

# TOPICAL ISSUES OF PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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## Thematisation of Recognition in the Anthropological Reflections of Pierre Bourdieu

**Purpose.** The purpose of the study is to elucidate the essence of the concept of recognition in the context of the philosophical and anthropological views of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. The main objectives include analyzing the scholar's critique of philosophy as "scholastic" theorizing, reconstructing his philosophical and anthropological ideas, and uncovering the existential significance of the human striving for recognition. **Theoretical basis.** The research builds on Bourdieu's interpretation of recognition as a fundamental existential goal through which individuals seek to justify the meaning and purpose of their existence. In his concept of recognition, Bourdieu identifies the desire for authority, status, and prestige – components of symbolic capital – as the primary driver of human behavior. This symbolic capital, however, can only be accumulated within society. Simultaneously, recognition becomes a source of competition and rivalry for possession of symbolic capital, driving societal development. At the core of Bourdieu's philosophical and anthropological ideas lies an attempt to frame the subject of study within objective structures, thereby aligning subjective human experience with the impact of external social structures. **Originality.** Taking into account Bourdieu's critique of the "systemic" flaws of philosophy, which is dominated by a "scholastic" mindset, this study reconstructs his philosophical and anthropological ideas rooted in the empirical trajectory of his research, which is primarily grounded in sociological analysis. The concept of recognition is presented as the societal counterpart to the theological notion of justification, serving as a foundation for understanding the meaning of human life. The agonistic nature of the concept of symbolic capital highlights recognition as a constitutive dimension of human existence in society. **Conclusions.** Sociological analysis, as a prerequisite for Bourdieu's philosophical and anthropological reflections, does not imply a rejection of philosophical methodology. Instead, it underscores a belief that sociological tools are better suited for constructing of a universal human concept. Since Bourdieu's ideas were shaped by studying specific sociological scenarios, which in turn formed his theoretical framework, his concepts should be viewed as both the prerequisites for and the outcomes of this methodology. From this perspective, Bourdieu's understanding of recognition in the social field emerges as the result of human interaction with social structures and other individuals who impose demands and set tasks, facilitating the acquisition of social status – that is, the accumulation of symbolic capital.

**Keywords:** human; society; symbolic capital; justification; concept; sociological analysis; recognition

### Introduction

The study of problems related to human activity and experience is determined by general scientific ideas about the essence of human nature, without which it is impossible to analyze historically changing social practices. This refers to the dependence of a researcher's trajectory on the philosophical and anthropological paradigm that shapes the vision of social modalities of worldview and individual behavior. Evidently, taking this argument into account, the French sociologist P. Bourdieu sought to explain the connection between his historical-sociological research and the human issue, particularly the aspiration for recognition. P. Bourdieu's (1997)

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philosophical-anthropological reflections are presented in his work "Pascalian Meditations", which scholars attribute to the later stage of his academic career.

Although P. Bourdieu's body of work is characterized by achievements primarily in sociology, it demonstrates a unique ability to connect sociological theory with the achievements of philosophical thought. According to scholars, all significant works by P. Bourdieu stand out for their philosophical excursions, themes, and inquiries aimed at clarifying or problematizing methodological issues in the study of specific phenomena or subjects (O. Yosypenko & S. Yosypenko, 2021, p. 163). Scholars generally agree that "Pascalian Meditations" is a kind of philosophical manifesto by P. Bourdieu (2024).

Researchers of P. Bourdieu's intellectual legacy rightly note that the foundation of his academic inquiries lies in an agonistic vision of the social world. In the context of his philosophical and anthropological perspectives, this is reflected in the unique synthesis of E. Durkheim's thesis that "society is God" and J.-P. Sartre's notion that "hell is other people" (Peters, 2012). Regarding recognition, P. Bourdieu's agonistic view presents it as an endless competition and struggle for symbolic capital – a resource accessible to individuals through recognition, respect, and prestige.

Scholars analyze P. Bourdieu's concept of habitus through the lens of social recognition, explaining the "recognition habitus" or "cognitive habitus" as a set of models of perception and expectations whose primary function is to actualize social behavior that ensures mutual recognition among social agents. The concept of recognition allows for understanding the functioning of habitus as a pre-reflective common sense capable of producing coordinated collective actions (Piroddi, 2021). Seeking to enrich A. Honneth's idea of spheres of recognition and P. Bourdieu's concept of the social field, scholars highlight the shared characteristics of their approaches. For instance, social networks are seen as spheres of recognition, where individuals gain acknowledgment in the form of "likes", "retweets", and similar markers of approval from other users (Piroddi, 2022, p. 337).

Noting that P. Bourdieu has no specific studies dedicated to the emotional dimension as a mechanism of symbolic power, scholars argue that attachment and belief foster the affective binding of agents to the asymmetrical logic of the social fields they inhabit (Vázquez Gutiérrez, 2022). Following P. Bourdieu's framework, researchers examine discursive strategies employed to legitimize symbolic capital in the implementation of contemporary social programs. For example, focusing on the prestigious nature of the French nuclear project, researchers elucidate cognitive mechanisms influencing individuals to recognize the importance of this initiative (Dybczyńska, 2024).

The monograph of Finnish philosopher H. Ikäheimo holds significant theoretical and methodological value, substantiating the universal importance of recognition and its manifestations. According to Ikäheimo (2022), an anthropological approach to the issue of recognition should form the foundation of philosophical discourse in the search for a shared mode of human coexistence, where moral relationships are paramount. In a study on the socio-anthropological dimensions of recognition, primarily represented in A. Honneth's philosophy, scholars develop an approach to recognition as a foundational principle of justice (Sytnichenko & Usov, 2023). They argue that the contemporary philosophical representation of recognition as the horizon and condition of human existence is rooted in justice, solidarity, dignity, and care.

As we can see, research approaches to P. Bourdieu's interpretation of recognition as symbolic capital – a resource encompassing status, authority, reputation, prestige, and popularity, achieved

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solely within society – can be divided into two groups. Studies in the first group predominantly interpret the concept of symbolic capital from a socio-political perspective. In contrast, the second group's works focus on understanding the issue of recognition in P. Bourdieu's scholarship through the lens of a socio-anthropological approach. The unifying aspect of these researchers is their emphasis on P. Bourdieu's notion of recognition as a vital need involving competition and rivalry for symbolic capital. However, in our view, the philosophical and anthropological aspects of P. Bourdieu's research, particularly the analysis of recognition within this context, which is closely tied to the concept of symbolic capital, require more detailed examination.

### Purpose

The purpose of the study is to clarify the essence of the concept of recognition in light of the philosophical and anthropological views of the French sociologist P. Bourdieu. The main tasks are to analyze the scholar's critique of philosophy as "scholastic" theorizing, to reconstruct the researcher's philosophical and anthropological ideas, and to uncover the meaning of a person's desire for recognition as a justification of the meaning and purpose of their existence.

### Statement of basic materials

#### *Philosophy as a "scholastic" type of theorizing*

P. Bourdieu's philosophical views were significantly influenced by the work of B. Pascal, in whose honor the "Pascalian Meditations" are named. As is well known, B. Pascal abandoned fundamentalist thinking, ambition, and communicated with ordinary people without populism. The thinker was interested in the question of symbolic power and sought to find the cause of illogical behavior, rather than condemning or ridiculing it. It is in the name of B. Pascal that P. Bourdieu criticizes the "scholastic" mind inherent in philosophy, devoid of practical significance. Without considering the important problems of human existence, philosophy, according to P. Bourdieu, gives them the form of discourse, not for the purpose of analysis, but for legitimization. P. Bourdieu (1997) methodologically criticizes this situation, which he considers the main systemic epistemological, ethical, and aesthetic error of professional philosophy.

According to scholars, the subject matter, genre, and style of "Pascalian Meditations" are determined by their place among P. Bourdieu's works, which are usually classified by subject matter. The author's philosophical works, the main of which is "Pascalian Meditations", occupy a separate niche, which researchers agree on, with reservations. The first reservation is that the few texts by P. Bourdieu that can be defined as philosophical are contained in "Pascalian Meditations", so they can be considered as one philosophical work. The second reservation is that such classification may give the impression that P. Bourdieu has works devoted to ethnology or sociology separately, and to philosophy separately, which is certainly not true, since all of the author's programmatic works are permeated with philosophical reflections (O. Yosypenko & S. Yosypenko, 2021, p. 163).

In "Pascalian Meditations", scholars see a kind of sociological research, which has always been something like fieldwork in philosophy for P. Bourdieu. Relying on B. Pascal's insights, using the form of meditations and his basic concepts, the scholar raises philosophical issues that, in his opinion, cannot be raised by professional philosophy. The author seeks to make the social conditioning of philosophy and the dominance of the "scholastic" mind within it the subject of sociological analysis (Bourdieu, 2024).

Like M. Heidegger and J.-P. Sartre, P. Bourdieu argues that the world and human life are devoid of inherent meaning and have meaning attributed by people. The scholar opposes the intellectualism of philosophers who project their experience onto the minds of laypeople. P. Bourdieu (1997) is convinced that subjective acts of meaning-making are mostly mentally silent, that is, they do not always involve consciousness or ideas (p. 241).

It is noteworthy that P. Bourdieu's works focus on the role of practice in social dynamics and worldview formation. The structuring of ideas and the production of practices are conditioned by individuals' ability to spontaneously navigate the social space and respond relatively adequately to various situations, as well as by the formation of skills and abilities during the process of socialization (Boreiko, 2020, p. 6). However, scholars often consider the role of practice from opposite positions to those of Western philosophical traditions.

P. Bourdieu's philosophical views can be traced back to the genetic sociology of symbolic power, which he conceived as a form of critical theory. Rejecting the idea of the intellectual "prophet" or "total intellectual", as substantiated by J.-P. Sartre, P. Bourdieu links individual ideas about aesthetic taste to the social position of a person. The scholar argued his position in the work "Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste" through an original combination of social theory, photographs, and interviews, trying to explain the understanding of the subject within objective structures, that is, the connection of external social structures with the subjective experience of the individual (Bourdieu, 1984).

Notably, P. Bourdieu emphasizes the need for individuals to choose in everyday life between what they find aesthetically pleasing and what they consider fashionable or ugly. Since there is no pure taste, every aesthetic choice is a difference, i.e., a choice made in opposition to the choices of representatives of other social classes. The author argues that the social world functions, on the one hand, as a system of power relations, and on the other hand, as a symbolic system, where even the slightest differences in taste serve as the basis for social evaluation.

The empirical consolidation and sociological objectification of the prerequisites for P. Bourdieu's philosophical views on social life and human activity suggest that the leitmotif of his views on philosophy is not the rejection of its goals, but the belief that his sociology provides more suitable intellectual tools for achieving these goals, particularly the creation of a universal "idea of man" (Peters, 2012, p. 81).

It is evident that philosophical understanding of reality requires coordination between abstract reflections and real individual and social practices, which P. Bourdieu fully strives to adhere in his anthropological reflections.

### *Philosophical and anthropological ideas*

P. Bourdieu's philosophical reflections did not overlook issues related to human existence in both the material and spiritual worlds, the finite and the infinite, as well as the existential ambiguity of human nature and the "mind-body" dichotomy. At the same time, the core of the philosophical and anthropological ideas of the scholar lies in the problem of the existential justification of human life, pleasure, suffering, and mortality, which is addressed in the "Pascalian Meditations" (Bourdieu, 1997).

Since P. Bourdieu's philosophical and anthropological views are based on a theoretical framework formulated and expanded by research on various specific social scenarios, his ideas should not be seen as a definitive discourse, but rather as part of an analytical toolkit for use in empirical research. For example, the concept of habitus was formed and refined through a con-

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tinuous interaction between theorization and experience, and the more abstract philosophical and anthropological premises of Bourdieu's sociology have methodological applications in his empirical works, which, in turn, served to concretize and further develop these prerequisites (Peters, 2012, pp. 80-81).

The trajectory of P. Bourdieu's research is aimed at challenging various interpretations of human subjectivity that understand it as an intellectual and contemplative stance toward the world. According to Bourdieu (1997), "pure" subjectivity is replaced by the perception of a person who is systematically influenced by the prohibitions and conditions of the social world regarding cognitive, practical, emotional, and bodily participation in the processes of reproduction or transformation of their environment (pp. 138-142).

The rejection of intellectual and contemplative approaches to the "human-world" relationship leads P. Bourdieu to criticize dualistic views of the "mind-body" relationship, which treat the body as an object of individual representation. Following M. Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu (1990b) argues that the human body is the operational locus of practical intentions and competencies, which serve as the basis for intervening in the social world (p. 73). The frequent reference to "mental structures" embodied in habitus indicates that the central element of Bourdieu's model of human beings is not the reduction of free will to bodily actions, but rather the analysis of body and mind within the continuum of practical activity. Habitus, as a practical sense, reflects Bourdieu's defense of a non-dualistic understanding of the "mind-body" opposition. This involves the simultaneous understanding of sensations as elements of a sensory mechanism that immerses the body in social reality and as a symbolic and interpretative tool through which a person gives meaning to their experience.

Bourdieu's (1990a, p. 196, 1997, p. 134) works do not dwell extensively on the biological component of human nature, although they include passages that hint at the scholar's views on the modality of action and experience, as well as implicit assumptions about the physiological and neurological properties of humans and the cognitive plasticity across the stages of human life. While Bourdieu examined the differences that determine the dual nature of humans, the primary focus of his philosophical and anthropological reflections, which aligns with his dualistic stance, is the rejection of interpretations of human nature based on polarizations such as "material-ideal", "mind-body", and "subject-world".

Bourdieu's views on the human condition are both a prerequisite and a consequence of his sociological theory. If Bourdieu's discourse on humanity were more abstract, the reason for this would not be a rejection of the empirical trajectory of research, which differs from the "scholastic" type of theorizing that the scholar consistently critiqued. On the contrary, it would arise from the fact that Bourdieu's "idea of the human" is characterized by a non-scholastic heuristic approach, whose advantage lies in the creation and refinement of this idea through prolonged engagement with the challenges of empirical research (Peters, 2012, p. 80).

*The desire for recognition as a justification for the meaning of human existence*

According to P. Bourdieu, human participation in social interactions is motivated by an attempt to avoid confronting one's finitude. Articulating this idea in "Pascalian Meditations", the researcher writes about an individual's immersion in everyday life in order to avoid thinking about their finitude, even if they are aware that life ends in death. Sharing Schopenhauer's view that life becomes a real problem when one becomes aware of inevitable death, P. Bourdieu emphasizes the existential function of fulfilling social roles, which serves to protect a person from

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contemplating their finitude (Kholod, 2023). The influence of existentialist philosophy is also evident in Bourdieu's statement regarding human efforts aimed at understanding life as endowed with meaning, given its associations with fear, cruelty, and suffering.

In light of this, the practices of social life are, in essence, a socio-psychological mechanism that helps suppress the awareness of one's mortality. Due to the understanding of future death and the awareness of oneself as a being who must have grounds for existence, people feel a need for justification, legitimization, and recognition. In this context, P. Bourdieu (1997) quotes B. Pascal's statement regarding the desire to justify the existence of the world as the only source of justification, other than God (p. 239).

The justification of individual and social existence is agonistic, because, due to the lack of ideal or symbolic goods, recognition is achieved in a differentiated manner. According to P. Bourdieu (1990a), all forms of the sacred have a profane complement, and each difference gives rise to vulgarity and competition for a life recognized by others, where the struggle to rid oneself of insignificance takes place (p. 196).

The question of recognition as a social equivalent to the theological problem of justification, linking the concept of recognition with the legitimacy of existence and the human right to feel justified in one's being, i.e., the way of one's existence, was raised by P. Bourdieu in "Pascalian Meditations". According to the author, no one can claim, either to themselves or others, that they neglect any justification. If "God is dead" and no justification can be sought from Him, then this justification must be sought in people's assessments (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 237).

Other authors also emphasize the theological matrix of the recognition problem, arguing that theories based on the idea of an individual's dependence on public opinion and attributing to others the "power of recognition" – i.e., the power to determine the importance of each person and give meaning to their existence – are the secular equivalents of the theological motive. The theological connotations of the concept of recognition are largely inherited from the Augustinian doctrine of justification, while the idea of granting society competence in matters of suffering and happiness, prerogatives previously reserved exclusively for Christian theology, is borrowed from Enlightenment philosophy. Indeed, one of the most important prerogatives of the Christian God is judgment – the power to assess the significance of people's lives and condemn them to salvation or eternal torment in hell. Considering the sacralization of society, which changed the trajectory of Feuerbach's religious alienation, we can understand why the problem of recognition is a cornerstone of many contemporary theories (Carnevali, 2020, pp. 98-99).

According to P. Bourdieu, a person's desire for recognition in certain social spheres is based on a basic inclination to invest in social games. Since this was initially practiced within the family, the motivational support for an infant's need for recognition is similar. The desire for recognition is an emotional condition for the effectiveness of socialization from the moment the first experience of recognition is gained in childhood. Instilling the tendency to invest in social play as a prerequisite for educational and pedagogical work relies on one of the drivers – the search for recognition – as the basis for all subsequent investments (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 166).

The scientist's approach to the problem of recognition differs significantly from the concept of recognition proposed by German philosopher A. Honneth, which is based on the ideas of G. Hegel and J. Mead. From the standpoint of justice or injustice, i.e., respect or disregard for human dignity, A. Honneth identified three main forms of recognition: love as a form of recognition at the individual level, and law and solidarity at the social level. The foundation of love at the first level of recognition, where trust in oneself and the world is formed, is the relationship of

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devotion and autonomy. Mutual recognition at the next level is characterized in the context of the theory of the significance of the generalized other (J. Mead), which constantly reminds the subject of the limits of freedom and responsibilities, recognizing the right to respect and self-respect as a legal and moral subject. Moreover, the recognition of the subject as a moral and respectable person is possible only in the context of mutual legal recognition (Bazaluk, 2024). In the sphere of social recognition, characterized by solidarity, the individual characteristics of subjects acquire significance. Self-recognition, as an important element in the formation of self-identity, emerges through social solidarity. Gaining recognition helps overcome loneliness and utilize the positive potential of law and solidarity (Honneth, 1996).

In his later works, P. Bourdieu (1997, 1999), unlike A. Honneth, perceives recognition as a phenomenon equivalent to the competition of social and symbolic differences that permeate all social relations. Material difficulties, caused by economic problems, are inseparably linked with the subjective feeling of unfair denial of social and symbolic significance. If we view P. Bourdieu's approach through the lens of A. Honneth's typology of recognition forms, then in the sociologist's understanding, recognition means the achievement of self-respect by individuals as a result of their special and distinct status in the collective, which influences and determines love and friendship, as well as legal and political recognition of the individual. The approaches of both scholars converge in their agonistic understanding of the phenomenon of recognition and in A. Honneth's (1992) thesis that the integrity of human subjects, vulnerable to trauma through insults and disrespect, depends on the approval and respect of others (p. 188).

### Originality

Taking into account the criticism of the methodological "errors" in philosophy as "scholastic" theorizing, identified by P. Bourdieu through sociological analysis, the philosophical and anthropological ideas of the scholar, based on the empirical trajectory of his research, are reconstructed. The concept of recognition is the social equivalent of the theological concept of justification as a basis for giving meaning to human life. The agonistic nature of the concept of symbolic capital illustrates recognition as a constitutive dimension of human existence in society.

### Conclusions

The concept of recognition, which expresses a person's desire to gain authority at the level of interpersonal interactions and in social life, is one of the central issues in modern social and anthropological research. P. Bourdieu's methodological critique of philosophy is based on the inability of the "scholastic" theoretical worldview to address the pressing issues of human existence, which are instead reframed as discourse. A vivid illustration of P. Bourdieu's philosophical and anthropological reflections is the concept of symbolic capital, where the desire for recognition is justified as a fundamental existential goal for a person. The agonistic view of recognition suggests the necessity of struggling for its attainment as a driving force behind the development of society. The continuous fulfillment of social roles by individuals is accompanied by the function of protecting them from the awareness of the finitude of existence, which involves the ability to suppress the awareness of one's own death or to come to terms with it. A person achieves social recognition, which is rooted in the desire to be perceived as significant and authoritative, as a legitimate and deserved resource, thereby enhancing the influence of symbolic capital.

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## Тематизація визнання в антропологічних рефлексіях П'єра Бурдьє

**Мета.** Дослідження полягає у з'ясуванні сутності концепту визнання у світлі філософсько-антропологічних поглядів французького соціолога П. Бурдьє. Основними завданнями є аналіз критики вченим філософії як "схоластичного" теоретизування, реконструкція філософсько-антропологічних ідей дослідника, розкриття екзистенційного змісту прагнення людини до визнання. **Теоретичний базис.** Робота ґрунтується на розумінні П'єром Бурдьє визнання як фундаментальної екзистенційної мети, за посередництвом якої людина намагається виправдати смисл свого існування. У концепції визнання головним мотивом поведінки людини П. Бурдьє вважає прагнення до авторитету, статусу, престижу, що складають символічний капітал, який можна здобути лише в суспільстві. Водночас визнання постає джерелом конкуренції, суперництва за володіння символічним капіталом, що зумовлює суспільний розвиток. В основі філософсько-антропологічних ідей П. Бурдьє лежить намагання пояснити предмет дослідження в рамках об'єктивних структур, тобто узгодити суб'єктивний досвід людини із впливом зовнішніх соціальних структур. **Наукова новизна.** З урахуванням критики П. Бурдьє "системних" помилок філософії, у якій домінує "схоластичний" розум, реконструйовано філософсько-антропологічні ідеї вченого, що ґрунтуються на емпіричній траєкторії його досліджень, в основі яких лежить соціологічний аналіз. Концепт визнання є суспільним еквівалентом теологічного поняття виправдання як підстави для обґрунтування смислу людського життя. Агоністичний характер концепції символічного капіталу ілюструє визнання як конститутивний вимір буття людини в соціумі. **Висновки.** Соціологічний аналіз як передумова філософсько-антропологічних рефлексій П. Бурдьє засвідчує не відмову від філософської методології, а наявність переконання, що соціологічний інструментарій є більш релевантним для створення універсальної концепції людини. Оскільки погляди П. Бурдьє

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сформувалися під впливом дослідження конкретних соціологічних сценаріїв, на основі яких склалася відповідна теоретична база, то ідеї вченого слід вважати передумовою й наслідком означеного інструментарію. Очевидно, під цим кутом слід розглядати розуміння П. Бурдьє визнання в соціальному полі як результату взаємодії людини із соціальними структурами й іншими людьми, які висувають вимоги, ставлять завдання, що сприяє здобуттю соціального статусу, тобто накопиченню символічного капіталу.

*Ключові слова:* людина; суспільство; символічний капітал; виправдання; концепція; соціологічний аналіз; визнання

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