

Pierre Bourdieu as a Hobbesian modernist

NIKOLA BALAŠ

Abstract: The purpose of this talk is to discuss Pierre Bourdieu's thinking in relation to broader currents in Western philosophy. Although Bourdieu worked consciously with philosophical inspiration for the purposes of sociological research, I would like to discuss his work in relation to an author who only seldom appears in his writings – the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. I will focus on key Bourdieusian concepts including field theory, capital or habitus, and argue that they are based on unconsidered Hobbesian foundations. While these foundations allow Bourdieu to create the impression that he correctly captures our human condition in a variety of its different manifestations, I will argue that the self-evidence with which we and Bourdieu take these foundations to be true does not have to be a product of our better understanding of the human condition but a typically modern collective illusion.

DISCUSSANT: MIROSLAV VACURA
(PRAGUE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS)

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ÚSTAVU ANALYTICKÉ CHEMIE
AV ČR / MEETING ROOM OF THE
INSTITUTE OF ANALYTICAL
CHEMISTRY OF THE CAS**

**VEVEŘÍ 97, 602 00 BRNO
5. PATRO / 5TH FLOOR**

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