# THE NEW PARADIGMS OF THE INTELLECTUALS IN CULTURAL THEORIES & THE PARADIGM OF INTELLECTUALS IN ROMANIA (AS A SYMPTOM OF THE CENTRAL & EAST-EUROPEAN SITUATION)

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*Abstract*

The recent studies in the sociology of culture are focusing, more then ever, on the idea of the power relations. My paper will present, from this point of view, some of the new theories regarding the sociology of culture, especially the theory of the French post-structural sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. The paper presents his theory about the cultural field and the relations of power between the actors of the cultural field, with a close look on the particularities of the intellectual situation. In the final part of my paper I will focus on the current situation of the paradigm of intellectuals in Romania, as a symptom of the Central and East-European situation in general.

***Key words:*** *sociology of culture, intellectuals, habitus, field, power.*

## 1. Introduction. New theories in sociology and Central and East-Europe situation

The recent studies in sociology of culture are focusing, more then ever, on the idea of the power relations. My paper will present, from this point of view, some of the new theories regarding sociology of culture, especially the theory of the French post-structural sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. I will present his theory about the cultural field and the relations of power between the actors of the cultural field, with a close look on the particularities of the intellectual situation. In the final part of my paper I will focus on the current situation of the paradigm of intellectuals in Romania, as a symptom of the Central and East-European situation in general. The paradigm of intellectuals was, and still is, a very difficult problem to discuss, especially regarding the communist period, because

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this social category was one of the most persecuted during the dictatorship regimes in Central and East-European countries. The intellectuals, more than other categories, were caught in the middle quite often, between social duties and personal thoughts and feelings, between official ideology of the communist regimes and the solid need to speak against it, between official censorship and the freedom of expression. They also produced the change into the European society, being the leading group of change.

This wave of change was possible because of the general change of mentalities after the Second World War. The new generation of thinkers, philosophers and scholars within humanities, realized that one of the major problems with the European world before the Second World War was the construction of the European societies. The so-called "Euro-center thinking" – putting Europe in the center of the world – was already an old concept even at the beginning of the 20th century. The massive industrialization of America, the rise of Japan made possible a new era in the international relations of power. The major European mistake was the self-conscious idea, who led to a depreciation of other social systems, not European. As a result, after the War, European social philosophy changed completely because philosophers felt that it had failed them. So, the most important questions for European thinkers became: what is a society, what are its systems, how does the power relations work, and what are the social and cultural paradigms who lead the society.

Two major ideas were established after the Second World War in Europe: first, the need to change the role of the intellectuals in the social system, giving them a more important, even a leading role in the social system, in order to prevent the ideological horrors that appeared during the past war; second, and as a consequence of the first idea, how to exercise influence in the society in a different manner than before.

My paper will present two theories about the society and cultural system: the first emerged from the structural theories of the `60-`70s and the second, more recent, is called post-structural or deconstructionist theory, and is based on the cultural evaluation of the social system.

The structural theory, in the same way as the post-structural theory, is centered on the concept of power. The structural accent goes on the scientific evaluation of the power criteria in the society, focusing on theoretical discourses about power as a general idea, regarding all the general possibilities; the post-structural accent goes on the cultural position of power in society.

Both theories define power relations as a process. The main difference between those two theories is that, in the structural theories power is an objective scientific process of accumulations, mainly economical ones, with a strong ideological reflection of this social effect, and in the post-structural theories the power is defined as a subjective process of influence, guided by leading personalities, mainly. My evaluation of the post-totalitarian cultural

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system in Romania will focus on the second mode of defining power relations, the main reason for my option being the fact that, after the fall of the totalitarian communist regime, Romanian cultural system had a new beginning in the construction of its social system, mainly concentrated on the civic sense of the individuality. This was the answer of the society after the so-called objective scientific revolution of communism, who was not counting on the individuality, but on its massive suppression. This situation is more relevant within the post-structural way of defining a cultural paradigm, as I will try to show. As a fact, intellectuals played a major role in this construction, being the subjective factors of the construction.

But, in socio-cultural theories of the society, intellectuals did not always play the main role in establishing power relations in society. In the neo-Marxist theories, proletarians or the working class, or, more generally, the economic criteria played the major role. Also, I found that those new cultural theories could be easily applied to the cultural realities in Romania, after the fall of communism, as a symptom of the Central and East-European situation in general. It is quite interesting for the Central and East-European studies to identify new ways to analyze the socio-cultural realities after the fall of communism.

## 2. Some aspects of the definition of society in neo-Marxist and structural theories. The role of intellectuals

In the field of the sociology of culture, the theory of power relations plays an important role. In order to introduce these new theories, first we have to take a look at the Marxist theories. Also, these Marxist theories have played a very important role in the cultural system during the communist time in Central and East-Europe. I want to underline the importance of presenting these theories, because this could help our understanding of the social and cultural realities in Central and East-Europe.

The concept of power relations in the sociology discourse has its origins in the Marxist theory of the society from Marx's "The Capital" (1867). Marx believed that he could study history and society scientifically and discern the problems of history and the resulting outcome of the social conflicts in the society. Karl Marx was also the first one to discuss the structure of the society based on power relations. In Marxist theory power means, first of all, a struggle for power between social classes: proletarians against bourgeois. The Marxist theory introduced the economic criteria into the social discourse to separate and evaluate the social categories. The segregation between social categories is a direct result of the capitalist mode of production, in Marxist terms. The social categories who should win the power struggle - the proletarians - could do this

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only by force and revolution, as a consequence of the economic and social inequity between those social categories. The relations of power, as presented in the Marxist theories, are solved by force, and force means revolution. The revolution is a social explosion as a consequence of the social implosion of a social order.

As a fact, this general sociological idea of the relations of power is not completely new, as it follows a clear line in the early `60 and `70s with the theories of structuralist philosophy. Theories proposed by thinkers, philosophers and sociologists like Claude Levy Strauss, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricoeur established a new concept in the contemporary thinking, not only in the sociology of culture, but also in the field of humanities, generally speaking. At the same time, most of those theories followed the Marxist way, concerning especially the definition of society as a struggle for power, but they changed the way in which they defined the system of the society. The most important change relays in the definition of the change in society. In Karl Marx theory, change means first of all social and political revolution, using force. In those theories change appears more like a continuation of the previous form of the society.

### *2.1. Michel Foucault theory of episteme vs. Thomas Kuhn theory of paradigm*

For most of the sociological theories, intellectuals played a key-role in assuring the metamorphosis of a society, meaning bringing useful and necessary change into the society. In structural definitions, especially those proposed by Michel Foucault in his books "The Order of Thinks" (1966) or "The Archaeology of Knowledge" (1969) "Discipline and Punish" (1975), change became possible by transfer from a episteme to an other episteme. Michel Foucault`s concept refers to an "historical a priori that grounds knowledge and its discourses and thus represents the conditions of their possibility within a particular epoch". Every episteme is build on an assumption that a period of time can be considered only by the products of it. In the knowledge case this means only the discourses. Intellectuals were not part of Foucault investigation as individual subjects, but as subjects of their works.

In his definition, the world history of knowledge is divided between the Antique episteme, the Renaissance episteme, the Classical episteme and the Modern episteme. Each episteme is a social system based on cultural and economic relations. Foucault theory of episteme was related with Thomas Kuhn theory of paradigm from the book "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" (1962). As a fact, the main difference in defining a society between Foucault and Kuhn consists in how they regard science as having a main role in changing one period of the society with another. In Michel Foucault theories, change is

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possible because of the shift in knowledge, the shift in public, scientific discourse. In Thomas Kuhn theories, in the society, paradigms are produced by its leading personalities, the scholars, the intellectuals.

For Foucault, the social system, the episteme, is produced by the major discourses in an epoch. The discourse is the product of a person, and if that person is a major figure in the cultural and social system, he calls that person a logotête. The logotête is an important intellectual, scholar of an epoch who creates major discourses. Those discourses created an episteme, an epoch. But Foucault is not interested in the personalities but in their products, meaning their discourses, because, he said it many times, this is a proper scientific approach. For Foucault the episteme has objective existence, for Kuhn the paradigms are something that scientist objectively decide to create. Kuhn's approach of the paradigm problem makes, in my opinion, the connection with the post-structural theory of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. But in structural theories, intellectuals are not taken into consideration because it will be very difficult to re-create their personalities, as an act of historical and scientific research, from the present time to the past. Foucault states that an episteme could be re-created from the present using the tools of the archaeology of science, meaning we could investigate the past, by re-create it, only if we are able, scientifically, to analyze the discourses of the past, the only reasonable evidence. The document became more relevant then personalities.

One of the most important differences between structural sociological theories and post-structural theories consists in the fact that, in the case of the first ones, culture is just a small piece of the system, but in the case of the second ones, culture has one of the leading roles in the construction of the social system. The structural theories resides more in the dualism subjectivity/objectivity witch post-structural theories tries to underpass.

### 3. The sociologist post-structural theory of social and cultural system of Pierre Bourdieu.

Pierre Bourdieu (1930- 2002), was one of the most important scholars, philosophers and sociologist in contemporary European culture. His works are related with philosophy, sociology, literary theory and anthropology.

Bourdieu's works are influenced by the mainstream sociological field. He synthesized those traditional theories into his original theory. He was influenced by Max Weber, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, Claude Levi Strauss in sociology and anthropology and Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Edmund Husserl in the philosophy of phenomenology. His sociologic system is based on the main concepts of domination, symbolic systems, social structures witch reproduce themselves. The main theory that Bourdieu produced was the theory

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of habitus, symbolic capital and field. His main works are: *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* - in French *La Distinction* (1979) and *The Rules of Art - Les règles de l'art* (1992).

At the center of Bourdieu's sociological work is the logic of practice. Different from the intellectual tradition, Bourdieu's theory looks in a more pragmatic way to define the social system: merely like a struggle to become dominant by using a sort of know-how attitude. This is the most important idea that Bourdieu brought in the cultural arena: intellectuals are no more intellectualist, but more like pragmatic figures who lead the social field, they transcend their own circle to become leading social figures. Social agents like the intellectuals do not, according to Bourdieu, continuously calculate according to explicit rational and economic criteria. Bourdieu's sociological work was dominated by an analysis of the mechanisms of reproduction of social hierarchies. In opposition to marxist analyses, Bourdieu criticized the primacy given to the economic factors, and underlined the capacity of social actors-like intellectuals, major literary critics, editors from the big publishing houses, to speak only about cultural field - "to actively impose and engage their cultural productions and symbolic systems plays an essential role in the reproduction of social structures of domination". The system which Bourdieu called symbolic violence ("the capacity to ensure that the arbitrariness of the social order is ignored—-or misrecognized as natural - and thus to ensure the legitimacy of social structures") plays an essential part in his sociological analysis.

### *3.1. Bourdieu`s new sociological theories & the situation of the intellectuals*

For Bourdieu, the modern social world is divided into what he calls fields. For him, the differentiation of social activities led to the constitution of various, relatively autonomous, social spaces in which competition centers around particular species of capital. Those spaces are extremely particular, like the publishing houses or Universities, or the literary canon, if we are speaking about the cultural field. These fields are organized on a hierarchical basis and the power inside the field is assured by the never ending struggle made by the actors of the field to occupy the dominant position. This is the main difference between is theory and the traditionalist sociology of Marx and other philosophers.

Pierre Bourdieu developed a theory of the social reality focused on the concept of habitus. This theory had a considerable influence in the social sciences, and is not completely new, following a philosophical line which came from the Antiquity. This theory seeks to show that social agents - in our case, the intellectuals - develop strategies which are adapted to the needs of the social worlds they inhabit. Bourdieu continued Weber's views that society cannot be

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categorized only in the Marxist way: economic classes and ideologies. Instead of analyzing societies in terms of classes, Bourdieu uses the concept of field: "a social arena in which people maneuver and struggle in pursuit of desirable resources". Intellectuals are agents of the field and they subscribe to a particular field not explicitly, by making of a specific contract, "but by their practical acknowledgment of the stakes, implicit in their very "playing of the game" in the field. Also, intellectuals are motivated to play a more substantial role into the field because of their "faith" into the reality of the field, which is called by Bourdieu illusion.

The individual agent develops these dispositions in response to the objective conditions they encounter. In this way Bourdieu theorizes the inculcation of objective social structures into the subjective, mental experience of agents. "Having thereby absorbed objective social structure into a personal set of cognitive and somatic dispositions, and the subjective structures of action of the agent then being commensurate with the objective structures and extant exigencies of the social field, a toxic relationship emerges." By doing this, Bourdieu makes an "epistemological break with the prominent objective-subjective antinomy of the social sciences in structuralism" and therefore is more important to emphasize the role of the position in the filed of an individual, not the individual himself. This could bring a completely new perspective of the role of the intellectuals.

There is a strong relationship between the habitus and the field. Social agents, like intellectuals, constituted the field, and those agents bring to the field their habitus. But, in the same time the field itself transports some habitus to its agents, making this a two way relationship. For Marx, "capital is not a simple relation, but a process, in whose various movements it is always capital". Bourdieu sees symbolic capital (e.g. prestige, honor, the right to be listened to) as a crucial source of power. Symbolic capital is any species of capital that is perceived through socially inculcated classificatory schemes. When a holder of symbolic capital -like an important intellectual - uses the power this confers against an agent who holds less, and seeks thereby to alter their actions, they exercise symbolic violence.

Therefore, it is important to underlinethe in Bourdieu's theory the key-role of the symbolic position and the symbolic capital of the actors of the field, like intellectuals. They can provide a source of understanding for the all social system.

## 4. Some aspects of the Romanian situation of the intellectuals. The relation with the political power

The sociological system exposed by Pierre Bourdieu could be easily attached to Central and East-European countries, at the end of the communist

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regimes. More than in the Western countries, in this part of Europe culture and science played a key-role in the development of freedom. At the end of the communist era, the debate generated by intellectuals like György Conrad, Arpad Göencz in Hungary, Vaclav Havel, Milan Kundera in Tchecoslovakia, Czeslaw Milosz or Bronislaw Geremek in Poland or Paul Goma in Romania, had the same significance as the debate at the end of 19th century in France, with ”l'afaire Dreyfus”, this being the moment of the birth of intellectuals as a social status-quo in Europe. During the communist period all these important intellectuals were united by the common enemy. There is another common feature of the intellectuals in Central and East-Europe: they were always at the origin of the social and political revolutions, either the romantic Revolutions in the 19th century, or those more political of the 20th century.

If the Western intellectual movement was more related to the economic way of conceiving the society, in Eastern Europe the symbolic credit, as defined by Bourdieu, is by far more relevant in the presentation of the intellectuals paradigm. In the same way as the theory of Thomas Kuhn or Michel Foucault, the intellectuals in this part of the European continent played the role of the ancient scientist or of the “logotêtes”. They created a social environment in which all those related items of the cultural system involved also with the social system.

The faith of the Romanian intellectuals was one the most tragic one in the history of the Communism. One of the main features of the Romanian communism was that of it didn't have intellectual figures on the main leading board of the Communist Party. Heavily uneducated persons, but with a very strong political ambition were the leading figures of the Romanian Communist regime. Immediately after they completely seized the power, in 1948, a massive destruction of the former way of the “bourgeois society” was established. The main target was the intellectuals and the politicians. One of the main features of the Romanian political system before the Second World War is that the political system was closed to the so-called civil society: intellectuals and men and women of culture. Looking back at the Romanian cultural and institutional tradition, the symbolic credit played by far a more important role then the economic one. Based on the late economic development, intellectuals had to play a more significant role based on their personal cultural abilities rather then on a cultural system based on economic realities, like in Western Europe. In this direction we could cite the cultural group Junimea, established in 1863 by Titu Maiorescu, a very important cultural figure of the 19th century, in which many of the Romanian leading cultural figures activated, such as M.Eminescu, I.L Caragiale. The members of the Junimea group were not only important cultural figures, but most of them became politicians, Titu Maiorescu himself was minister several times and prime-minister of Romania between 1912-1914. During the time consumed between the two World Wars, many intellectuals

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played a major role in the local politics: the poet Octavian Goga-minister and the historian Nicolae Iorga were both prime-ministers. So, in Bourdieu's terms, the habitus of the cultural field used to interfere with the political one, or sometimes, like in the case of Junimea, to realize the same habitus.

This strong connection between cultural and political field in the Romanian system before the Communism, was one of the reasons that explained the prosecution and mass terror against intellectuals after the Second World War. To put it in the terms of Bourdieu's theory, the communist regime wanted to destroy the habitus of the Romanian society, composed by this mixture of political and cultural personalities, and in order to do that, the communists had only the alternative to destroy their prestige, as the main source of power. First, they destroyed their intellectual reputation by falsifying their symbolic heritage in the people' s mind. This meant to destroy the previous habitus, and re-create a new one for the new political and cultural field. The communists did this by completely changing the education system, in which the symbolic position of the intellectuals was demolished. Many important intellectuals were blamed by referring to only some parts of their works, parts considered as being against the proletarian ideology. In order to apply the Marxist rules of power, the communist regime used force, as force is considered the main source of power in this kind of society. The use of force was conducted both ways: in the symbolic way and also in the political way.

1) The symbolic use of force consisted in changing the way of interpreting the works of many major Romanian writers, like M.Eminescu, I.L.Caragiale, Nicolae Iorga, Mircea Eliade, E. Cioran, etc., by presenting only those parts of their works that were not related to or that were against the Marxist ideology.

2) The second direction, the political one, was conducted by force: complete extinction, in the physical sense of the word, of the intellectuals, by sending them to prison, or just killing them, and, in a more elaborate way, substituting them with surrogates: false intellectuals appeared over night, mainly from the uneducated parts of the society, but to whom the communist leaders gave enormous symbolic credit by making them members of the Romanian Academy of Science and Arts or other similar cultural institutions. One of the directions was to offer some intellectuals money or political positions, and, although not many of them accepted, there are some significant names in the Romanian cultural system of the moment, like M.Sadoveanu, G.Calinescu, Camil Petrescu.

Although based on the Marxist doctrine, the Romanian regime understood that the symbolic credit of intellectuals appreciated by the common people was a source of alternative power, and thereby a potential danger to the communist power. So they tried to destroy the autonomy of the cultural field, the autonomy, as described in Bourdieu's theory, being an important characteristic of the cultural field.

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Because the intellectuals, as logotetes, lost all the symbolic positions during communism, the Romanian cultural field has tried to overcome this situation after 1989 by concentrating on the personal charisma of the intellectuals. As the German scholar Wolf Lepenies says: "all the intellectuals after 1989 in East-Europe tried to reestablish their autonomy, because they suffered of the myth of the lost opportunity". Mainly this direction led to these effects:

1) First, the Romanian intellectual creates or recreates new forms of social organization in order to build the new habitus. New houses of publishing, new forms of cultural and social organizations appear, with the purpose to re-create the so-called "societatea civica"- the leading group of intellectuals who get involved into the political and social realities of the new Romania. In ordre to create and re-create the new social habitus, intellectuals like Andrei Pleşu, Gabriel Liiceanu, Mihai Şora, Nicolae Manolescu, Ana Blandiana and others formed a social group called *Alianţa Civică*, who later became a political party.

2) The second action was to re-judge the old habitus of the communist regime in order to re-create the new habitus. It is interesting to notice that in Romania this action appeared after the creation of the new institutions, to the great difference of the other East-European countries. This process is one of a long time, and mainly deals with the re-interpretation of historical facts which were seen in a different way during the communist period. One of the examples that can illustrate this direction is the opening of the big archives of the secret police, "Securitate".

This reaction can be seen as a natural reaction of the cultural field itself to re-create the habitus once lost as a result of the brutal interference the Communist ideology.

## Conclusions

Recent theories about the position of intellectuals in the society could be operative to understand the long process of maturation of the cultural field in the bigger economic one. Intellectuals played an important role in defining the idea of the symbolic credit as a factor of power in the society. In this line, the sociological theory of Bourdieu and others stresses the opportunity to understand the new social values of the postmodern contemporary life in which the symbolic plays a different role then before, but an increased one. The mass-media society is based on this characteristic also.

As to what concerns the study of the new realities in Eastern Europe, these theories can be very useful to explain the emerging of a new cultural field and the re-creation of cultural personalities who influenced and changed the entire cultural system and even the social one.

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