

Viviana Zelizer receives honorary doctorate from Sciences Po

During a ceremony on November 13, 2019, Sciences Po in Paris awarded the sociologist Viviana Zelizer and the economist Joseph Stiglitz the titles of Doctor Honoris Causa. This distinction was given to Professor Zelizer for her work as the founder of a new school of economic sociology, and to Professor Stiglitz as the leading figure of the new Keynesian economy.

Created in 1918, the title of Doctor honoris causa is one of the most prestigious distinctions awarded by French higher education institutions to honor "people of foreign nationalities because of outstanding services to science, literature or the arts, to France or to the higher education institution that awards the title."

*The European Economic Sociology Newsletter has the pleasure of publishing the *éloge* by Professor Jeanne Lazarus, who delivered the commendation at the award ceremony, and the transcription of Professor Viviana Zelizer's acceptance speech. (Jeanne Lazarus' *éloge* was translated from French by Troy Tice.)*

Praise by Jeanne Lazarus

Mr. Director, dear Frédéric Mion

Dear colleagues

Dear students

Dear Professor Stiglitz

Dear Professor Zelizer, dear Viviana,

In consultation with you, I will deliver this address in your mother tongue, or more accurately, the mother tongue of your mother: French.

Viviana Zelizer is a sociologist and has been a professor of Sociology at Princeton since 1988. If the Department of Sociology at Sciences Po has chosen to award her the title "Doctor Honoris Causa," it is because, for many of us, Viviana Zelizer is a reference, an inspiration, and a scholar whose personality we admire as much as her work.

Viviana is arguably the most well-known and widely recognized

female economic sociologist in the world. Her work demonstrates that in contemporary societies since industrialization and the advent of a capitalist economy, the economy and intimacy are paradoxically regarded as needing to remain separate even though they are deeply intertwined: intimate relations overlap with economic issues, economic practices intersect with social, cultural, and ethical issues. And yet, our societies carry out an enormous amount of work in order to create boundaries between the economic and the intimate and to give the impression that these spheres are impervious to one another. How this work is carried out and its implications for how we organize our societies is at the heart of Viviana Zelizer's research.

The work of separation is profoundly political even though it does not present itself as such: the political challenge of the twentieth century was to have the economy accepted as a world apart, obey-

ing its own neutral rules, endowed with their alleged rationality. The early twenty-first century has called this certainty into question. Not only are the social consequences of economic decisions required to be taken into consideration, but more importantly the very idea of a neutral economy, of an economy that purports to be apolitical, amoral, detached from all ethical considerations, can no longer be maintained.

Social criticism influences both corporations, which now have "social responsibility" departments, and governments, whose economic policies are called into question when they do not consider their consequences on society. The interaction between economic activity and society, which Viviana Zelizer has described since the late 1970s, is higher on the agenda than ever before.

Viviana Zelizer was born in Buenos Aires to a Jewish family from Europe. Her mother came

from an important family in the French Jewish community. Viviana, then, was brought up in a multilingual environment, a fact that allowed her to work for a time as an interpreter between English, Spanish, and French. She left Argentina to study sociology at Columbia University in the United States where she obtained her master's degree, then her doctorate in 1977. She taught first at Barnard College, a women's college affiliated with Columbia. She became a professor there and chaired the Sociology Department before moving to Princeton in 1988, becoming one of the major figures in Sociology at the prestigious university.

Her doctoral supervisor was Bernard Barber, himself a student of Talcott Parsons. Together with Mark Granovetter and Richard Swedberg, she was part of the generation of sociologists who decided to reexamine the great disciplinary division that had taken place a few years earlier, a division encapsulated in the slogan attributed to Talcott Parsons: value for economics, values for sociology. Challenging this division, these young sociologists then founded, largely around network analysis, what they called the "new economic sociology," whose aim was to demonstrate the importance of social ties in markets.

Viviana Zelizer brought to economic sociology, if you will pardon the pun, a *voix différente* and a *voie différente*, "a different voice" and "a different path." She has succeeded in making gifts, the circulation of money within the family, consumption, and the informal economy central to inquiry. That was a challenge. It took some time for Viviana Zelizer to be considered an economic sociologist by men working on "serious" subjects like businesses, networks, or trust. However, it is clear that if the new

economic sociology had several founding fathers, it had only one founding mother: Viviana.

It was while working on these subjects, seemingly less serious than markets and high finance,

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that Viviana was chosen as the first chair of the Economic Sociology section of the American Sociological Association, which since 2003 each year gives the Zelizer Book Award to the best book on economic sociology. But perhaps the most obvious mark of recognition is that there is not a course on economic sociology in the entire world that does not grapple with her work.

This is not an anecdotal issue, nor is it a matter of indulging ourselves by emphasizing supposed gender differences in approaches to the economy – men study markets and finance, women the domestic sphere – but rather a central scientific question. A significant number of economists, and as well as sociologists, consider "real" economics to be about businesses, finance, and "serious" markets, while domestic money, money that passes between individuals, is perceived as peripheral and incidental. Yet if domestic money is deemed to be a peripheral subject, then the demonstration of this money's multiple social meanings – derived from culture, religion, relationships among people, etc. – will not be transposed to the rest of the economy and will not undermine the idea that the economic world is governed only by cold rationality. Or more precisely, if the division

between the domestic economy and the real, or serious, economy is maintained, then any manifestation of culture or socialization in economic practices will be classified as "bias."

On the contrary, Viviana Zelizer's work affirms that economic practices, not only in the domestic space but as a whole, cannot establish themselves without being consistent with the culture and the ethics of the societies to which they belong; therefore, ethical norms need to be transformed if previously unacceptable markets, practices, and forms of calculation are to be developed. Culture is not a bias; it is the foundation of all economic practice.

Viviana's early work on life insurance was already a way of moving between the different regions of economic life. Life insurance is a multi-billion-dollar industry that mobilizes financial markets and state-of-the-art calculation techniques to measure risk, uses the best of financial engineering and requires a suitable legal framework. We are at the very heart of "real" markets. Yet the history of this industry is a history of morality and ethics. Viviana's hypothesis, supported by exhaustive archival research, is that life insurance could only develop the moment a good death was redefined in conjunction with the redefinition of the role of the head of the family. No longer did good Christian husbands and fathers have only to prepare themselves spiritually for the afterlife,

they also had, perhaps above all, to anticipate the financial consequences their deaths would have on their families. Since then, if life insurance has become such an important North American industry, it is not thanks to actuarial work or the quality of the calculations, but because of the ethical work undertaken as such by its promoters.

Her work on life insurance continued with a book with the magnificent title *Pricing the Priceless Child*, published in 1985. By exploring the monetary valuation of children, i.e., their work, the cost of adoptions and, more dramatically, financial compensation paid in the event of accidents, Viviana entered areas that are now considered taboo, but which have not always been so. It was in the middle of the nineteenth century that the American middle classes invented the child with no economic value. From the moment children were taken out of the workplace to become schoolchildren, parents no longer had their children to count on to support them in their old age but from now on had to make sure to provide for their unproductive children who were focused on their education. Modern family values dictate that money spent on children is not counted, which renders the child, literally and figuratively, “priceless.”

The sacralization of family values and children, which must make them impervious to any economic valuation, has paradoxically made both calculating the costs associated with family matters a taboo *and* the education of children extremely expensive, as North American families know all too well. (As everyone knows, French families are not concerned by these changes!) Families take on debt, sometimes putting themselves in financial danger in order to live up to social expectations. Shedding light on this economic aspect of the family enables us to

better understand the many political issues discussed today, in France and elsewhere. To start a family in today’s world is both to be able to support one’s needs and one’s children until they become independent and enter the job market. If economic conditions no longer allow households to do so, considerable violence is done to people who are unable to fulfill their moral role as parents.

Viviana’s best-known work in France is her work on money. Her only book translated into French, *The Social Meaning of Money*, attacks a well-established idea among economists but also among sociologists: that money is simply a necessary tool in exchanges, neutral and odorless. This supposed neutrality would be its strength: it could evaluate everything, authorize exchanges between anyone, anytime, anywhere. Yet it is also what it is criticized for: it would impoverish collective life by imposing a single value system, making everything and every person comparable. The increased circulation of money would have given birth to a rationalistic, calculating humanity that risked, if it had not already done so, losing its soul in modern, monetarized society.

Viviana pushes back against these two correlated conceptions of money: it is not neutral and impersonal, and it does not destroy social ties. Once again, her careful study of families enables her to deploy her arguments. She teaches that money has an odor, and that its users appropriate it and color it with social, cultural, or emotional meanings. Her analysis here is also grounded in the social changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: money entered every household, including the poorest. Actors “earmarked” it according to its origin (lottery winnings, gifts, salaries, illegal income, etc.), its function (money for rent, coal,

food, leisure, etc.), and its user (wife, husband, children).

Viviana Zelizer’s sociology of money states that money does not impose its logics unilaterally but that it is domesticated. It is colored by its users. Thus, preexisting power relations, between men and women for example, will be found in how people use domestic money. At the same time, this is not meant to imply that the presence of money has no effect on ways of life and moral values. Only that this transformation is reciprocal. It should be minutely observed in order to understand its form.

Thus, to really understand the economy, Viviana decided to explore intimacy. Her sources were very original: press clippings, home economics textbooks, advice to newlyweds, professional booklets, advertising materials, etc. But it is in court archives that she has found the most material for understanding how we have come to live in a world where the economy and the intimate are deeply intertwined although the prevailing ethical code asserts that these spheres are hostile and must remain separate.

We manage to keep these spheres separated, Viviana tells us, because individually and collectively we produce an immense and permanent relational work. In each of the spaces of social life that we encounter, we make arrangements that Viviana calls “economic circuits” and that are made up of a specific arrangement of four elements: ties among participants; transactions; the means of exchange; and the circuit’s boundaries.

When the relational work fails, judges are brought in; before the courts, the law is asked to categorize and reshape the boundaries between the economy and intimacy as society imagined them. Judges must decide whether a transfer of money between a man and a woman is a gift or the payment of a ben-

efit; whether a divorced parent is obligated to pay for their children's university education; whether domestic work is a service or a job, or whether a friend who helps out is an undeclared employee. What the courts are looking at in these cases is never "purely" economic or "purely" intimate. Lawyers provide them with all kinds of evidence: employment contracts, professional regulations, descriptions of the activity under question but also reports on the intimate ties that bind people, restaurant bills whose totals will be deemed justifiable or illegitimate depending on the relationship between the parties and more broadly arguments on the "normal" and "appropriate" nature of the relationships and the cash flows they generate.

The court draws the moral boundaries of the relationships between parents and children, between a lawyer and a client, between lovers, or between a domestic worker and their employers. Within these boundaries, it is crucial that the relationship, the transaction and the means of exchange match. In order to separate the good uses of money from the bad, we have categories such as corruption, prostitution, theft, but on closer inspection, and especially in court cases, their boundaries are much less clear than our moral comfort would like. Newspapers are full of the issues that fascinate us, whether the tabloid newspapers that flaunt the family wars waged over the wills of famous singers¹ or the more serious newspapers that cover the recent dismissal of the McDonald's executive who had an intimate relationship with a subordinate or that wonder whether the luxurious meals the president of the National Assembly had served to his friends were really "professional."² In each of these cases, there is recourse to the law but also to morality. These eminently Zelizerian subjects fill our

conversations. Evidence for the intermingling of the intimate and the economic is ever under our eyes, and yet we continue, through relational work, to maintain the fiction of separations which are meant to protect the purity of each of these spheres.

Relational work is not an individual issue: marriage contracts, birth certificates, employment contracts, or declarations of interest are social translations of this relational work, i.e., of the walls we try to build in order to know where we fit in society, how to act with others and integrate the existence of the inevitable financial flows without money destroying social ties.

This approach paves the way for multiple investigations, multiple comparisons: people do not marry or divorce in the same way or at the same cost in France, the United States, China or Algeria. The "right" way to care for children and the elderly also differs. Can people entrust their sick children or parents to someone outside the family? The answer to this question is moral, cultural; it is also institutional and translated into the different forms of the welfare state. The stakes are of fundamental importance to our societies. They are a source of conflict within families, but also of political conflict. People take to the streets to defend their purchasing power and their retirement, to protest a hike in metro fares. In the end, it is a matter of making their idea of the proper way to live coincide with their economic possibilities.

French scholars have known, read, and used Viviana Zelizer's work for a long time. In 1992, her first article in French appeared in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, the journal founded by Pierre Bourdieu. It is striking that Viviana can reconcile all the trends of French sociology. The seminars she gave when she visited Par-

is brought together in the same room those who usually crossed paths trading barbs in the pages of journal articles. This recognition in different or even opposing epistemic universes is probably due to the ecumenism of her approach that interests historians, sociologists of the family and intimacy, scholars interested in care work, as well as economic sociologists. It is also linked to the fact that Viviana Zelizer does not enter into academic quarrels but offers her own vision of society, which she sets out in a very calm, non-aggressive way, so much so that she – almost always – steers clear of economic sociologists' favorite sport, the one thing they can all agree on: the criticism of our economist friends!

For Viviana Zelizer is a great thinker, and I would like, if I may, to take advantage of this ceremony – which has seen some of my fellow sociologists wear a gown for the first time in their lives – to reflect on what greatness is for an academic.

A great thinker delineates the world differently and reorganizes causalities. In doing so, they open up new avenues of research, pushing us to question elements that together we had not seen or thought of before. And what Viviana does, on top of that, is provide us with the tools to think. After having illuminated zones of social life that we did not see, she gives us the categories of thought to make sense of them.

This helps us to understand why Viviana is so cited and respected: her work paves the way with generosity. It offers us a new way of seeing and questioning the world and provides us with a toolkit to take with us when we explore it.

This generosity is also reflected in the way Viviana encourages younger students and researchers. I had the chance to see it firsthand when we first met. I had not even started my master's degree, yet

you, Viviana, kindly gave me your time, attention, and advice. A few years ago, in the almost familial atmosphere of a symposium celebrating the twentieth anniversary of *The Social Meaning of Money* in Paris, scholars came from across Europe and the Americas to speak about the importance your work has had for them and to express something of the richness of the paths that you opened. I remember the attention you gave everyone, switching easily from Spanish to French to English, asking questions, showing an interest in each person that was far from feigned. This is evident from the care with which you frequently cite your students' most recent work in your writings, work carried out across the world by researchers interested in the subjects you have explored. Academic greatness is also defined by the benevolence and concern shown to younger scholars.

As will be obvious by now, I have great admiration for Viviana Zelizer, and it is both a great joy and a great honor to have been able, on behalf of Sciences Po, to share it with her today.

Acceptance speech by Viviana Zelizer

**Chers collègues, chers étudiants
Professeur Stiglitz
Mesdames, Messieurs,**

Quel grand honneur et quelle joie de recevoir cette émouvante distinction de la part de Sciences Po, une institution universitaire avec une si brillante histoire, si influente au niveau national et international. Je suis également reconnaissante à Jeanne Lazarus et au formidable département de sociologie de Sciences Po. Vous avez

rassemblé une équipe qui contribue à notre discipline en général et spécifiquement à la sociologie économique avec des travaux importants et innovants. Je remercie vivement Jeanne pour son éloge: pour ma part je connais et admire ses recherches, spécialement ses efforts pour établir des liens entre les études sur la financiarisation et sur l'économie domestique, aussi bien que son intérêt pour l'étude de la moralité des transactions financières. Jeanne et ses collègues à Sciences Po font partie du renouveau de la sociologie économique.

Je voudrais aussi remercier Marina Abelskaia-Graziani pour avoir facilité si efficacement et avec tant de gentillesse ma visite.

Dans quelques instants, je reviendrai au sujet de la sociologie économique. Mais entre-temps, permettez moi quelques remarques personnelles qui expliqueront en partie mon plaisir d'être ici. Née en Argentine d'une mère française et d'un père argentin, j'ai grandi dans un monde bilingue français-espagnol bien avant d'aborder d'autres langues. Mon grand-père Simon Weill, née à Paris, rue Baudin en 1879, ingénieur agronome émigré en Argentine au début du vingtième siècle pour diriger une entreprise agricole a reçu la légion d'honneur pour sa participation à la première guerre mondiale.

Dans mon cas, émigrée aux Etats-Unis après mes premières études universitaires, je suis devenue, peut-être paradoxalement, spécialiste de l'histoire culturelle et économique américaine. Mais deux éléments inattendus m'ont rappelé mes racines françaises. D'abord, la traduction française de mon livre *La Signification sociale de l'argent*, préfacée par Jérôme Bourdieu et Johan Heilbron, m'a mise en contact avec des chercheurs français; ce qui m'a ouvert les yeux sur l'épanouissement des sciences humaines en France. En même temps, j'ai établi un échange in-

tellectuel et des amitiés profondes avec plusieurs collègues français. Tout cela m'a ouvert la voie d'une conversation inspirante avec des économistes et sociologues français, une conversation qui continue. Et qui aujourd'hui atteint une merveilleuse nouvelle dimension.

Vous m'excuserez, je l'espère, de continuer mon exposé en anglais, ma langue de travail malgré mes origines hispanophones et francophones.³

Let me start by noting that sharing this honor with Professor Stiglitz adds to the wonder of today's event. Not only because I have been his longtime fan, but because it foregrounds possibilities of interdisciplinary dialogue between economics and sociology. As it turns out, an intellectual highlight of my last few decades has been the growing exchange of ideas with economists. Especially memorable, several years ago, Princeton economist Avinash Dixit and I co-organized an Economics & Sociology workshop – the first such effort at our university, hosting speakers from both disciplines whose work focused on the social organization of economic life.

I was further drawn into the world of economics as member of the advisory council for the Paris School of Economics, as it re-organized the teaching of economics in Paris. And, also in Paris, five years ago I had the great honor of participating in an interdisciplinary conference organized by Florence Weber and other collaborators for the twentieth anniversary of my book *The Social Meaning of Money*, bringing together economists and sociologists into productive dialogue. Finally, only a few weeks ago, I had the privilege of delivering the inaugural lecture honoring Elinor Ostrom, a political scientist, on the tenth anniversary of her Economics Nobel Prize. Ostrom, the first woman to receive the Economics

Nobel, was an ardent supporter of interdisciplinary dialogue, as necessary for identifying as she put it: “the common work parts of all this buzzing confusion that surrounds our lives.”

These are interesting times for both economics and economic sociology in their separate attempts to make sense of that “buzzing confusion.” Certainly, we are witnessing exciting new developments within economics, as with the latest Nobel Prize awards. But don’t worry, I won’t talk to you about economics when we have a greater expert in the room.

Instead, here’s what I see from the perch of economic sociology. After almost half a century studying economic life, and more specifically trying to make sense of intersections among economic activities, interpersonal relations, and shared culture, I am encouraged by the newest developments in our field. Let me indulge briefly in telling you about my own path within economic sociology and how it connects to more recent research in the field. Awards, much like birthdays, trigger such reflections on past, present, and future.

When I began my academic journey during the 1970s, I never in fact imagined that I would arrive at the center of a field called economic sociology. Why? Two main reasons: first, my attention to culture and morality in a field committed to explain the influence of social networks on the economy, and second, my push to redefine what we should consider as “real” economic sites, beyond the standard focus on capitalist markets and corporations. Let me tell you a bit more about each of these two issues.

First the issue of culture and morality. My dissertation and first book traced changing cultural and morally inspired responses to the

life insurance industry in the U.S during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That research sparked my long-term interest in

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the mingling of morals and markets: how, I asked, do the separate worlds of values and morality intersect with economic activity? Specifically, how did deep opposition to life insurance as the morally suspect pricing of human life become legitimized in the twentieth century as a meaningful death ritual: so that life insurance became acclaimed as a morally laudable economic investment in the future for the American middle class?

I followed the life insurance study with a second book *Pricing the Priceless Child*, examining the cultural transformation of children’s economic and sentimental value in the US during the same historical period. Like my *Morals and Markets* book, the *Priceless Child* offered a way of thinking through how Americans responded to economic changes that other people had portrayed as inevitable rationalization.

This exploration of cultural transformations and moral debates made me an anomaly among scholars involved in launching the so-called new economic sociology of the 80s. In fact, I did not even consider myself as contributing to the fledgling field. Why? Because those pioneers concentrated on social networks, deliberately staying

away from meaning systems. And, importantly, they approached the analysis of social relations as a context: as external facilitators or

constraints on economic processes. That’s what we mean by the “embeddedness” (encastement) of economic phenomena in social processes. Context analysts look at standard economic phenomena such as labor markets, commodity markets, or corporations, showing how interpersonal social networks as context shape the options of economic actors.

Along with a few other dissenting sociologists, I came to challenge this context approach, in favor of more subversive alternatives. In this *analyse alternative* we identify shared meanings and social relations not as context but at the very heart of economic activity, including the previously sacred and unexplored territory of markets and money.

In my 1994 book on the social meaning of money, I thus pushed deeper into economic territory, showing that all economic reasoning is in fact social. Contra the dominant economic theory of fungibility, I drew from U.S. historical materials to demonstrate the relational, cultural, and moral differentiation of money, what I call monetary earmarking (*marcage*) depending on money’s sources, its uses, its users. In the process, the book mapped out a variegated

social and culturally meaningful economy far different from the monochromatic grey world of modernity predicted by classical social thinkers.

Importantly, culture in my analysis does not act as an autonomous force but as a constitutive element of social relations. As a result, where others focus on straightforward social network conceptions of interpersonal ties, I find the variable meaning, quality, and intensity of relational ties among economic actors. In this alternative view, negotiated and dynamic interpersonal interactions, not the individual, become the starting point for economic processes. To describe this process, I later coined the term relational work.

The second reason I remained for some time on the outskirts of mainstream economic sociology was my choice to focus on a range of economic spheres outside the capitalist firms and production markets that dominated the field's mainstream. I investigated instead intimate economies, households, caring labor, gift exchanges, remittances, welfare, and consumption. This broadened lens breaks down artificial boundaries between supposedly sturdier "real" economic spheres and those allegedly peripheral, trivial economies. To be sure, we must recognize variability in different kinds of markets and monetary transactions. But acknowledging this expanded economic territory moves us away from sentimental but erroneous dichotomies. It challenges what I call "hostile worlds" views

splitting the world into economic activity and personal spheres, with the often perverse effect of increasing economic inequalities for those involved in the more personalized and therefore supposedly less seriously economic domains.

I thus entered the field of economic sociology through a side door and, let me add, also a woman's door in a specialty where most leading scholars were men. I sometimes wonder whether my different approach to economic activity, if my attention to meaningful relations and to different kind of economic arrangements stems not from the fact that I am a woman but because as a woman working in a male-dominated field I surveyed the economic landscape as the Simmelian *l'étranger*,⁴ who Simmel described as "plus libre, pratiquement et théoriquement ... moins lié dans son jugement par les conventions":⁵ in this case perhaps less beholden to mainstream paradigms of what constitutes core economic institutions.

To my surprise, in the past fifteen years or so, the field has turned in my direction. It has been a delight to read the stellar work of a younger and international generation of economic sociologists as they break new ground studying the meanings and morality of markets as they probe into a variety of economic spheres: financial markets, welfare economies, art worlds, markets for human goods, informal lending and saving practices, the emerging world of cybercurrencies, and more. This twenty-first century research by (among others) U.S. and French

sociologists and increasingly stellar young Latin American scholars, advances truly alternative socially based description and explanation of economic activity. These investigators are also trying to make strong connections among moral theories of the economy, ideas of social change, and public policy. I am gratified by their extensive adoption and extension of my relational work framework (documented by the brilliant sociologist Nina Bandelj in a forthcoming review essay).

Meanwhile, I am still (still is a word that comes up often after you reach a certain age!) pursuing answers to the multiple puzzles raised by the mingling of meanings, relations, and economic activity. One of my current projects that I will discuss tomorrow focuses on the college economy: As elite universities increasingly recruit low-income students into a mostly affluent campus community, how, I ask, do students manage cross-class relations in their everyday economic interactions with roommates, friends, and teammates? Note that for me, this means that after a career specializing in historical research, for the first time I find myself speaking to live informants rather than reading dead respondents' testimonies!

Pour finir, je voudrais vous remercier encore une fois pour m'avoir accordée un tel honneur. Recevoir ce titre de Docteur Honoris Causa a Science Po m'inspire a continuer a rechercher, ainsi que enseigner a mes élèves les profondes racines sociales et culturelles de nos vies économiques.

Endnotes

1 The complicated succession of the French singer Johnny Hallyday, for example.

2 In July 2019, the French politician François de Rugy was forced to resign as environment minister after revelations that he had organized a series of lavish dinners for friends and professional acquaintances when he was president of the National Assembly.

3 Dear colleagues, dear students
Professor Stiglitz
Ladies and gentlemen,
What a great honor and joy to receive this moving distinction from Sciences Po, a university institution with such a brilliant history, so influential at the national and international levels. I am also grateful to Jeanne Lazarus and to the formidable sociology department at Sciences Po. You have assembled a team which contributes to our discipline in general and specifically to economic sociology with important and innovative work. I warmly thank Jeanne for her praise: for my part, I know and admire her research, especially her efforts to establish links between

studies on financialization and on the domestic economy, as well as her interest in the study of morality within financial transactions. Jeanne and her colleagues at Sciences Po are part of the revival of economic sociology. I would also like to thank Marina Abelskaia-Graziani for facilitating my visit so efficiently and with such kindness.

In a few moments, I will come back to the subject of economic sociology. But in the meantime, allow me a few personal comments that will partly explain my pleasure in being here. Born in Argentina to a French mother and an Argentinian father, I grew up in a bilingual French-Spanish world long before coming to other languages. My grandfather Simon Weill, born in Paris, on rue Baudin in 1879, an agricultural engineer who emigrated to Argentina at the start of the twentieth century to run an agricultural initiative, received the Legion of Honor for his participation in the First World War.

I emigrated to the United States after my first university studies, and became,

perhaps paradoxically, a specialist in American cultural and economic history. But two unexpected events reminded me of my French roots. First, the French translation of my book *The Social Meaning of Money*, prefaced by Jérôme Bourdieu and Johan Heilbron, put me in contact with French researchers; which opened my eyes to the development of the social sciences in France. At the same time, I established an intellectual exchange and deep friendships with several French colleagues. All this opened the way for an inspiring conversation with French economists and sociologists, a conversation that continues. And which today reaches a wonderful new dimension.

I hope you will excuse me for continuing my presentation in English, my working language, despite my Spanish and French origins.

4 Simmelian stranger.

5 freer, practically, and theoretically ... less bound in its judgment by conventions