styles they admire but with which they can only partially identify. So they refer to traditional culture externally and aesthetically (especially from the point of view of clothing), and they formally adhere to Islam.

Nonetheless, they publicly flaunt a sharing of Western values only to deny them within the home (especially concerning the role of women). This urban petty bourgeoisie is very active in politics and aims to take the place of the Europeans. Bourdieu speculates that the revolution carried out by this new ruling class will probably result in a bureaucratization of the state and the economy. This prediction will be confirmed by history, as demonstrated by the control of the state and the economy exercised for decades by the National Liberation Front (NLF).

### *The bourgeoisie*

Bourdieu does not systematically analyze what he calls the bourgeoisie (prominent entrepreneurs, senior officials, self-employed professionals, teachers). It limits itself to raising the problem of the possible contribution of these economic and cultural elites to the post-independence political process and wonders about their potential capacity, by a privileged social situation and a modern economic ethos, to contribute to a possible change focused on an alliance between the different social classes aimed at guaranteeing Algeria's inclusive social and economic development.

## THE MONOGRAPH ON ARTISANS

The economic sector that Bourdieu defines as traditional includes the social class of traders and artisans. Although firms can have very different sizes, this sector is characterized by a relatively homogeneous culture, con-



servative both from the point of view of values and economic ethos. The reflections on the link between work, economical ethos, and politics are deepened by Bourdieu in one of the annexes entitled "The artisans in Algeria." Bourdieu highlights how relationships in most artisan firms are paternalistic: the owner has often inherited the company from his father, some of the employees are part of the family, and the entrepreneur is, therefore, at the same time, the head of the family. Professional socialization occurs through an apprenticeship in the field, started at a young age, outside of school and training institutions. On the other hand, the company's value is challenging to translate into monetary terms. Economic relationships with customers and suppliers are entirely embedded in social structures (friends, family, neighborhoods, bonds of honor).

Despite this cultural homogeneity, it is possible to distinguish various categories of artisans, based on the level of income, social origins, or even the type of firm. According to Bourdieu, artisan firms are distributed on a continuum between two extreme poles: at one extreme, the artisans see their work as simply an activity to escape unemployment. They earn very little without being able to satisfy their needs (they are the so-called simulacra of occupation of which we have already spoken in par. 2). Market craftsmanship is positioned at the capitalist economy's frontier, at the other extreme. Between the two poles, the majority group is represented by subsistence crafts, whose primary function is to ensure the satisfaction of basic needs. The entrepreneurs who are part of this group cannot increase their profits and therefore cannot develop an investment program to expand and modernize the firm.

According to Bourdieu, subsistence craftsmanship is most closely linked to traditional society's economic and cultural structures. The complex mythical-ritual work management system governs traditional artistic craftsmanship. The social division of labor based on gender assigned women to produce dishes, clothes, carpets, agricultural tools, etc. The manufacture of handicraft products took place according to a specific calendar full of symbolic meanings, divorced from the principles of calculability and profitability.

This type of production could also give rise to small artisan firms, in this case, male-run, inserted in the commercial circuits of rural markets. It is profoundly in crisis due to the influx of manufacturing products. On the one hand, the younger generations move away from craftsmanship, similarly to what happened to agriculture, as they begin to evaluate it according to the schemes of the modern economy in terms of costs and benefits (in the face of a massive commitment above all in terms of working hours, the incomes are meager). On the other hand, traditional artistic crafts cannot compete with the prices of manufactured products.

The artisans, therefore, try to face the competition by reducing working times. Consequently, the quality of the products is lower. And they try to imitate the European taste yet. Bourdieu then analyzes the process that led to the invention of a baroque style, the result of the contact between civilizations, and the imitation of the showiest and gaudy European productions. Artisans are increasingly inspired by low-cost European products stocked on the covers of magazines and advertising posters. Paradoxically, it is not uncommon for them to imitate what were initially bad industrial imitations of their art, traditional artistic craftsmanship.

In any case, especially in the textile sector, the handicraft crisis is caused by the gradual abandonment of traditional clothing. One of the few exceptions is represented by jewelers, as the jewels worn by women (exchanged during ceremonies) continue to have significant social and symbolic importance. By the way, Bourdieu underlines that in the new universe of economic and cultural meanings, the social function of craftsmanship and its conception can no longer be the same even when projects to safeguard and enhance the traditional processes and products are hypothetical implemented.

It is essential to underline that due to urbanization in cities, crafts proliferate that do not require high professional and technological skills: butchers, bakers, blacksmiths, etc. These are trades practiced by immigrants from the countryside who can barely guarantee their livelihood. At the same time, there is a shortage of professionals in the technology sector, which demonstrates, according to Bourdieu, the difficulty for Algerians to work in the scientific-technological field. They were not socialized in childhood. That said, all subsistence artisans cannot organize and conceive their work based on the principles of the modern capitalist economy, such as the separation of company and family accounts.

Finally, we find frontier companies at the other end of the continuum, positioned on the border between the subsistence and market economies. The ambivalence of craftsmanship fully emerges in the case of entrepreneurs

who, while placing their products on the market, continue to convey a traditionalist image of the profession (which is valued by them as opposed to subordinate work employed) and professional relationships (paternalistic). Although these are often more prominent companies, entrepreneurs continue to confuse the family social sphere with the economic one of the company.

According to Bourdieu, these tensions demonstrate how economic conversion presupposes a global reinvention of the attitude towards the social world. If the availability of substantial capital constitutes the necessary condition for economic development, in that case, this cannot be accomplished without forming a true entrepreneurial spirit, that is, a radically new vision of work, the future, human relations, and the meaning of economic activity. A reflection that would probably have been useful also in post-war Italy when the development programs for the South were conceived.

## CONCLUSIONS

The critical analysis of *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* made it possible to highlight how some of the epistemological and methodological principles (reflexivity, the joint use of quantitative and qualitative methodologies) appear clear to Bourdieu's eyes during his first field research. This experience coincides with his conversion from philosophy to sociology. At the same time, in this book, it is possible to find a series of elements that allow us to reconstruct the genealogy of the concept of habitus, the root of which must be found more in Max Weber's study of Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism than in post-war sociology of Marxist inspiration. But what is the legacy of this book for the study of work in Bourdieu's sociology? Although Bourdieu has written little on Labor (1993; 1996), it is possible to individualize a line of research that runs through his entire corpus and is particularly lively at the beginning and the end of his career.

Bourdieu attributes a substantially positive role to work as an activity and an employment. On the one hand, he insists on the need to take into consideration for the sociological study of work not only the objective truth of the exploitation and extraction of added value in capitalist productive processes, but also the subjective dimension by which workers derive from their activity sources of satisfaction (linked to the ability to act in and on the surrounding natural and social environment, but also to interactions with colleagues, customers, users, or the set of social relationships within which the work takes place). These satisfactions are more significant when the workers' dispositions are congruent with the values, attitudes, and cultural orientations associated with a given occupation in a specific economic sector (Bourdieu 1996).

On the other hand, beyond this aspect linked to work as an activity, Bourdieu attributes great importance to employment. In contemporary Western societies, the State has helped to rebalance the asymmetry of wage labor by guaranteeing protections for workers and their families through the Welfare State. Work is a vector of social integration, a point to which Bourdieu has returned several times in the course of his career: in the Algerian research, which we have amply accounted for in this essay, in the preface to the French translation of Marienthal's monograph on the unemployed (1982), and in some of the chapters that make up the considerable volume *La misère du monde* (1993).

In Algeria between the 1950s and 1960s, Bourdieu underlined how stable and qualified wage labor constitutes an individual psychological armor that guarantees social integration. At the same time, it is an indispensable requirement for detaching oneself from contingencies of the present to bring about a creative transformation of one's habitus. In the absence of this stability, individuals live at the mercy of events, and this psychological and social disorder is a source of great suffering. Bourdieu puts forward the risks and consequences of unemployment: this is a problem addressed directly in Algeria but which will return in the last phase of his career in conjunction with a series of studies on unemployment, precariousness, and the suffering of a large segment of the population in France in the 1990s, shaken by large social protest movements, of which Bourdieu himself was one of the leading intellectuals, against the hegemony of neoliberal policies (Bourdieu 1993).

These studies have been realized by collaborating with work sociologists, such as Michel Pialoux (1996). They have given rise to a lively line of research that mobilizes some of the Bourdieusian conceptual categories, such as

that of habitus, to analyze the relationship with the work of workers struggling with the profound organizational transformations of factories (just-in-time, total quality, flexibility, atypical contracts, etc.) and social changes in territories increasingly afflicted by unemployment (Beaud, Pialoux 1999). In contrast to a deterministic interpretation of the concept of habitus, prevalent in the Italian sociology of work and economics, this research tradition demonstrates that the disagreement between workers' dispositions and work ethic, imposed in the world of work by these social, economic and organizational transformations, is an excellent starting point for deepening the analysis of the subjective experiences of workers.

More recently, starting from this research perspective, scholars studied the processes that can lead to union or political mobilizations (Lomba, Mischi 2013; Lomba 2013), also concerning the highly topical issue of health and occupational safety (Gollac, Volkoff 1996, 2006; Thébaud-Mony 2006). The attention to the workers' experience and their attitudes is, therefore, one of the main legacies of *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*: from a Bourdieusian perspective, it allows to analyze how workers live their employment condition (and unemployment), the creative reinvention processes that will enable to acquire new dispositions more congruent with the expectations of the labor market, and the same collective social strategies (political, trade union) which can lead to a transformation not only of habitus but also of the economic field itself.

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