

Fernando Antonio Pinheiro Filho

# The Renovation: Aspects of Pierre Bourdieu's Reception in Brazil

(doi: 10.2383/29574)

Sociologica (ISSN 1971-8853)

Fascicolo 1, gennaio-aprile 2009

**Ente di afferenza:**

()

Copyright © by Società editrice il Mulino, Bologna. Tutti i diritti sono riservati.  
Per altre informazioni si veda <https://www.rivisteweb.it>

## **Licenza d'uso**

Questo articolo è reso disponibile con licenza CC BY NC ND. Per altre informazioni si veda <https://www.rivisteweb.it/>

# The Renovation: Aspects of Pierre Bourdieu's Reception in Brazil

by Fernando Antonio Pinheiro Filho

doi: 10.2383/29574

Brazil was most likely introduced to Pierre Bourdieu at least a decade before Pierre Bourdieu was introduced to Brazil. When the first issue of the journal *L'Homme* published his review of *Les religions africaines au Brésil* by Roger Bastide, a lecturer at the University of São Paulo from 1938 to 1954, Bourdieu was a young graduated philosopher who had earned his stripes through ethnographic fieldwork in Algiers. As the work's subtitle would suggest, this was a "sociology of the interpenetration of civilizations" based on the analysis of the relationship between Catholicism, the main legacy of Portuguese colonialism, and the African cults. At a certain point in his review, Bourdieu credits Bastide with having found an analytical orientation that managed to avoid "the frustrating movement between an empty unity and an incoherent multiplicity" [Bourdieu 1961]. Further on, in dealing with the specific purpose of this text, i.e., the incorporation of Bourdieu's work into Brazilian social sciences, I will briefly return to the institutional configuration of which Bourdieu was a part. This first glimpse of the author would seem to authorize the reader already familiar with Bourdieu's oeuvre to see in this distinction – positioning analysis somewhere in between unifying theory, understood as empty if not placed at the service of multiple comprehension, and the multiplicity of the empirical world, incoherent without an operating logic to organize it – a possible foretaste of his own intellectual project. The opening here assayed is, therefore, justified, if we can understand it, as I believe we can, as the widest-reaching expression of the impact that Bourdieusian sociology had on Brazilian intellectual produc-

tion from its implementation in the 1970s. In this sense, this article will attempt to develop some of the most significant characteristics of the process that sees theoretical and methodological innovations produced at the centre of the intellectual world appropriated by the periphery, a condition that can confer, as we shall see, certain inventive and critical aspects insofar as distance helps allay the threat of orthodoxy.

This article aims to achieve this objective by combining various significant lines of approach anchored in careful avoidance of anachronisms. In other words, it will be important to approach the debate generated by Bourdieu's books in Brazil from their initial publication in Portuguese and to articulate this debate with the increasing accommodation of his thought in research. This will inspire thought in the various different disciplinary and thematic domains of the social sciences in which he has become a staple reference, whilst also revealing the renovating influx of his presence in Brazilian intellectual life.

## 1. Bourdieu for Brazilians

*La Réproduction*, from 1970, was the first book by Bourdieu to be translated into the Portuguese language, with editions brought out in 1972 by a publisher in Lisbon and another through Editora Zahar in Rio de Janeiro three years later. Taking the publication dates of the first Brazilian editions of Bourdieu's works as ground zero for his diffusion here gives us the following sequence:

“Campo intelectual e projeto criador” (Intellectual Field and Creation Project), an article from 1966 translated by Moacir Palmeira, following Bourdieu's seminars at École des Hautes Études em Sciences Sociales during the period from 1996 to 1969. It was included in issue 246 of “Les Temps Modernes” and published in book form in 1968 under the title *Problemas do Estruturalismo* (The Problems of Structuralism).

*A Economia da trocas simbólicas* (The Economy of Symbolic Exchange), a collection of articles organized and edited by Sergio Miceli in 1974.

*A Reprodução* (*Reproduction*), the translation from 1975 mentioned above.

*Bourdieu, Coleção Grandes Cientistas Sociais* (Bourdieu, Great Social Scientists Collection), a selection of articles organized by Renato Ortiz in 1983.

The sociologist Sergio Miceli,<sup>1</sup> born in Rio de Janeiro in 1945, had only recently completed his Master's thesis and come into contact with Bourdieu's work when

<sup>1</sup> PhD. in Sociology (Ecole des Hautes Etudes em Sciences Sociales, 1978); Full Professor, Universidade de São Paulo and editor Revista Tempo Social.

he prepared what would be one of the first collections on the author anywhere in the world. Further ahead, I will return to Miceli's central importance to the present theme. For the time being, it is suffice to mention the introductory text he wrote for that volume, which serves as a reading key to this collection of writings as they first came to the attention of the Brazilian public, with the special virtue of presenting a novelty produced abroad in such a manner as it made sense within another intellectual system.

Entitled "A força do sentido" (The Power of Meaning), Miceli's essay seeks to extract Bourdieusian concepts from the discussion of the impasses to which reliance on the classics of the discipline had driven the more relevant lines of modern sociological theory. As such, it organizes the debate at the heart of the structuralist fronts, referring them back to Durkheim and Marx. Besides this, it takes this as its base in establishing a connection between the notions of social fields and habitus as a possible way out of the deadlock between emphases on explanation through action or through structure when considered exclusive alternatives. Allied with this preliminary work, it also aligns the parallels and differences between the Weberian and Bourdieusian theories of domination. As a result, the text sheds light on one of the core foci of Bourdieu's endeavour, namely that of thinking symbolic systems in their entirety, without dissociating their functions of communication and domination, underscoring the touchstone of the economy of the concepts he presents, precisely that which affords an understanding of the furtive conversions of power into meaning. This strategy of exposition succeeded in constructing new nexuses for the discussion then in vogue among the Brazilian academic milieu, which mobilized, among others, the currents of Althusser, phenomenology and the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss; whilst also, on another point, fixing upon the well-rounded understanding of the classics they possessed as the platform from which to avoid the array of orientations available in conducting sociological research. Also in relation to this volume, which consisted of articles originally published from 1966 to 1971 on such topics as religion, education and the system for the production of cultural goods, it is important to remember that the organizer did most of the translations himself and consulted directly with the author throughout the editing process.

In 1983, a new collection of writings was published by Editora Atica in São Paulo – the prestigious "Coleção Grandes Cientistas Sociais," coordinated by Florestan Fernandes, whose institutional and scientific work at the University of São Paulo between 1954 (when he replaced Roger Bastide as the chair of Sociology I) and 1969 (when he was forced into retirement by the military dictatorship) made him the key figure in the establishment of sociology in Brazil. The series included Brazilian and foreign writers already accepted as classics (Marx, Durkheim and Weber, as well

as Comte, Simmel and Mauss) and contemporaries for whom inclusion was something of a sign of prestige. The volume on Bourdieu, for example, followed upon collections of the writings of Habermas and Mannheim. The book was coordinated by the sociologist Renato Ortiz,<sup>2</sup> who also penned the opening introductory study. This preface, written toward the end of the 1970s under the title “In Search of a Sociology of Practice,” fits into the same category of a reading guide as Miceli’s text, with which it shares certain properties, though at no loss to differences in perspective. Ortiz’ preface takes the same care to place Bourdieu’s work at the centre of the tradition and to develop his fundamental notions with clarity. On this aspect, it is the idea of practice as mediator between the objective and subjective dimensions of the real that anchors the reconstruction of the concepts of field and habitus, a shift exemplified by more recent texts such as “O costureiro e sua griffe” (The Tailor and his Label). Ortiz also takes a critical approach by questioning the ability of a sociology he saw as limited to explaining social reproduction to deal with the problem of historical change. Among the selected texts were extracts from the 1972 book *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

From the perspective of reading material, in the years that followed the Brazilian debut of Bourdieusian sociology, the academic public was able to draw from an expressive sample of his published works, accompanied by adequate interpretive support for the incorporation of this new interlocutor into the institutional bases of the intellectual debate. This was expressed through the increasingly frequent presence of tools of his devising on university courses in the humanities (especially the Social Sciences) and in research on the ground. Initially, Bourdieusian sociology was slow to feature on the curricula of academic subjects, with lecturers frequently commenting on their students’ initial reactions to him. One tendency was to read him as a prophet of ineluctable social reproduction and, therefore, as somehow shoring up an unjust order. In terms of research, however, things ran far more smoothly from the very beginning, as can be seen from a brief look at some specific cases.

## 2. Thinking Brazil Through Bourdieu

Given the sheer magnitude of the constellation of works produced in Brazil over the last few decades making use of the tools Bourdieu developed, and which I believe too vast for technical measurement, I will once again draw upon the pioneers in broaching this subject. They have been chosen not only for their precedence in

<sup>2</sup> PhD. in Sociology/Anthropology (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1975); Full Professor, Universidade de Campinas.

time, but because their work managed to coagulate groups of researchers interested in a collective conception of intellectual endeavour so attuned to Bourdieu himself, indeed an orientation highly consonant with some of the earliest academic projects of Brazilian sociology, like those of Donald Pierson and Florestan Fernandes. We shall therefore leave more general comment on his impact on other thematic areas and disciplines to the next section.

The year following Bourdieu's death, the journal *Awal*, *Cahiers d'Études Berbères*, brought out a dedicatory issue that contained an article by sociologist José Sérgio Leite Lopes,<sup>3</sup> in which he makes a brief overview of Bourdieu's contribution to two areas in which, according to the author, he had been most effective: ethnological studies and the analysis of intellectual life, anchoring each into its distinct institutional pole. The inclusion of a work of this kind in a tribute is itself highly expressive, because it represents the importance that Bourdieu's work had attained in Brazilian intellectual production, besides indirectly gauging the country's presence as a relevant marker for measuring the diffusion of his thought worldwide. However, this is not the only reason for mentioning this article. A succinct description of its argument has the merit of presenting his competent understanding of the phenomenon as something of a platform for the rest of our considerations.

Lopes, as I see it, rightly considers Bourdieu's input from the perspective of the internal need for renovation within the social sciences (expressly in the ethnology of the peasant and lower classes and in the sociology of culture), deeply linked to the urgency of the political struggle of the dictatorship years (1964-1984), besides looking to articulate the first research work conducted under his influence with the internal configuration of the Brazilian intellectual field. Two particular cases hold his attention: the group of intellectuals associated with the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro and the team formed by Sergio Miceli in São Paulo.

In relation to the Rio group, primacy is given to Moacir Palmeira's<sup>4</sup> doctoral thesis written in Paris in 1971, "*Latifundium et capitalisme au Brésil: lecture critique d'un débat.*" This thesis looks at the transformations occurring in capitalism in Brazil at the moment of inflection represented by the consolidation of the industrial hub and the reconfiguration of the social strata in course during the period 1960/1970, the interpretation of which was priority among the concert of themes then occupying Brazilian social sciences. In this arena, his originality lay in ceasing to focus on the reality through the direct lens of the object in order to problematize the reconstitu-

<sup>3</sup> PhD. in Anthropology (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 1986); Associate Professor, Museu Nacional da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>4</sup> PhD in Sociology (Université de Paris V, 1971); Full Professor, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro.

tion of the debate on the existence of feudalism in Brazil, a burning question in the literature on the national agrarian issue and one that proved capable of revealing the mechanisms of subordination and the fight for autonomy between the country's intellectual and political fields. Undoubtedly decisive in achieving this was his Bourdieusian orientation in framing the problem, as Palmeira himself remarks concerning the frequent incoherencies among the intellectuals immersed in the debate:

As soon as one accepts our way of positing the debate and the problems it raises – that one considers not the individual discourse (or sum of individual discourses), but the discourses of a whole intellectual field, where the “real” authors count for less than the positions they expound (which are generally less “assumed positions” than they are possible positions “imposed” by the structures of the intellectual field and “adopted” by this or that author on this or that point of his discourse) – the problem of coherency simply disappears. The question that arises is therefore to ascertain: 1) what is intended by such a discourse – which is less evident than one would think; 2) which mechanisms are set in motion to apprehend the object it sets for itself; and 3) what are the effective “results” it obtains” [Palmeira 1971, 93-94, translated by the author from the French original].

In these terms, it was possible to relate the discourse back to the structure of the field and reconnect it with the injunctions of the political interplay, thus evincing the interest that each position cloaks by imposing itself as a purely argumentative contestation of the adversary whilst simultaneously taking an effective stance. In other words, the thesis has the merit of bringing reflexivity to this type of study by unveiling what the theoretical dispute does through what it says, thus restoring to the intellectual his status as a political agent. This is due to the way in which it retranslates, into the terms and rules of his field, the debate that he analyzes from a position of apparent neutrality and through which he takes a position on the contemporary issues that these same rules make him see from a perspective at the same time absolutizing and disinterested. It is through an indirect enunciation that Palmeira's thesis reorganizes the filtering of the political element in the intellectual debate, rejecting the purely technical slant of a quarrel among specialists armed with their specific brands of knowledge on the existence of the feudal mode of production. This occurs at the same time as it discards a wholesale reduction of the theoretical position to the class interests at stake in the clash of the day. The idea of a field emerged as a solution to the need to find mediations between a history of ideas detached from the social world and their analysis as a pure reflection of it. Such a use would be accentuated by the São Paulo group and consolidate, over the coming decades, as a resource at the disposal of Brazilian researchers, whose empirical work had run up against the same problem.

The circulation of Moacir Palmeira's thesis in Brazil was curtailed by the fact that it was never published in book form. Nevertheless, upon his return to Brazil, Bourdieu's works gained greater diffusion among Palmeira's colleagues at the National Museum and a team formed that would press ahead with an offshoot from the "Comparative study of regional development" project, which focused on the life stories of the working peasantry. This continuation initially centred on agricultural workers, but was later extended to the urban labourer and industrial machinist, as well. According to José Sérgio Leite Lopes, a member of the team that also included Lygia Sigaud<sup>5</sup> and Afrânio Garcia,<sup>6</sup> as well as Palmeira himself, the findings suggested by this initiative throughout the 1970s, in which Bourdieu was a key reference, went beyond merely unveiling the mechanisms of exploitation to which these groups were subjected and actually evinced what he calls the modalities of the internalization of domination by the dominated, something achieved by paying close attention to small but meaningful aspects of their lifestyles identified during the fieldwork. As such, the notion of symbolic violence gave voice to social agents hitherto largely seen as the passive victims of a machine that corralled them into a state of alienation. It was this that led Lopes to consider the presence of Bourdieu a decisive factor in the renovation of fieldwork practice in ethnological studies and in differentiating between the Rio approach and the sociology conducted at the University of São Paulo, to which he attributed a whole other calibration between theory and empirical research. While for the São Paulo group more stock was placed on the theoretical discussion itself than on the research preceding it, for the Rio group, theory was a discrete means of measuring the vocalization of the agent as a component of the intelligibility of his situation.

It is important to clarify here that the project to which Lopes refers, organized by the anthropologists Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira<sup>7</sup> and David Maybury-Lewis, began in 1968, thanks to support from the Ford Foundation, and inaugurated the National Museum's Post-graduation Programme in Social Anthropology, formally regulated three years later. In its original inception, the programme focus was on indigenous societies, and it was only with the hiring of Moacir Palmeira and Lygia Sygaud that the lens widened to include the peasantry and other groups mentioned by Lopes. And, if indeed Bourdieu's work provided research in this field and theses written

<sup>5</sup> PhD. in Anthropology (Universidade de São Paulo, 1977); Full Professor, Museu Nacional da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>6</sup> PhD. in Anthropology (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 1983); Maître de Conférence, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.

<sup>7</sup> PhD. in Sociology (Universidade de São Paulo, 1966); Full professor, Universidade de Brasília – deceased in 2006.



under that orientation with tools that were put to effective use, the same cannot be said for the ethnology of indigenous societies, whether in the tradition of the Museum itself (in which Roberto da Matta<sup>8</sup> stands out as the intellectual leader), or in the wider tradition of Brazilian anthropology, which since its very implementation boasted a stock of accumulated knowledge on indigenous groups that constitutes one of the high points of its contribution. If we consider that this area of ethnology never went into decline (despite occasional theoretical and political turbulence), and that Bourdieu's influence within it is far more diffuse, then we are led to temper the cognomen of 'renewer' of Brazilian ethnology in the total sense in which Lopes attributes it to Bourdieu, without prejudging the impact of his interventions on many debates in the area.

Continuing with Lopes' overview, I believe it necessary to introduce certain nuances inherent to the distinction he draws between the work produced in Rio and that of São Paulo. If there is no doubt as to Bourdieu's importance to the intellectual operation carried out by the group to which Lopes belongs, notably as a brace for that type of investment in fieldwork, drawing the distinction with the work produced in São Paulo at precisely this juncture is to place too much stock in the role of self-sustaining theory as a characteristic of the São Paulo school. For reasons tied to with the history of social sciences in São Paulo, the implantation of Bourdieu's work that occurred there during this same period encountered an intellectual environment that was far more favourable to a stable insertion.

In fact, the institutional existence of social sciences in São Paulo dates back to the very foundation of the University of São Paulo and the Free School of Sociology and Politics, both in the 1930s, due to the initiative of sectors of the elite interested in forming a corps of specialized directors. From the very beginning it could count on the participation of various foreign professors (mostly French), who were not only quick to instil a professional ethic and set of organizational criteria bound by academic principles, but who also, from the perspective of a work style, extolled the virtues of empirical research, especially the North-Americans connected with the School of Sociology and Politics, the driving force behind studies of community. In contrast, social sciences in Rio de Janeiro encountered far greater difficulty in gaining autonomy, as the institutions there were co-opted by organs of the State from their very inception, which saw them as instruments of government policy. In this respect, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira's considerations marking the 20th-anniversary of the

<sup>8</sup> PhD. in Anthropology (Harvard University, 1971); Full Professor, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

National Museum's Post-graduate Programme in Social Anthropology are particularly eloquent:

Let me begin by saying that the idea to create the programme formed over the course of a personal intellectual life project, in an attempt to transplant to Rio de Janeiro something of my academic experience from the early 50s at the University of São Paulo (...) Today, I can clearly see that, deep down in my spirit, there was one core objective: to form anthropologists endowed with a standard of intellectual work analogous to that which I had experienced during my student years at USP, (...) so heavily influenced by professors from the Mission Française and structured along *normalien* lines [Cardoso de Oliveira 1988; 38]

Oliveira's account coincides with Sergio Miceli's analysis of what was going on in the social sciences during the 1940s and 1950s:

In reality, the only academic life anyway close to the European and North-American acceptance was at the University of São Paulo, by which I mean the permanent professional activity of a staff of lecturers and researchers equipped to make the university the centre of their personal lives (emotional and professional), the venue of their accomplishments, their priority space of sociability, the last horizon of their expectations of social improvement, the decisive stage for recognition of their scientific and intellectual merit [Miceli 2001b, 107].

This brief digression on issues that involve the process of the institutionalization of social sciences in Brazil serves to direct attention to the conditions in which Bourdieu's work was received in São Paulo. Perhaps more important than the coincidence of the views of one expressing his experience in institutional enterprise and another analyzing the finer details of this general process – in direct consonance, we might add, with the Bourdieusian toolkit, as we shall see in the following section – is the air of family that prevails between them and the very ideal of the professional scientist lived by Bourdieu. This becomes all the clearer if we associate the abovementioned differentials of USP with a tradition of valuing the kind of empirical fieldwork (albeit always theoretically oriented) done on the various research projects that over the decades consolidated a standard of excellence. On the other hand, the USP-ian tradition greatly privileged the theme of the nation's modernization in all its ramifications (folklore, racial prejudice, development, to mention just a few striking examples), thanks to a hierarchy of relevance stringently controlled by Florestan Fernandes and in which there was little room for studies in the area of culture – in clear contrast with the generation that preceded professional sociology, with its essayistic style, whose theme of choice was the formation of nationhood. With the end of Roger Bastide's tenure in the 1950s, which had opened up lines of research into Brazilian poetry and baroque art, among other themes, the first generation of

his students sought refuge in other departments of the university. The most telling event in this respect was Antonio Candido's move from sociology at USP to literature at the São Paulo State University in 1958, followed by a return to USP as professor of Literary Theory and Compared Literature in 1961, whereupon he would become a key reference in the study of Brazilian literature, even if his work always retained vestiges of his time in sociology. According to Sergio Miceli<sup>9</sup> the generation of sociologists by graduation with an interest in the arts and the cultural industry found itself with nowhere to turn, seen as most of their themes found no instigating forum for discussion in their own field, while the only available alternative did not cater to the strictly sociological aspects, entirely concentrated as it was on a culturalist essayism that readily found venues of expression both inside and outside of the university, in literary journals and culture magazines. As such, Bourdieu's oeuvre filled a space long left vacant, coming into play at precisely the moment in which culture became once more a sociological concern (initially the cultural industry, a theme related to the earlier agenda, followed by the Brazilian intellectual system itself) and serving as a reference that could vent long-repressed energies while arming them for a clash with academic censors intent on jealously guarding the imperative of erecting a science rigorous in its observance of social facts but inflexible as to the problems it deemed worthy of such careful attention. Miceli also argues that the book *Le métier de sociologue* played a pivotal role in this context by offering the possibility of a new engagement in the work of empirical prospecting and return reflection.

One way or another, from the 1970s a general change in the academic field – the nationalization of post-graduate studies, growing balance between sociology, anthropology and political science, greater international circulation for young researchers and a higher level of specialization – was expressed in thematic dispersion. It was in this direction that the USP-based ethos of the lecturer/researcher expanded in collusion with the National Museum project, to mention only those institutions of which we have spoken, becoming a national reference around which would flare various clashes concerning the definition of the legitimate style of intellectual activity. The triggering of this kind of debate is itself dependent on a more advanced stage of autonomization of the intellectual field, which allows it to think itself for itself. In Brazil, this step was first taken from the Bourdieusian perspective in the work of Sergio Miceli.

Under Bourdieu's guidance in Paris in 1979, Miceli published his doctoral thesis *Intellectuals of the Ruling Class in Brazil* (1920-1945), which focused on the intellectual trajectories of the writers of the period, unveiling their relationships with

<sup>9</sup> In conversation with the author in May 2008. The next reference idem.

the ruling elites, central to the propulsion of their careers, normally marked from the outset by the negative inheritance of the social and economic decline of their families. The book constituted an innovative way of socially rooting an activity that represents itself as solely based on immanent imperatives and brought into relief significant details, such as corporal stigmas and gender relations, among other of the agents' building blocks. Of particular note is that the analysis, which Bourdieu followed closely, dispenses with the notion of field. In this respect, it is relevant to quote from an interview with the author in which he was urged to quantify the importance of sociability as the nucleus of his reflection:

Recently, when the book was republished (...) I tried to explain that the word *field* didn't even appear in the thesis. It's not a central concept, it does not articulate anything, it doesn't organize the social space [in Brazil], which is organized by other things. What I wanted to find out by analyzing the trajectories and sociability of the group how a man derives friendship, political leanings and amorous preferences. It's a turbulence of emotions, passions, reasonings, judgements, preferences. In French and European society, there is a field, because the cultural life there is very autonomized, independent and dense [in Bastos *et al.* 2006, 231]

In this manner Miceli retained the nuclear concern of Bourdieu's sociology to seek out connections between practices and their circumstances, as already mentioned indirectly on the theoretical level, as we have seen, but also strove to find a solution of his own that could avoid *vulgata* and refrain from the mechanical application of a model that was incongruent to the specific historical conditions with which he was dealing – a precaution not always followed by Brazilian sociology, which, as of this seminal work, would appropriate the lexicon of Bourdieu and Miceli himself when dealing with similar themes. The author understands the book as a kind of methodological summula of everything that he would go on to produce, such as the studies on the Catholic ecclesiastical elite, literary modernism and ruling class portraiture, in the way it grasped the meaning of the sources from the social conditions that determine the manner in which they present themselves and the perception of the importance of the institutional dimension, as well as its treatment of sexuality and the pattern of sociability to which I have already alluded. The fact that the analysis resulted in a disenchanted vision of the intellectual world that ran against the grain of the laudatory discourses, exalting the redemptive meaning of the "mission" as its protagonists lived it, lies at the root of the controversy it sparked. Another point of affinity with the practice of science as Bourdieu saw it is the resistance this type of sociology inspires through his effect of objectification. This inaugural analysis of intellectual life found continuity in the form of a collective project on the research programme "History of the social sciences in Brazil," which Miceli directed at the

São Paulo State Institute of Economic, Social and Political Studies (Idesp) – of which he was one of the founders –, and which resulted in a two-volume publication (1989 and 2002). Consisting of contributions from professionals from various areas (including the anthropologists Lilia Schwarcz,<sup>10</sup> Fernanda Peixoto<sup>11</sup> and Heloísa Pontes,<sup>12</sup> the sociologist Maria Arminda do Nascimento Arruda<sup>13</sup> and the political scientists Fernando Limongi<sup>14</sup> and Maria Hermínia Tavares de Almeida<sup>15</sup>), the team produced a sociology of the social sciences that became a work of reference thanks to its careful disentanglement of institutional profiles, standards of professionalization in academic activity, the generation clashes and the groups' internal logics of sociability. Despite the heterogeneity of the formation of the participants, Bourdieu's analyses on the intellectual field contributed greatly to mounting the backbone of the work's general structure, which, paraphrasing Bourdieu, crystallizes the idea of a sociology of producers as an integrative part of the regional sociologies they produce.

### 3. Overview and Perspectives

At the present time, Bourdieu is one of the most often cited authors in the area of the humanities in Brazil (especially in sociology), a constant presence on undergraduate and post-graduate reading lists and bibliographies in the social sciences, the intellectual template for countless research projects on a range of themes, and an indispensable reference in theoretical and methodological debates. In addition to the various reasons already given for this is the growing number of translations of his books that have come out over the last few decades (with only a few exceptions, usually only a short time after the publication of the French originals – as can be seen from the bibliography), the heavy flow of Brazilians into institutions predicated upon his work and the steady stream of Bourdieusian intellectuals into Brazil, the adoption of his weaponry against neo-liberal hegemony by factions of the Left, and the presence of many of his disciples in key positions in the Brazilian intellectual milieu (including

<sup>10</sup> PhD. in Anthropology (Universidade de São Paulo, 1993); Full Professor, Universidade de São Paulo.

<sup>11</sup> PhD. in Anthropology (Universidade de São Paulo, 1998); Assistant Professor, Universidade de São Paulo.

<sup>12</sup> PhD. in Sociology (Universidade de São Paulo, 1996); Associate Professor, Universidade de Campinas.

<sup>13</sup> PhD. in Sociology (Universidade de São Paulo, 1986); Full Professor, Universidade de São Paulo.

<sup>14</sup> PhD. in Political Sciences (University of Chicago, 1993); Full Professor, Universidade de São Paulo.

<sup>15</sup> PhD. in Political Sciences (Universidade de São Paulo, 1979); Full Professor Universidade de São Paulo.

directorial positions). In the face of this panorama, it would be inaccurate to limit his influence to the disciplinary and thematic domains already mentioned, though it is indeed the sociology of culture in the broad sense in which it has flourished most powerfully in Brazilian thought. On the other hand, even there Bourdieu is far from laying down a new hegemonic tradition (there is strong resistance to him from currents that privilege the internal analysis of works, despite his best efforts to overcome this internal/external dichotomy), whether it is due to his many detractors here, or because those who assimilated his instruments most carefully tend not to wield them as ready-made concepts capable of engendering a new orthodoxy. And so, to close this analysis, I believe it might be apt to make brief mention of the impact he has had on other thematic areas, the resistance he has provoked and the possibilities left to be explored.

His first works to circulate in Brazil had enormous impact on educational studies, territory dominated by sociology in the Brazilian social sciences, with huge prestige throughout the 1970s. However, if Bourdieu's emphasis on the reproductive mechanism inherent to the educational institution offered new lines of exploration to the researcher, it also incurred the wrath of pedagogues who felt threatened in their belief in the libertarian powers of the school. After a swift decline in the following decade, the more recent return to these studies could, in my view, re-appropriate Bourdieu's contribution in less ballistic fashion. The same could be said of those factions of anthropology that are somewhat reticent about the aspects of Bourdieu's work that address their core concerns. Beyond the use of concepts, as I see it, methodological practice would stand to gain a lot should reflection on the dilemma of ethnological work be accompanied by a broader incorporation of the potentialities inherent to the notion of *habitus*, in all of its dimensions – dispositional, distributive, categorical –, whose neglect all too often leads to the notion's ill-fame as excessively rigid and unprofitable. Likewise, in the domain of religion, where there is a constant turnout of quality works of a sociological or anthropological nature, there have been many analyses of the religious field, though the term itself has been incorporated as a kind of synonym for the conjunct of religious institutions. In an area of such rapid transformation, fuelled by the dynamic of fierce competition that has taken and increasingly-accentuated hold among the various faiths in recent decades, perhaps all of the possibilities of constructing the problem more rigorously from the concept of field have yet to be explored.

Note that I have mentioned, as examples, only a handful of thematic areas and disciplines in which Bourdieu has made his presence felt. According to Sergio Miceli<sup>16</sup> the multiplicity of Bourdieu's intellectual interests and the plasticity of his interpretive

<sup>16</sup> Also in the conversation cited above.

schemes, which encompass the most varied dimensions of social experience, lie at the root of the resistance he sparks. Indeed, against a backdrop of institutions not long formed and struggling to maintain their autonomy in the face of pressures coming from all sides (especially of a political and economic nature), the internal competition between disciplines makes them particularly guarded when it comes to their identities and prone to reject what they see as alien systems. In other words, an enterprise like that of Bourdieu, which transits amongst so many different disciplines, risks running into obstacles in all areas in which he is taken as a heretic who has come to challenge the native prophets, as if the historically drawn disciplinary borders amounted to real and non-traversable epistemological schisms. In this respect, the conditions of his reception were favourable insofar as they provided powerful means by which to consider the scientific field at a time in which it was affirming its standard of professionalization, but this synergy was also the source of the unreasoning rejections of which he was a target.

In summary, if Bourdieu managed to constitute a school in Brazil, it then is more a school of activity than a school of thought, taking loan of Howard Becker's words to differentiate a blend of similar ideas that gain unity from the external factor of groups that, in effect, work collectively, even with diverse internal theoretical guidance. Mentioning Becker also aids in better assessing, through comparison, the space occupied by Bourdieu: author of common thematic interests and theoretical solutions close to Bourdieu, Becker has not achieved the same level of diffusion, despite his visits to Brazil to present courses and lectures in the Social Anthropology Graduate Program of the National Museum, thanks to his connection with Gilberto Velho. If Becker has not given rise to a school by now in none of the meanings he describes, this is much less due to the quality of his work than to factors such as the relative circumscription of his reception into Gilberto Velho's group, and thus into the domain of urban anthropology – notably into the studies of divergence, much in vogue during the 1970s –, and such as the absence of translation of important works into Portuguese. The most expressive example may be the book *Art Worlds*, published in 1982: in spite of it being prior to Bourdieu's most significant work in art sociology, the impregnation in this area of study tends to lead to the slightly biased reading of Becker as an extension of Bourdieu, as if he were an alternative or a complement.

For the purposes of this presentation, it would be pointless to expand on the reservations Bourdieu roused. Indeed, there would appear to have been nothing specifically Brazilian about his having encountered so many adversaries keen to delineate in argumentation what they saw to be his scope and limitations, not to mention the mere detractors, less conversant with the rules of intellectual discussion. One way or another, there can be no doubt as to the renovating power of his contribution,

which has spread most diffusely even through sundry refractory fields. Moreover, confronted with his way of practicing science, those same fields can no longer shirk making the methodically oriented examination of the empirical world an end of their activity, as opposed to a means of proving a ready-made theory; nor can they neglect the consequences of the reality of the symbolic dimension of the real.

## Bibliography

### Works by Bourdieu Published in Brazil (French titles and dates in brackets)

- 1974 *A economia das trocas simbólicas*. Sergio Miceli (ed.). São Paulo: Perspectiva.
- 1975 *A reprodução. Elementos para uma teoria do sistema de ensino*. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves. [*La reproduction – éléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement*, 1970].
- 1979 *O desencantamento do mundo: estruturas econômicas e estruturas temporais*. São Paulo: Perspectiva. [*Algérie 60, structures économiques et structures temporelles*, 1977].
- 1983 *Pierre Bourdieu: Sociologia*. Renato Ortiz (ed.). São Paulo: Ática.
- 1983 *Questões de sociologia*. Rio de Janeiro: Marco Zero. [*Questions de sociologie*, 1981].
- 1988 *Lições de aula*. São Paulo: Ática. [*Leçon sur la leçon*, 1982].
- 1989 *O poder simbólico*. F. Tomaz (ed.). Lisboa/Rio de Janeiro: Difel/Bertrand Brasil.
- 1989 *Escritos de educação*. M.A. Nogueira e A. Catani (eds.). Petrópolis: Vozes.
- 1989 *Ontologia política de Martin Heidegger*. Campinas: Papirus. [*L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger*, 1988].
- 1990 *Coisas ditas*. São Paulo: Brasiliense. [*Choses dites*, 1987].
- 1995 *Livre-troca. Diálogos entre ciência e arte*. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil. [*Libre-échange*, 1993].
- 1996 *A economia das trocas linguísticas. O que falar quer dizer*. São Paulo: Edusp. [*Ce que parler veut dire. L'économie des échanges linguistiques*, 1982].
- 1996 *Razões práticas. Sobre a teoria da ação*. São Paulo: Papirus. [*Raisons pratiques. Sur la théorie de l'action*, 1994].
- 1996 *As regras da arte*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras. [*Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, 1992].
- 1997 *A miséria do mundo*. Petrópolis: Vozes. [*La misère du monde*, 1993].
- 1997 *Sobre a televisão*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar. [*Sur la télévision*, 1996].
- 1997 *Meditações pascalianas*. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil. [*Méditations pascaliennes*, 1997].
- 1998 *Contrafogos. Táticas para enfrentar a invasão neoliberal*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar. [*Contre-feux*, 1998].
- 1999 *A dominação masculina*. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil. [*La domination masculine*, 1998].
- 2000 *O campo econômico. A dimensão simbólica da dominação*. D. Lins (ed.). Campinas: Papirus.
- 2001 *Contrafogos 2. por um movimento social europeu*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar. [*Contre-feux 2. Pour un mouvement social européen*, 2001].
- 2002 *A profissão de sociólogo – preliminares epistemológicas*. Petrópolis: Vozes. [*Le métier de sociologue. Préleables épistémologiques*, 1967].
- 2002 *A produção da crença*. São Paulo: Zouk.



- 2003 *O amor pela arte. Os museus de arte na Europa e seu público.* São Paulo: Edusp/Zouk. [L'amour de l'art, les musées d'art et leur public, 1966].
- 2003 *Os usos sociais da ciência – por uma sociologia clínica do campo científico.* São Paulo: Editora Unesp. [Les usages sociaux de la science, 1997].
- 2007 *A distinção. Crítica social do julgamento.* São Paulo: Edusp/Zouk. [La distinction – critique sociale du jugement, 1979].

## Reference works

Bourdieu, P.

- 1961 “Review of Bastide, R., ‘Les religions africaines au Brésil.’ Paris: P.U.F., 1960.” *L’Homme, Revue française d’anthropologie*, 1.

Cardoso de Oliveira, R.

- 1988 “Depoimento: rememorando um programa,” cited in Corrêa, M., “A Antropologia no Brasil (1960-1980),” in *História das ciências sociais no Brasil*, vol. 2., edited by S. Miceli. São Paulo: editora Sumaré, 1995.

Bastos, E.R., Abrucio, F., Loureiro, M.R. and Rego, J.M. (eds)

- 2006 *Conversas com sociólogos brasileiros.* São Paulo: Editora 34.

Becker, H.

- 1982 *Art Worlds.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bouveresse, J.

- 2003 *Bourdieu, savant et politique.* Marseille: Agone.

Delsaut, Y. and Rivière, M-C.

- 2002 *Bibliographie des travaux de Pierre Bourdieu.* Pantin: Le Temps des Cerises.

Heinich, N.

- 2007 *Pourquoi Bourdieu.* Paris: Gallimard.

Jackson, L.C.

- 2002 *A tradição esquecida: “Os parceiros do Rio Bonito e a sociologia de Antonio Candido.”* Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG.

Lahire, B. (ed.)

- 2001 *Le travail sociologique de Pierre Bourdieu.* Paris: La Découverte.

Lopes, J.S.L.

- 2003 “Pierre Bourdieu et le renouveau des enquêtes ethnologiques et sociologiques au Brésil.” *Awal, Cahiers d’Études Berbères*: 27-28.

Loyola, M.A.

- 2002 *Pierre Bourdieu entrevistado por Maria Andréa Loyola.* Rio de Janeiro: Editora Uerj.

Miceli, S.

- 2001a *Intelectuais à brasileira.* São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

- 2001b “Condicionantes do desenvolvimento das Ciências Sociais.” In *História das ciências sociais no Brasil*, edited by S. Miceli. São Paulo: Editora Sumaré.

Miceli, S. (ed.)

1995 *História das Ciências Sociais no Brasil*, vol. 2. São Paulo: Ed. Sumaré.

2001 *História das Ciências Sociais no Brasil*, vol. 1. São Paulo: Ed. Sumaré.

2002 *O que ler na ciência social brasileira*. São Paulo: Editora Sumaré/Anpocs/Capes.

Palmeira, M.

1971 “Latifundium et capitalisme au Brésil: lecture critique d’un débat.” Thèse de 3e Cycle présentée à la faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de L’Université de Paris (mimeo).

Peixoto, F.A.

2000 *Diálogos brasileiros: uma análise da obra de Roger Bastide*. São Paulo: Edusp/Fapesp.

Pontes, H.

1998 *Destinos Mistos: os críticos do grupo Clima em São Paulo (1940-1968)*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

## **The Renovation: Aspects of Pierre Bourdieu's Reception in Brazil**

---

**Abstract:** In the past few decades, the work of Pierre Bourdieu has become an important reference for research in several areas of the human sciences in Brazil. This article intends to follow the steps on the local implementation of his ideas, indicating some reasons of their scope and limits, and pointing out his work into a Brazilian intellectual field.

---

**Keywords:** *Bourdieu, sociology, academic field, intellectuals, social sciences in Brazil.*

---

**Fernando Antonio Pinheiro Filho** was born in São Paulo (Brazil) in 1965. In 2003 he obtained his Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Sao Paulo. Since 2005 he is Professor in the Department of Sociology of the same institution, with researches in the areas of sociology of culture (particularly visual arts and literature) and sociological theory. Among other works, he is the author of the book *Lasar Segall: art in society* (Sao Paulo, Cosac Naify Eds., 2008).