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TOWARD A SOVEREIGN SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE: AZERBAIJANI PHILOSOPHY AND EASTERN EPISTEMOLOGIES IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

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Abstract. This article develops a philosophical-sociological critique of Western universalism in the sociology of knowledge by integrating the conceptual approaches of Bourdieu and Foucault with epistemological traditions emerging from the intellectual and philosophical heritage of Azerbaijan. Drawing on my dissertation in philosophical sociology, the study demonstrates how epistemic hierarchies are historically produced through relations of power, and how they reproduce the global dominance of Western modes of thought. Through a comparative lens, I argue that Azerbaijani intellectual traditions—shaped under the influence of Islamic, Turkic, and Persian currents—offer alternative epistemic styles that emphasize relationality, spirituality, and the inseparability of ethics and knowledge, in contrast to the rationalist paradigms of Western thought. Specifically, I draw on Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic power and Foucault’s notion of discourse to reveal the mechanisms through which epistemic domination operates.

The article advances a framework of philosophical sovereignty within the sociology of knowledge that challenges universalist claims by re-embedding epistemic practices in their historical, cultural, and moral contexts—particularly in the Azerbaijani search for intellectual self-determination and national identity. The paper’s original contribution lies in bridging Western critical theory with Azerbaijani philosophical heritage to propose a pluralistic framework for intellectual autonomy and epistemic sovereignty.

Keywords: philosophical sovereignty, sociology of knowledge, philosophical sociology, Bourdieu, Foucault, Azerbaijan, epistemic hierarchies, national philosophy

К СУВЕРЕННОЙ СОЦИОЛОГИИ ЗНАНИЯ: АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСКАЯ ФИЛОСОФИЯ И ВОСТОЧНЫЕ ЭПИСТЕМОЛОГИИ В ГЛОБАЛЬНОМ КОНТЕКСТЕ

Майкл Химмлегард

Резюме. В данной статье рассматривается философско-социологическая критика западного универсализма в социологии знания посредством интеграции концептуальных подходов Пьера Бурдьё и Мишеля Фуко с эпистемологическими традициями, возникшими в интеллектуальном и философском контексте Азербайджана. Опираясь на моё диссертационное исследование по философской социологии, показано, как эпистемические иерархии исторически тесно связаны с формами власти и воспроизводят глобальное господство западных парадигм мышления. В компаративной перспективе выдвигается тезис о том, что азербайджанская интеллектуальная традиция, формировавшаяся под влиянием исламских, тюркских и персидских идейных течений — предлагает альтернативные эпистемические стили, акцентирующие реляционность, духовность и неразрывную связь этики и знания, в противовес рационалистическим парадигмам Запада. В статье, в частности, используется концепция символической власти Бурдьё и понятие дискурса Фуко, что позволяет раскрыть механизмы эпистемического господства.

Статья развивает концепцию философской суверенности в рамках социологии знания, которая оспаривает универсалистские притязания, возвращая эпистемические практики в их конкретные исторические, культурные и моральные контексты — особенно в связи с поиском интеллектуального самоопределения и национальной идентичности Азербайджана.

Оригинальный вклад автора заключается в соединении западной критической теории с азербайджанским философским наследием и в выдвигании плюралистической модели интеллектуальной автономии и эпистемического суверенитета.

Ключевые слова: философская суверенность, социология знания, философская социология, Бурдьё, Фуко, Азербайджан, эпистемические иерархии, национальная философия

MÜSTƏQİL BİLİK SOSİOLOGİYASI: AZƏRBAYCAN FƏLSƏFƏSİ VƏ ŞƏRQ EPİSTEMOLOGİYASI QLOBAL KONTEKSTDƏ

Maykl Himleqard

Xülasə. Bu məqalə bilik sosiologiyasında Qərb universallığının fəlsəfi-sosioloji tənqidini araşdırır; bu məqsədlə Pyer Burdye və Mişel Fukonun konseptual yanaşmaları Azərbaycan fəlsəfi və intellektual irsində formalaşmış epistemoloji ənənələrlə inteqrasiya olunur. Fəlsəfi sosiologiya üzrə dissertasiyama əsaslanaraq belə demək olar ki, bu tədqiqat işi epistemik iyerarxiyaların tarixi olaraq hakimiyyət münasibətləri vasitəsilə necə formalaşdığını və bu iyerarxiyaların Qərb düşüncə formalarının qlobal üstünlüyünü yenidən necə istehsal etdiyini göstərir. Müqayisəli yanaşma prizmasından irəli sürülür ki, İslam, türk və fars intellektual axınlarının təsiri altında formalaşmış Azərbaycan düşüncə ənənəsi münasibətlik, mənəviyyat və etika ilə bilik arasındakı ayrılmaz bağlılığı vurğulayan alternativ epistemik üslublar təklif edir. Burdyenin simvolik güc konsepsiyası və Fukonun diskurs anlayışı əsasında epistemik hökmranlığın mexanizmləri açılır.

Məqalə bilik sosiologiyasında fəlsəfi suverenlik anlayışını inkişaf etdirir və universalist iddiaları tənqid edərək epistemik təcrübələri onların konkret tarixi, mədəni və mənəvi kontekstlərinə — xüsusilə Azərbaycanın intellektual özünüidentifikasiya və milli ideya axtarışına — yenidən yerləşdirir. Müəllifin orijinal töhfəsi Qərb tənqidi nəzəriyyəsinə Azərbaycan fəlsəfi irsi ilə birləşdirməsində və intellektual müstəqillik və epistemik suverenlik üçün plüralist bir çərçivə irəli sürməsidir.

Açar sözlər: fəlsəfi suverenlik, bilik sosiologiyası, fəlsəfi sosiologiya, Burdye, Fuko, Azərbaycan, epistemik iyerarxiyalar, milli fəlsəfə.

Introduction: The Problem of Epistemic Hierarchy

The sociology of knowledge emerged as a critical response to the philosophical illusion of universality. From Mannheim's relationism to Bourdieu's field theory, sociologists have argued that thought is socially situated, historically conditioned, and shaped by struggles for symbolic power. Yet the sociology of knowledge itself has not escaped the gravitational pull of Western epistemological assumptions. Its canonical narratives—from Durkheim to Foucault—have been constructed largely within European intellectual horizons, reproducing what de Sousa Santos (2018) terms *epistemologies of the North*. The result is a paradox: a reflexive discipline that interrogates the social conditions of knowledge production while remaining epistemically parochial. This paradox has also been noted in recent philosophical reflections on sociology in the Azerbaijani context, where the growing dominance of applied empiricism has been criticized for weakening the discipline's theoretical coherence and philosophical self-reflexivity (Mammadzada & Melikli, 2025). Recent work in Azerbaijani philosophy has likewise emphasized the need to critically reassess the epistemic foundations of contemporary knowledge production. In particular, Mammadzada (2025) argues that the philosophy of science must be distinguished from the philosophies of individual disciplines and rethought in light of current debates on artificial intelligence, consciousness, and scientific ethics.

In my dissertation on philosophical sociology, I argued that philosophy—and by extension, all forms of knowledge—is determined by social factors rather than transcendent rational principles. This insight invites a re-examination of epistemic authority itself. If philosophical knowledge is socially

conditioned, whose social world has defined the “universal” standards of reason, truth, and objectivity? To reclaim philosophical sovereignty within the sociology of knowledge is to expose how these standards have been monopolized by the West and to open the field to alternative epistemic grammars—those emerging from the East, from the Global South, and from historical peripheries like Azerbaijan.

1.1. Power and Knowledge: From Epistemic Universalism to Epistemic Domination

Michel Foucault’s analysis of power/knowledge provides a crucial foundation for understanding epistemic hierarchy. Knowledge, Foucault (1977) argued, does not merely describe reality but produces it through discursive formations governed by institutional power. In this sense, Western epistemology functions as a regime of truth: a historically specific configuration that naturalizes its own assumptions while marginalizing others. The sociology of knowledge, when grounded exclusively in European philosophical traditions, risks perpetuating what Quijano (2000) called *the coloniality of power*—the imposition of Western categories of thought as the measure of all knowledge.

Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory complements this perspective by situating knowledge production within structured spaces of struggle. Scientific, philosophical, and academic fields operate according to hierarchies of capital—cultural, social, and symbolic—that determine whose voices are heard, whose theories are legitimate, and whose epistemologies are rendered invisible. In global context, the Western academy occupies a dominant position in this transnational field, exporting its cognitive categories and marginalizing non-Western forms of knowing (Bourdieu, 1990; Go, 2020).

From a Bourdieuan standpoint, reclaiming philosophical sovereignty within the sociology of knowledge requires a reflexive displacement—a conscious awareness of one’s own positionality within the global field of power. It entails not only recognizing the symbolic violence embedded in the academic system but also developing alternative sites of intellectual autonomy outside the Western centers of consecration. The Azerbaijani context, as discussed later, exemplifies both the peripherality and the potential of such sites for philosophical self-determination.

1.2 Why Azerbaijan? A Peripheral Epistemic Geography

Azerbaijan occupies a unique position in the geography of global knowledge. Situated between East and West, Islam and secular modernity, it embodies the entanglement of multiple epistemic traditions. The intellectual heritage of figures such as Mirza Fatali Akhundov, Nariman Narimanov, and Ali bey Huseynzade reflects a continuous negotiation between European rationalism and Eastern metaphysics. Rather than adopting Western epistemology wholesale, Azerbaijani thought has historically emphasized synthesis—an effort to reconcile empirical reason with spiritual insight, social modernity with moral tradition, and individual cognition with collective ethical consciousness (Mammadli, 2019; Hasanli, 2022).

This synthesis is not merely a combination of disparate elements but a dynamic epistemic orientation that seeks to overcome dualisms inherited from both Islamic theology and European Enlightenment rationalism. It represents an ongoing search for intellectual balance that unites rational inquiry with ethical self-reflection, thus constituting a distinctive contribution to global thought and a key expression of Azerbaijan’s philosophical sovereignty. Adıgezalova and Abasov (2025) reinforce this claim by reconstructing medieval Azerbaijani philosophy as a sustained intellectual synthesis shaped by Zoroastrian ethics, Islamic theology, Sufi metaphysics, and Eastern Peripatetic rationalism. By framing the region as a philosophical center of intercultural exchange rather than a derivative margin, their analysis supports the argument that Azerbaijan’s epistemic traditions can function as autonomous sources of conceptual innovation within global theory.

This synthesis offers fertile ground for rethinking the sociology of knowledge. While Western epistemology often separates the knower from the known, the Azerbaijani and broader Eastern traditions view knowledge as inherently relational and ethical—a process of becoming rather than possession. Such an approach undermines the Cartesian legacy of disembodied rationality and re-centers knowledge within lived experience, collective memory, and moral responsibility. In this sense, Azerbaijan’s philosophical tradition illustrates how a peripheral intellectual culture can assert its own autonomous path, shaping universal questions through a nationally grounded epistemic vision.

1.3 Aim and Contribution

The purpose of this article is threefold. First, it reconstructs the philosophical-sociological critique of Western universalism by integrating the insights of Bourdieu and Foucault with the relational

epistemology articulated in my dissertation. Second, it situates Azerbaijani intellectual traditions within the global sociology of knowledge, not as exotic curiosities but as expressions of a sovereign philosophical culture capable of generating original theoretical perspectives.

Third, it advances a framework for understanding how epistemic authority is produced, contested, and potentially democratized in a multipolar world through the assertion of philosophical self-determination rather than through any externally defined “decolonial” discourse.

The argument unfolds in three steps. Section 2 elaborates the theoretical framework, combining philosophical sociology with the concept of intellectual sovereignty. Section 3 applies this framework to the analysis of Azerbaijani thought as an alternative epistemic style and discusses its implications for a globally inclusive and culturally autonomous sociology of knowledge.

2. Theoretical Framework: Philosophical Sociology and the Assertion of Philosophical Sovereignty

2.1. Philosophical Sociology as a Reflexive Critique of Universalism

Philosophical sociology, as articulated in my dissertation, begins with the assumption that philosophical knowledge—like all knowledge—is socially determined. It rejects the idea of a transcendental reason detached from historical and social contexts. Instead, it views knowledge as embedded within fields of practice and structured by power relations, symbolic hierarchies, and institutional logics. At its core, philosophical sociology seeks a form of philosophical sovereignty—that is, the capacity of thought to critically reflect on its own historical and moral boundaries rather than accept inherited epistemic frameworks as self-evident truths.

This orientation places philosophical sociology in direct conversation with Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology and Foucault’s archaeology of knowledge, while extending their insights toward a deeper reflexive critique of the very conditions that make philosophy possible.

Whereas Bourdieu (1990, 1992) conceived the scientific field as a system of positions organized by struggles over symbolic capital, Foucault (1977, 1980) showed how discourses produce and discipline subjects through regimes of truth. Both theorists dissolve the Enlightenment distinction between knowledge and power. In doing so, they open a space for analyzing how epistemic hierarchies are socially produced. Philosophical sociology builds upon this reflexive analysis, emphasizing not only the social embeddedness of knowledge but also the moral and self-reflective responsibility of the knower.

Philosophical sociology extends this analysis one step further. It reveals how even the most abstract philosophical categories—truth, reason, objectivity—are products of social structures and cultural milieus. This awareness of philosophy’s internal limits and conditions of possibility constitutes an act of epistemic self-reflection—a recognition that thought must continuously interrogate its own foundations. Following Mannheim’s early insight into relationism, my approach traces the social genealogy of ideas without collapsing them into mere ideology. To sociologize philosophy is not to relativize truth arbitrarily but to historicize the very conditions under which truth becomes thinkable and to reclaim the autonomy of philosophical inquiry within its socio-historical boundaries. A similar insistence on the necessity of philosophical self-reflection within sociology is articulated by Mammadzada and Melikli (2025), who argue that sociology loses its critical capacity when detached from philosophical inquiry into its own epistemological and normative foundations.

This reflexive move is crucial for asserting philosophical sovereignty. Western universalism has long rested on the fiction of a neutral reason standing above history and geography. Yet as Santos (2018) and Bhambra (2021) remind us, such neutrality is a form of epistemic domination—it erases the localities of knowledge and re-presents Western particularity as universal validity. In this sense, philosophical sociology asserts a moral and epistemic sovereignty—a capacity for critical self-grounding that resists the universalizing authority of Western epistemology. Properly understood, it offers a methodological antidote: it exposes the hidden sociology of “universal reason” itself and reclaims the possibility of situated, plural, and ethically aware knowledge.

2.2. Bourdieu: The Field of Knowledge and Symbolic Domination

Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of knowledge provides a powerful analytical lens for examining how epistemic hierarchies are reproduced. In *Science of Science and Reflexivity* (2004), Bourdieu conceptualized the scientific field as a space of positions structured by unequal distributions of capital—economic, social, cultural, and symbolic. The authority of knowledge is not purely epistemic but deeply

social: it derives from the ability to impose the *nomos* of the field, the taken-for-granted rules that define what counts as legitimate knowledge.

When transposed to the global scale, this model exposes how Western academic institutions function as the dominant pole in the world’s epistemic field. They define the standards of publication, the lingua franca of theory, and the criteria of scientific legitimacy. As Alatas (2020) notes, the “global division of intellectual labor” situates Western theorists as producers of concepts and non-Western scholars as providers of empirical data. This epistemic asymmetry mirrors the economic and political hierarchies of global capitalism.

From a Bourdieuan standpoint, asserting philosophical sovereignty within the sociology of knowledge requires reflexive displacement—a conscious awareness of one’s own positionality within the global field of power. It entails not only recognizing the symbolic violence embedded in the academic system but also developing alternative sites of intellectual autonomy outside the Western centers of consecration. The Azerbaijani context, as discussed later, exemplifies both the peripherality and the potential of such sites.

2.3. Foucault: Power/Knowledge and the Genealogy of Epistemic Hierarchies

While Bourdieu uncovers the structural mechanisms of epistemic domination, Foucault reveals its discursive microphysics. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault demonstrates that power and knowledge are not separate domains but mutually constitutive forces. Knowledge operates through discursive formations that determine what can be said, thought, and known within a given historical period.

The colonial encounter represents a paradigmatic case of such a discursive formation. As Bhattacharya (2020) and Mignolo (2018) argue, colonial power did not simply conquer territories—it redefined the epistemic conditions of truth. The “civilizing mission” was simultaneously a project of epistemic conversion, compelling colonized societies to internalize Western categories of science, reason, and progress. In Foucaultian terms, colonialism functioned as a global disciplinary regime that normalized Eurocentric epistemology and marginalized alternative cognitive traditions.

Within the sociology of knowledge, these mechanisms persist as what Connell (2019) calls *Northern theory*: a corpus of abstract, universalizing paradigms that derive from the specific social history of Europe but masquerade as context-free truth. The challenge is not merely to add new voices to the canon but to reconstruct the epistemic grammar of sociology itself—to assert the autonomy of philosophical reason grounded in diverse historical experiences, such as that of Azerbaijan.

2.4 Toward an Azerbaijani Philosophy of Sovereignty: Relational, Ethical, and Situated

Against this backdrop, the Azerbaijani intellectual tradition offers a distinct philosophical orientation grounded in ethical and relational modes of thought. Rather than construing knowledge as an autonomous realm of propositions, it conceives of knowledge as an ethical relation between self, community, and cosmos. As Rahimli (2020) observes, classical Azerbaijani philosophy—deeply influenced by Islamic thought, Turkic humanism, and the quest for moral balance—does not separate epistemology from ontology or ethics. Knowing is a process of moral cultivation, a striving for harmony between the inner and outer worlds.

In this tradition, knowledge is not owned but embodied. It arises through dialogical encounters rather than competitive refutations, through reflection and reverence rather than domination. This stands in sharp contrast to the Cartesian model of the isolated knower or the positivist image of detached observation. By foregrounding the relational and the ethical, Azerbaijani philosophical culture demonstrates how intellectual maturity is inseparable from moral integrity. It represents a search for philosophical sovereignty—the ability of a culture to think from within its own moral, historical, and linguistic foundations without submitting to external epistemic hierarchies.

My dissertation aligns with this vision. It proposes that all philosophical knowledge, including that of the West, is a social practice sustained by communities of belief, shared languages, and symbolic struggles. To strengthen the sociology of knowledge through philosophical sovereignty is therefore not to reject theory, but to diversify its origins—to recognize that reason has many homes and that truth emerges from multiple, nationally rooted traditions of thought. In the Azerbaijani case, this means restoring the continuity between philosophical reflection, ethical life, and collective identity.

2.5 A Reflexive Synthesis: Toward an Autonomous Philosophical Sociology

Bringing together these perspectives yields what may be called an autonomous philosophical sociology. This framework rests on three interrelated propositions:

1. Epistemic practices are socially and historically situated. There is no view from nowhere. Every claim to knowledge arises from a specific configuration of social relations, institutions, and power structures.

2. Western epistemology functions as a global field of domination whose universalism conceals the historical particularity of the European experience while marginalizing other epistemic traditions.

3. Azerbaijani philosophy, as part of a broader Eastern intellectual heritage, embodies relational, ethical, and pluralistic modes of knowing that can expand the conceptual repertoire of the sociology of knowledge.

Such a synthesis transforms philosophical sociology into a tool of intellectual self-determination. It retains the methodological rigor of sociological analysis while affirming the moral and cultural autonomy of local philosophical traditions. In doing so, it not only critiques the Western canon but also reconstructs sociology itself as a genuinely plural and self-reflexive discipline—one capable of acknowledging the sovereignty of thought as a universal human aspiration.

3. Analysis and Conclusion: Azerbaijani Philosophy as Intellectual Sovereignty

3.1. Rethinking Knowledge Through the Azerbaijani Lens

To affirm philosophical sovereignty within the sociology of knowledge is to provincialize Europe—not by dismissing its intellectual legacy, but by situating it among others. Azerbaijan provides a particularly revealing case because it has historically been a contact zone of civilizations: a crossroads of Turkic nomadic cultures, Persian scholastic traditions, Islamic mysticism, and Russian secular modernity. This complex layering has produced an epistemic culture that is inherently plural and resistant to totalizing universalism.

Classical Azerbaijani thinkers such as Nizami Ganjavi (12th century) and later Mirza Fatali Akhundov (19th century) embodied this hybridity. Nizami’s poetic cosmology articulated a vision of knowledge inseparable from beauty and moral perfection, while Akhundov’s reformist writings combined Enlightenment rationalism with ethical humanism rooted in Islamic philosophy. As Mammadli (2019) emphasizes, this synthesis did not merely imitate European thought but transformed it through local sensibilities, producing what he calls “transversal rationality.”

From a sociological standpoint, this transversal rationality destabilizes the dichotomy between modern and traditional, reason and faith, East and West. It enacts what Bourdieu might describe as a field inversion: the subaltern epistemic actor reclaims interpretive power by redefining the stakes of the intellectual field. Azerbaijani philosophers have long practiced such inversions—not through confrontation but through retranslation, reinterpretation, and ethical renewal.

This mode of epistemic practice constitutes a form of philosophical self-determination: a refusal to be absorbed by Western categories without resorting to isolationism. It demonstrates that intellectual autonomy is not achieved by opposition, but through the creative reconfiguration of one’s own epistemic resources.

3.2. The Ethical Turn: Knowledge as Care

A salient feature of Azerbaijani philosophy is its ethical orientation. Knowledge is never neutral; it is bound to responsibility, community, and care. The Sufi-inflected traditions that permeate Azerbaijani thought emphasize the transformation of the self as the precondition for knowing the world. This perspective resonates with Foucault’s later notion of *care of the self* (*le souci de soi*)—a practice through which truth is not discovered but lived (Foucault, 1984).

However, whereas Foucault’s model emerged from Greco-Roman ethics, the Azerbaijani tradition situates this care within a cosmology of unity (*tawhid*), where the self, society, and cosmos are interdependent manifestations of divine order. As a result, epistemic authority stems not from mastery but from humility; not from objectification but from participation.

This ethical relationality offers a profound critique of Western academic culture. The modern university, as Bourdieu (1990) and Go (2020) note, often rewards the competitive accumulation of symbolic capital, transforming knowledge into an economy of distinction. In contrast, the Azerbaijani model frames knowledge as service—to truth, to community, and to the moral equilibrium of the world.

Such an ethic of responsibility could recalibrate global academia toward more cooperative and pluralistic modes of inquiry, reaffirming the moral foundations of philosophical sovereignty.

3.3. Genealogies of Resistance: From Periphery to Intellectual Center

The history of Azerbaijani intellectual life reveals recurring moments of epistemic resistance and renewal. During the Soviet era, Azerbaijani scholars navigated the tension between Marxist orthodoxy and indigenous modes of thought. Philosophers such as Huseyn Javid and Jafar Jabbarli employed allegorical language to sustain metaphysical reflection within a materialist framework. Beyond this early period, successive generations of Azerbaijani philosophers—from the 1920s–30s through the 1970s–80s, including figures such as Heydar Huseynov, Rza Vekilov, and Fazil Rahimzadeh—continued to negotiate the boundaries between ideological conformity and intellectual autonomy. Their works illustrate an evolving attempt to preserve philosophical inquiry within the constraints of Soviet discourse, transforming Marxist categories into vehicles for ethical and ontological reflection.

This creative subversion exemplifies what Foucault (1980) would call *reverse discourse*: the appropriation of dominant categories to articulate suppressed knowledge. Post-independence intellectual movements continue this struggle. As Hasanli (2022) documents, the resurgence of cultural and spiritual scholarship in Baku represents not a nostalgic return to tradition but a quest for intellectual sovereignty—a “third way” that transcends both Westernization and isolationism.

Through institutional reforms, new translation projects, and interdisciplinary research, Azerbaijani academia is redefining its role in the global field of knowledge production. Such efforts demonstrate that asserting intellectual autonomy does not require rejecting science or rationality; rather, it involves situating them within plural ontologies and ethical frameworks. As Santos (2018) writes, “the future of knowledge is ecological: it lives in diversity.” The Azerbaijani case thus exemplifies how a formerly peripheral epistemology can become a generative center of sovereign global thought.

3.4. Integrating Azerbaijani Philosophical Traditions into the Sociology of Knowledge

Integrating Azerbaijani philosophical traditions into the sociology of knowledge calls for methodological pluralism. The prevailing positivist and critical paradigms, though powerful, are insufficient to capture the relational and ethical dimensions of non-Western thought. A sovereign philosophical sociology should therefore embrace three methodological shifts:

1. From explanation to translation. Instead of explaining Azerbaijani philosophy through Western categories, researchers should translate across epistemic languages—acknowledging untranslatables as sites of theoretical creativity.

2. From critique to dialogue. Sovereignty in philosophy is not a withdrawal from global exchange, but a dialogical reconstruction of shared intellectual space. This involves recognizing the partiality of all standpoints and fostering intercultural learning.

3. From universality to plurality. The goal is not a single universal epistemology but a constellation of autonomous traditions—each contributing from its own locus of experience and value.

In this sense, the sociology of knowledge becomes not merely a study of ideas about society, but a practice of co-creating knowledge through mutual recognition. The Azerbaijani tradition—with its emphasis on ethical self-transformation, dialogical inquiry, and the unity of reason and spirituality—provides a viable model for such a plural and sovereign sociology of knowledge.

3.5. Conclusion: Toward a Sovereign Sociology of Knowledge

This article has sought to reassert philosophical sovereignty within the sociology of knowledge by reinterpreting its theoretical foundations through the lens of Azerbaijani thought. Drawing on the philosophical sociology developed in my dissertation, and informed by the works of Bourdieu and Foucault, I have argued that epistemic hierarchies are not accidents of history but systematic effects of power. The global dominance of Western epistemology persists because it is embedded in institutional fields, discursive regimes, and symbolic economies that privilege certain ways of knowing over others.

Azerbaijani philosophy offers pathways beyond this impasse. It reminds us that knowledge is relational, ethical, and situated—that truth is not a possession but a practice of moral attunement to the world and to others. By recognizing the autonomy and plurality of philosophical traditions, the sociology of knowledge can evolve from a Eurocentric critique into a genuinely global dialogue based on mutual sovereignty.

The task ahead is both theoretical and institutional. Theoretical, because it demands rethinking the very categories—truth, rationality, objectivity—on which sociology has been built. Institutional, because it requires transforming the global structures that govern academic legitimacy, funding, and publication. Asserting philosophical sovereignty thus means democratizing the field of knowledge: making room for voices, concepts, and traditions long marginalized by the myth of universality.

In this renewed landscape, Azerbaijani philosophy stands not at the periphery but at the frontier—a living testament to the enduring human aspiration for intellectual self-determination and the freedom to think from one’s own ground.

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