

Plugging into the Body of the Leviathan: Proposal for a New Sociology of Public Interventions

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The main argument of this short essay is that the concept of *intellectual*, especially the somewhat redundant neologism of *public intellectual*, is too narrow to guide research on how interventions in public affairs are currently authored, crafted, and operated. Instead, I propose the concept of *public interventions* to inform a more comprehensive approach that broadens the analytical frame by multiplying relevant agencies, modes and targets of intervention. This approach is inspired by Foucault's (*Truth and Power*) distinction between the "universal" and "specific" intellectual; Bourdieu's (*Corporatism*) replacement of the latter by a "collective intellectual"; and the approach to the public sphere urged by the contributors to *Making Things Public* (Latour and Weibel).

I will begin by sketching a brief and schematic genealogy of the concepts of "intellectuals" and "public intellectual," to explain why they are at once too freighted with historical meaning (and a narrative of decline), as well as analytically too narrow, for dealing with the realities of contemporary interventions in the public sphere. I will then proceed to outline an alternative approach focused on interventions, along the three dimensions of agencies, modes and targets.

Why Are Intellectuals Always Disappearing and Reappearing, Declining and Resurging, Defending Their Mission or Betraying It?

The idea of the "intellectual" has a long and ambiguous pedigree. As Charle puts it, it is "essentially historical," a category

of historical memory. It is not a concept that can be picked up ready-made and be used for analytical purposes. It could, of course, be used for practical and strategic purposes, but then one should be aware of the long history of uses and abuses it trails behind it, and the set of mechanisms and assumptions that gets activated every time it is deployed.

These are mechanisms of defamation and celebration, of self-definition and counter-definition—in short, of boundary work (Gieryn) and classificatory struggle (Bourdieu, *Intellectual Field*). It is instructive to know that the term *intellectual* was first coined during the Dreyfus affair—not for analytical or diagnostic purposes, but as a political insult. "To be 'intellectuel' meant to be 'dreyfusard,' that is a person who pretends to uphold things that the majority of the French refuse" (Charle). The insult, however, was embraced by its addressees and turned into a mobilizing device, a rallying call designed to bring into being and demarcate the boundaries of the category thus named (Bauman 2-8). Those who issued the call—Zola, Clemenceau, Anatol France, Henri Poincare, Durkheim—considered themselves to be the best representatives of the category and addressed their call to the like-minded. The laudatory meaning they gave it is still worn as a badge of honor today, just as the original

mocking meaning could still be activated as well.

The later career of the concept involved a continuous tangle between those who wanted to adapt it to changing historical circumstances, give it objective analytical meaning and extend it to wider circles of the educated, and those, on the other hand, who sought to redraw the boundary between who is and who is not a “true” intellectual based on the tradition, the preserved historical memory of the *intellectuals*. This boundary work often took the form of accusations that the intellectuals had betrayed their “true” mission (Benda, *Treason*), and ultimately informed a problematic of allegiance that pervaded all the later attempts to give the concept an objective analytical meaning (Eyal and Buchholz; see also Charle).

Only when taking into account this history of the concept can one understand the current popularity enjoyed by the concept of *public intellectual*. The conjunction “public intellectual” is, first of all, very recent. As can be seen in Figure 1, it hardly existed before 1987. The little uptick in 1987 marks the publication of Russell Jacoby’s *The Last Intellectuals*, a book that bemoaned the disappearance of intellectuals while at the same time creating something completely new, namely the conjunction “public intellectual.” As can be seen in Figure 1,

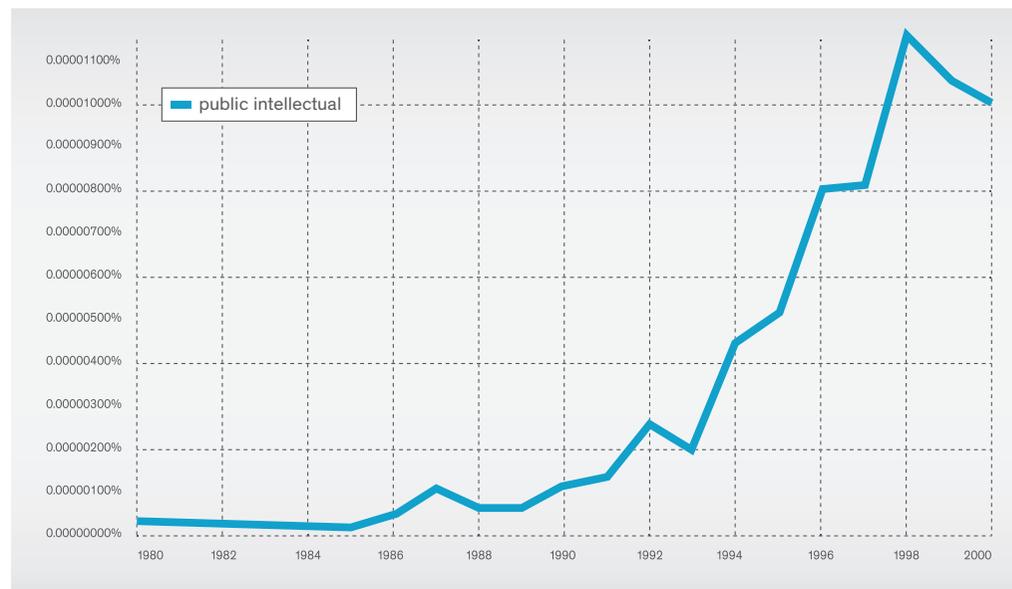


Figure 1: Frequency of appearance of “public intellectual” in Google Books from 1980 to 2000

Source: Graph. Google Books. Google, 18 June 2012. Web. 18 June 2012.

from the moment Jacoby announced their disappearance, the chatter about public intellectuals took off and never shut up.¹ Second, the conjunction “public intellectual” is also very peculiar. It is strikingly redundant. Intellectuals were always understood—and understand themselves—as those who in their writing and speaking appeal to a broad public. So we have a small mystery here: How is it that the addition of a redundant qualifier works to resuscitate and energize a moribund concept pronounced to be on the vein? $X+0=X^2$? What exactly is *done* by add-

ing the qualifier “public”? The answer is *boundary work*. The addition of “public” redraws the boundary between who is, and who is not, a “true” intellectual in a very specific way, excluding from the category of academics and especially experts who are understood to be confined to narrow technical pursuits. By the late 1970s, there were many attempts to give “intellectuals” objective analytical meaning as a “new class” composed of experts, technocrats, professionals, and academics (Bruce-Briggs 1979; Gouldner 1979; Konrad and Szelenyi 1979;

Walker 1979). Adding the qualifier “public,” therefore, was boundary work meant to exclude experts and academics from the category and to signal that true intellectuals are *not* experts and academics: They are not entangled in mundane technical affairs or limited to their ivory tower. They address a broad public, owing allegiance only to truth and universal values. Since this conjunction first appeared in a book titled *The Last Intellectuals*, a book that belonged to the venerable genre of jeremiad (mixture of lament and accusation) about the decline of true intellectuals and betrayal of their original mission (Posner), it activated not only boundary work from experts, but also an entire narrative—deriving from the historical memory of the *intellectuels*—about decline, “endangered species,” the threat of betrayal (by turning expert) or extinction (by a society of expertise), and consequently provoked a debate about whether public intellectuals are disappearing or on the contrary, reappearing on the web and the blogosphere (Donatich; Fuller; Kellner).

From Intellectuals to Interventions

The concept of *public intellectual*, therefore, leads us into a blind alley where nothing but echoes of the historical memory of the *intellectuels* reverberate between the walls. We need to retrace our steps back to

an intersection where this boundary work between intellectuals and experts was questioned, and pick an alternative path from there. Fortunately, this intersection is not too far behind. It is represented by Foucault’s (*Truth and Power* 128) distinction between the universal and specific intellectual.² While the “universal” intellectual fits the mold of what is meant by “public intellectual”—the prototype is represented by the engaged man of letters (e.g. Zola, Sartre) who speaks in the name of truth and universal values—the “specific” intellectual is an *expert*.

Foucault’s example of a “specific intellectual” is Robert Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer, says Foucault, was an individual whose narrow technical work as an expert acquired universal dimensions when it threatened the whole human species with extinction, and who consequently felt compelled to intervene in public affairs. Oppenheimer did not begin as the independent, engaged critic that he came to embody later. He started as an expert working in the service of the American government, first at the Manhattan project, and then as Chairman of the General Advisory Committee to the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). It was from this position that he began lobbying for international arms control, i.e. that he began intervening in public affairs. Eventually, his

activism led to the revocation of his security clearance in 1954 during the heyday of McCarthyism, and he became a *bona fide* dissident intellectual. Foucault concludes, therefore, that there is no reason to draw a strong distinction between intellectuals and experts: “the intellectual is simply the person who uses his knowledge, his competence and his relation to truth in the field of political struggles” (*Truth and Power* 128). Put differently, what is common to all who may be termed “specific intellectuals” is not that they correspond to a specific social type (since experts come in many different forms and shapes), but rather the *movement* by which their local and technical knowledge acquires a more general and public value and becomes the basis for intervention in public affairs. What is interesting about Oppenheimer surely is not merely his end point as a dissident intellectual, but the movement which took him from technical concerns and government service to increasingly independent intervention in public affairs. A movement, it is important to note, that did not owe its momentum solely to Oppenheimer himself, thus leading us away from the myth of the public intellectual as author and first mover. What Foucault did, therefore, was not to add another type, but to draw analytical attention to the enduring element in the concept of “intellectual,” the part that

is indifferent to boundary work and classificatory struggles, and that could serve as a basis for reconstructing the concept.

Agencies of Intervention

The analytical framework I propose here is designed to analyze a movement, not a social type or a group. The first question, however, is “who is moving?” When analysis is focused on “public intellectuals,” it tends to privilege the actions and pronouncements of a few prominent figures, thereby inevitably leading to boundary work, hagiography or a narrative of decline and betrayal. When, on the other hand, we analyze the movement by which knowledge acquires value as intervention in public affairs, the frame is broadened considerably.

First, it is clear that often this movement is initiated or carried through by experts, Foucault’s “specific intellectuals,” rather than generalist intellectuals. Moreover, these experts need not be only glamorous and well-known individuals, such as Oppenheimer, but can come from the ranks of the more “gray” practitioners, who often work away from the spotlight enjoyed by prominent figures. Yet, arguably, the public impact of their work is often no less profound. Few would recognize the names of the economists who designed the indicator of aggregate productivity trends.

The number-cruncher bent over reams of data seems far away from the image of the engaged or celebrity intellectual—though Nate Silver, the recently crowned “public statistician” (Scheiber), may still upend this stereotype. Yet, as Block and Burns show, these obscure economists profoundly shaped public discussion and political struggle over labor issues in the US over several crucial decades.

Or put differently, to avoid taking sides in boundary wars, we should take into account all actors making credible claims to represent publicly relevant knowledge and to engage with public affairs. And we need to take them into account not in isolation, or serially, but rather relationally as interdependent and competing in a common “intellectual field” where who is an intellectual and how to legitimately intervene in public affairs are objects of classificatory struggles (Bourdieu, *Intellectual Field*). Rather than limiting the analysis to a specific social type, this type of relational analysis directs attention to the factors structuring the intellectual field—the distribution of symbolic capital, the degree of independence from external political demand, and the degree of specialization (Sapiro). Field analysis replaces social types with intersections of these factors. For example, a region with a high degree of symbolic capital, relative immunity to

political demand, but weak specialization (a region roughly corresponding to where internationally acclaimed literary figures may be found), is likely to correlate with a mode of intervention in public affairs that approximates the ideal typical “public intellectual” (ibid.). Yet, field analysis also attends to the independent effect of trajectory and the construction of specific agencies of intervention. Intersections of factors specify positions, so to speak, but these positions could be occupied by a certain (albeit limited in characteristic ways) range of different actors, embarked on different trajectories, each thus subtly modifying the meaning of the position, constructing a somewhat different *agency of intervention* (e.g., Richard Dawkins moving into the “public intellectual” region entails the construction of a different agency of intervention than Naomi Klein). By this concept of “agency of intervention” I mean to emphasize that the answer to “who is moving?” should not be conflated with this or that concrete individual (or social type) because, as noted above regarding Oppenheimer, the momentum of their movement is often not of their own doing, and because the traveler, so to speak, is modified by the travel, by the distance traversed and the obstacles encountered, while their movement also modifies the region in which they travel in

characteristic ways. If repeated and stabilized, this interplay between how the actor is catapulted towards intervention, adapts herself to the road, yet also causes adaptations all around her path, is what I call an “agency of intervention.”

The need to distinguish between concrete individuals and agencies of intervention is the clearest when it comes to *collective* agencies of intervention. The concept of intellectual field permits us to analyze also groups, collectives, networks, even organizations, as participating in the struggle over how to legitimately intervene in public affairs. This was Bourdieu’s (*Corporatism*) criticism of Foucault. In contemporary conditions, he said, the agency of public intervention is most often a “collective intellectual”: a group of experts working together. The same message comes from literature on “epistemic communities” (Haas). The propensity to craft a collective agency of intervention may also be correlated with the region of the intellectual field one occupies. Sapiro argues that “collective intellectuals” abound where the degree of specialization is high while symbolic capital is low. I am not persuaded that these are necessary conditions, but this is certainly suggestive as a starting point for analysis.³

To summarize this first point: once inquiry focuses on the construction of agencies of

intervention, rather than on a social type, the scope of relevant actors is broadened from a few prominent individuals to include the ranks of more “gray” practitioners, especially as they increasingly are to be found working together in collectives—whether located in one strategic site, a public advocacy non-profit, or a (God forbid!) think tank (more about think tanks a little bit later)—or they are distributed in far-flung networks and epistemic communities.

Modes of Intervention

The analytical framework proposed here begun by asking “who is moving?” and developed the concept of “agencies of intervention.” The second step is to ask, *how* do they intervene in public affairs, what are the *modes* of intervention characteristic of different agencies? Here, once again, the term “intellectuals” or “public intellectual” narrows our vision and forestalls a broader investigation. When the term “intellectuals” was first invented, it was in response to a protest letter published in the daily newspaper. The letter was collectively drafted and signed by several prominent academics, men of letters, artists and journalists, who demanded a new trial for Captain Dreyfus (Charle). From then on, when the term “intellectuals” was used, it conjured not only a specific social type

who intervened in public affairs, but also the specific mode, media, and manner of such intervention. Put differently, one of the reasons why the term “public intellectual” functions as boundary work from experts is because it references a restricted set of means (as well as a “style”) by which intervention in public affairs could take place: the manifesto, the signed petition or protest letter, the polemical op-ed piece (and now the blog), the *samizdat* text, the gesture of “revelation,” prophesying, “speaking truth to power,” as well as propounding “transformative ideas” (Bell; Gouldner, *Telos*; Bauman; Sapiro).

As is evident in this short list of means of intervention, there is an intimate link between intellectuals and the concept of *opinion*. Intellectuals, in the classical sense of the term—and as discourse about “public intellectuals” seeks to re-inscribe—intervene by making their opinion known and by seeking to influence the opinions of others, or “public opinion.” This is part of the boundary work that aims to distinguish intellectuals from experts. Opinion, as its etymology indicates, is distinct from knowledge and expertise in three ways: firstly, it is a belief or a conjecture without much support—the only support it has is in “the force of the better argument,” namely rhetoric. Secondly, opinion indicates a preference, the choice to believe one thing and not

another—or, said more flatteringly, “taking a position.” Finally, opinion is couched in terms that are immediately accessible to laypeople. Opinion clarifies, while expertise obfuscates. Opinion clarifies not only by being accessible, but also *because* it is rhetorical and one-sided. Out of the clash of opinions, clarity emerges. As John Milton said in *Areopagitica*, his 1644 polemic tract against censorship and in defense of free speech: “Opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making.”

Yet this boundary work between intellectuals who make their opinions public and experts who provide technical assessments, between polemics and controversies (Chateauraynaud and Torny), is untenable (see also Heredia, unpublished). In contemporary conditions, when technical matters of concern are at the core of political struggles (global warming, economic restructuring, genetically modified foods—the list could be multiplied indefinitely), there is an irreducibly technical dimension to public polemics, just as there is an irreducibly rhetorical dimension to technical controversies (Latour, *Science in Action*; Latour and Weibel). Consequently, opinion strikes me as much too restricted a way to conceptualize what it means to intervene in public affairs, especially if we take into account the interventions made by experts and collectives of practitioners.

The focus on opinion seems calculated to exclude precisely technical expertise and a capacity to produce significant political effects, because it mobilizes robust and lasting “truth effects” in the form of reports, technical documents, expert testimony, even an experimental demonstration (properly publicized); or in the format of numbers, figures, graphs, and formulas, i.e. a “politics of measurement” conducted by modifying how matters of public concern are quantified, measured and represented (Porter; Breslau 39-40; Alonso and Star; Block and Burns).

Instead of the restricted means of intervention indexed by opinion, analysis should utilize a broad repertoire of formats or modes of intervention, all of which involve some hybridization of opinion and the technical armature of expertise. This hybridization is quite obvious in a series of technical products that are submitted to some kind of an adversarial procedure or forum: expert testimony at court; “position papers,” that quintessential product of think tanks; and the “expert opinion” elicited by regulatory agencies. In all these cases, the adversarial procedure or forum does the work of analysis for us, so to speak, since it operates to expose the irreducible rhetorical dimension of technical knowledge, and thus its nature as a form of public intervention. These ex-

amples, however, should merely serve to remind us that often the most efficacious interventions either come black-boxed as charts, figures, numbers, and other technical devices, or they are counter-strategies that aim to open up these black boxes and make the technical public and political, and therefore must be armed with similar technical tools.

A good example is the design of economic indicators. When think tanks like *Redefining Progress* or *New Economics Foundation* design and calculate alternatives to the gross domestic product (GDP) such as, respectively, the “Genuine Progress Indicator” (GPI) and the “Happy Planet Index” (HPI), this involves opening up the black box of the GDP, a technically detailed critique of how the GDP is compiled and measured, and a no less spirited and “opinionated” critique of the assumptions and presuppositions (read: “opinions”) upon which it is based (Eyal and Levy). Moreover, to the extent that these alternative indicators are employed by international, governmental, and non-governmental organizations to assess policy, or even to completely revise the System of National Accounts (SNA) (see Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi), they constitute a formidable intervention in public affairs. This is but one example of what I mean by suggesting that the analysis of public

interventions should incorporate a much broader repertoire of formats or modes of intervention.

Targets of Intervention

The final question to be asked is *where* intervention takes place. The concept of “intellectuals” carries with it a certain normative (Habermasian) vision of its target as the “public sphere,” by which is typically understood a sphere of public *opinion*, an agora populated by reasonable citizens who are presented with conflicting opinions and are capable of adjudicating between them according to the force of the better argument. I argued above that the concept of opinion is too narrow to capture the broad repertoire of contemporary modes of intervention in public affairs. Similar considerations apply when it comes to characterizing the target of public intervention. Modern-day politics, the public affairs wherein intervention should take place, are increasingly about technical affairs regarding which “the public”—understood as laypeople, who read newspapers and possess similar capacities for critical reasoning—is ignorant. This is an inescapable fact, but different conclusions could be drawn from it.

One could react defensively and, with Habermas, suspect that when the conversation gets technical somebody is ob-

fuscating, evading the debate, and using scientific jargon and technical details as ideology. One would, therefore, seek to create mechanisms that filter technical discourse and return the public sphere to an ideal state of pure conversation of opinions.

Or, concurring in diagnosis but diverging in valuation, one could affirm that indeed, because of the increasing technical complexity of public administration, the public is a “phantom”—it is ignorant about these matters, which are known only to experts. Yet the public’s ignorance could also be a strength because this means that it is impartial (Lippmann, *Public Opinion*; *The Phantom Public*; Binkley; Marres; Callon). One could reconstitute the public sphere through mediation of knowledgeable observers who act as honest brokers to guide the public through expert controversies. No doubt Walter Lippman had himself in mind. From 1931 to 1967 he wrote a syndicated column to this effect entitled *Today and Tomorrow*, carried by more than 200 newspapers and reaching an audience of more than ten million (Goodwin).

Lippman would probably have disapproved of the way this vision of mediated (and mediatized) public sphere has become a reality, yet the affinities between his analysis and contemporary realities are undeniable. The main reason why the concept of

“public intellectual” often comes coupled with a narrative of decline and betrayal, especially in the US, is because the task of guiding, mediating, influencing, orchestrating, and even creating public opinion has become the business of think tanks, and they are much better at it than intellectuals, even syndicated ones. It is not a coincidence that the concept of “public intellectual” was coined in the mid-1980s, a time marked by the ascendancy of second-generation think tanks in the American polity, which have professionalized the work of producing opinions and of producing individuals who present an opinionated posture as a way of living—pundits, columnists, commentators, “talking heads”⁴—as well as the work of orchestrating and generating “public opinion” using modern public relations techniques. Collectively, these organizations crowd out, speak over, or buffer the interventions of independent intellectuals (Medvetz).

So if you want to influence public opinion, form a think tank! It is possible, however, to draw a different conclusion from the increasingly technical nature of matters of public concern. My contention, inspired by the contributors to *Making Things Public* (Latour and Weibel), is that the concept of “the public sphere” is misleading in several respects when it comes to characterizing the targets of public intervention, and that

we need to conceptualize these differently. First, the concept of “public sphere” suggests a semi-permanent *arena* where robust conversation goes on uninterrupted among an already constituted social community. This is why contributions in this vein often bemoan the public’s indifference and passivity. The arena—if it exists—is already occupied by think tanks and mediatized discussion, where “the public” does not exist prior to being affected and mobilized by a specific matter of concern. As Marres suggests, following Dewey, we should think of “publics” in the plural as provisional communities formed in response to issues of concern that existing institutions and procedures are unable to handle. It follows that we should not think of the public sphere as a pre-existing arena, a wide *agora* one need only step into to be elevated into public existence. We should think about it as something that flickers in and out of existence, depending on whether “issues spark publics into being” (Marres 213), and perhaps—if we need to stick with spatial metaphors—as a set of tunnels that are often exceedingly narrow and that are always in the process of gumming up if they are not used. In short, in true Kantian fashion, we should never think of the public sphere as a given, but always a *task* (with the implication that as historical conditions change, so does the task; you cannot hope

to excavate today’s public sphere with the tools of yesteryear).

The second point has already been made, but it bears repeating. Concerning technical matters of public concern, intervention cannot be efficacious without being equipped with the armor of expertise, namely: techniques, instruments, demonstrations, figures, charts, numbers. Hence it cannot be a public sphere of merely opinion.⁵ I would argue, moreover, that we have much less to fear about the perceived imbalance between experts and laypeople, which so worried Habermas and which led Lippman to declare the public a “phantom.” To begin with, regarding newly emerging technical matters of public concern, it is often the case that *nobody* is an expert and everybody is ignorant. Intervention in public affairs then becomes partly a matter of creating or assembling expertise where none existed before. This is done by collectives composed of laypeople, activists, and experts, who educate themselves about a technical matter of public concern, and equip themselves with the knowledge and the technical means to craft an intervention (Callon). These collectives not only proliferate today in the sphere of patient activism (Epstein; Rabearisoa and Callon; Eyal et al.), but they are also predominant in environmental politics or the field of “green economics.”

Finally, the concept of “public sphere” is typically contrasted with “the state.” The public sphere of free discussion and opinion formation begins where the state—with its chains of command and obedience, its use of technical discourse as ideology—ends. We have to get rid of this boundary work as well. I suggest we think of the public sphere, or spheres, not as outside the state, but within its boundary, within fuzzy and thick interfaces where expertise and the state interpenetrate and blend into each other (Mitchell; Rose). This is no doubt why Dewey says that the formation of a public involves “the discovery of the state” (Marres 213), namely, what is it? What should it do? What should/could it be? Perhaps the most important question regarding the crafting of public intervention today is precisely about this “discovery of the state” in an era of globalization. Technical matters of public concern involve not just one state, but many, and often all, so that the assembly of a public is tantamount to the discovery of possibilities for truly global governance and coordination. These interfaces between expertise and the state constitute multiple public spheres of sorts, i.e. targets of public intervention that are directly continuous with the work of experts, because there are already established ports into the leviathan, so to speak; there are already institutionalized

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conduits by means of which particular types of expertise are permanently connected to the state. A good example is the aforementioned SNA. It is definitely part of the state since it is compiled on the basis of data collected by administrative agencies of the state (the Department of Commerce in the US), yet it is also an integral part of economic expertise, which not only supplies the tools with which to analyze these data, but also uses the "accounts" as measures of the variables composing general equilibrium models. Indeed, the SNA could also be seen as an "articulated macro level statistical response to the operational demands of a Keynesian economics" (Ward 10). Through the SNA, the state has been "governmentalized" (Foucault, *Governmentality*) and economic expertise has come to occupy a permanent role in the

government of the economy. Only on the basis of this permanent port or interface—within its volume, as it were—could the construction of alternative economic indicators become a form of public intervention, indeed precisely a form of "discovery of the state." Another such permanent port is the General Advisory Committee to the AEC that Oppenheimer led before he was removed. It is an institutionalized interface where the expertise of nuclear physicists blends with and interpenetrates strategic, political, and economic considerations of state agencies and decision-makers. If we focus on Oppenheimer's dissident years, we would perhaps miss the more important and enduring fact that nuclear physicists (like economists) routinely intervene in public affairs not from "outside" the state, but from within its boundary, as

an extension of their work as advisers for the AEC. Thus, to intervene in public affairs means to travel along "the frail conduits through which truths and proofs are allowed to enter the sphere of politics" (Latour, *Realpolitik* 19), to re-open these tunnels where they have gotten gummed up, and to plug into the body of the leviathan by means of these pre-existing ports. To do so, it is impossible—as an institutionalized matter of course—to rely on opinion alone, rather one must come equipped with charts, statistics, experiments, and calculations. Ultimately, the new face of public intervention in the twenty-first century will belong to collectives of experts, laypeople, and activists, equipped with technical tools, who forge new types of expertise and plug into pre-existing ports in the body of the leviathan.

Notes

¹ For the sake of comparison, the term "intellectuals" without qualifiers entered English language discussions during the first decade of the twentieth century (following the Dreyfus affair), enjoyed a steady climb, and peaked around 1970. Discussions of "intellectuals" then declined up till 1985, when they picked up again and returned to 1970

levels around 1995, no doubt due to the coining of the term "public intellectual." A similar search on *JSTOR* found that the conjunction "public intellectual" appeared in the title of 67 articles, the first of which is from 1988 and is a review of Jacoby's book. It had never been used in the title of an article before.

² Of course, "new class" theories also questioned the boundary work between experts and intellectuals, but they did so by totalizing and effacing the distinction between the two (relying implicitly or explicitly on another essentially historical concept, namely the Russian "intelligentsia" [Malia]), and without engaging in the work of reconstruction necessary to identify the enduring

element in the concept of "intellectuals" and convert it into present-day research problems and strategies. For this work, Foucault offers a much better starting point (Eyal and Buchholz 119).

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→ ³ In another paper, my co-author and I have suggested to consider the activity of designing and compiling economic indicators as a form of public intervention (Eyal and Levy). I will have more to say about this shortly, but for the moment let me just note that the individuals who joined together to develop the Human Development Index (HDI) as an alternative to the GDP were by no means low on symbolic capital. The group was led by a former Pakistani government minister of high stature, and included Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. It seems that in this case the mode of intervention—compiling an aggregate index—as well as the public sphere it targeted, the international system of national accounts (SNA), were more important determinants of the type of agency constructed than the factors identified by Sapiro.

⁴ In a play on the old Weberian distinction, we could say that intellectuals live *for opinion*, while pundits (and think tanks) live *of opinion*.

⁵ This observation is closely related to Posner's argument that the production and circulation of public intellectual commentary suffers from a "market failure" due to low barriers to entry and poor quality control that is unable to encourage market exit (Posner 72).

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