



STATE OF AFFAIRS

SOCIAL THEORY: CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

CALL FOR PAPERS

Total Intellectuals

Over contemporary debates on changes in scholarship hangs the spectre of the scholar as a “soulless specialist” of the Weberian kind, an expert for hire, reconciled with the vision of scholarship as a job like any other. The opposite of such a figure is the scholar who goes beyond the narrow frames of specialisation and administrative disconnection – a figure increasingly seldom to be found either in academia or in discussions of the academic milieu. In the conviction that it is precisely such an opposite that is worth viewing more closely, we are calling for papers on total intellectuals, that is, thinkers and scholars who in their daily work continually exceed (or exceeded) the bounds of narrow specialisations, restricted disciplines, and the unequivocal categorisations determined and continually modified by contemporary science.

Total intellectuals combine various fields of thinking and methods of describing the world that are often only seemingly distant from each other and yet are institutionally categorised in the form of separate academic disciplines. They are often writers who move smoothly between the cultivation of theory and engagement in practical activity, either social or political. They are people who experiment with various forms of academic and non-academic writing, searching for various media to express their specific comprehension of reality. Finally, they are scholars who go beyond a rigid understanding of “doing one’s work well” and beyond a certain professional standard of typical academic activity. They break through the usual career paths of their environment, and often blur the distinction between work and private or personal life.

We would like to suggest two possible theoretical contexts for authors who are interested in writing about total intellectuals for our issue.

The first context is a critical view of the total intellectual as a figure of domination in the field of intellectual production. In Pierre Bourdieu’s view, a total intellectual is someone who makes continual transfers between various fields of activity in order to achieve a dominant position. At the same time, activity in the literary, philosophical, and political field serves to “exceed” and simultaneously to “preserve” his advantages in various areas. Such an understanding of the total intellectual would encompass those thinkers, among others, whose position is coupled to their biographical (“generational”) experience and their role in their milieu, as in the case of Jean-Paul Sartre, whom Bourdieu analysed. Another example could be a person whose assessment evades the

conventional measures of intellectual work, someone whose impact and position do not depend on any single achievement but in sum produce a larger-than-life figure (such as Jan Strzelecki, whose influence on the Warsaw intellectual environment cannot be explained by any conventional standards of “academic success”).

The second context is the problem of specialisation and the reification of scholarship as a certain historical process connected with more general changes in the sphere of work. For Georg Lukács, the increasing specialisation in thinking was part of a broader process of reification, which included both material and non-material work and was linked with historical changes in bourgeois society. Such an understanding of the specialization process has its phases and uneven temporalities, running faster in certain fields of knowledge and geographical regions and slower in others. Certain disciplines of knowledge were encompassed by this process earlier; other ones could longer give “shelter” to persons unwilling to close their thinking in narrow methodological frames. In this sense, the total intellectual could resist the process of specialisation or could become the founder of certain disciplines while fleeing others (as did Florian Znaniecki, who abandoned philosophical projects for work in field of sociology that was just developing its conceptual tools. Other examples are the ingenious innovators who openly resisted the division of disciplines (such as Edward Abramowski, the enemy of an intellectual rigor that would separate the thinker from variable reality).

On specific issues, we encourage authors above all to engage in the following:

- problematization of the figure of total intellectual, his/her various embodiments and the functioning of his/her creativity
- research into the historical and institutional contexts in which total intellectuals worked
- consideration of the structural conditions that allow a total intellectual to occupy a particular position in the field of intellectual production
- comparative analyses, which take into consideration more than one total intellectual
- reflection on the role of the total intellectual in Eastern Europe and on the peripheries of Europe
- discovery of the often unrecognized paths and methods by which total intellectuals have influenced the academic environment.

Authors should submit the title of their text, an abstract of 500 words, and their affiliation to the editorial board’s email address (sekretarz@stanrzeczy.edu.pl) by **10 June 2019**. The editors of the issue, Dr Krzysztof Świrek (krzysztof.swirek@gmail.com) and Dr Tomasz Rawski (rawski00@gmail.com), will readily answer any questions. The editors will notify authors of the acceptance or rejection of their proposals within the week following the deadline.

After acceptance of the abstracts, the editorial board will expect to receive the finished articles, of not over 60,000 characters (with spaces), by **20 September 2019**.

The issue is expected to appear in the first quarter of 2020.