I would like to suggest that you read and react to the “Introduction” by Bourdieu in the form of your Essay No. 3 (the June essay). You might comment on the following questions.

Bourdieu does not refer to the “language of scholarship”; yet what he says might be applied to it.

- How would you understand this?
- Why does he criticize the “object construction” of language (with reference to Saussure)?
- How does he understand “the linguistic habitus”?
- Who are the agents of the linguistic market?
- Why does Bourdieu say that it is not language which circulates, but discourses?
- How can rituals (p. 41) be applied to our topic of scholarly English?
family, mother, love, etc. – assume in reality different and even antagonistic meanings, because the members of the same 'linguistic community' use more or less the same language and not several different languages. The unification of the linguistic market means that there are no doubt more and more meanings for each sign. Mikhail Bakhtin reminds us that, in revolutionary situations, common words take on opposite meanings. In fact, there are no neutral words: surveys show, for example, that the words most commonly used to express tastes often receive different, sometimes opposite, meanings from one social class to another. The word soigné (neat, clean, conscientious), for example, used approvingly by the petits bourgeois, is rejected by intellectuals for whom, precisely, it evokes everything that is petit-bourgeois, petty and mean-spirited. The polysemy of religious language, and the ideological effect of the unification of opposites or denial of divisions which it produces, derive from the fact that, at the cost of the re-interpretations implied in the production and reception of the common language by speakers occupying different positions in the social space, and therefore endowed with different intentions and interests, it manages to speak to all groups and all groups speak it – unlike, for example, mathematical language, which can secure the univocal meaning of the word 'group' only by strictly controlling the homogeneity of the group of mathematicians. Religions which are called universal are not universal in the same sense and on the same conditions as science.

Recourse to a neutralized language is obligatory whenever it is a matter of establishing a practical consensus between agents or groups of agents having partially or totally different interests. This is the case, of course, first and foremost in the field of legitimate political struggle, but also in the transactions and interactions of everyday life. Communication between classes (or, in colonial or semi-colonial societies, between ethnic groups) always represents a critical situation for the language that is used, whichever it may be. It tends to provoke a return to the sense that is most overtly charged with social connotations: 'When you use the word paysan (peasant) in the presence of someone who has just left the countryside, you never know how he is going to take it.' Hence there are no longer any innocent words. This objective effect of unveiling destroys the apparent unity of ordinary language. Each word, each expression, thenceforward bears on two antagonistic senses in which it is understood by the sender and the receiver. The logic of the verbal automatons which insidiously lead back to ordinary usage, with all its associated values and prejudices, harbours the permanent danger of the 'gaff' which can instantly destroy a consensus carefully maintained by means of strategies of mutual accommodation.

But one cannot fully understand the symbolic efficacy of political and religious languages if one reduces it to the effect of the misunderstandings which lead individuals who are opposed in all respects to recognize themselves in the same message. Specialized discourses can derive their efficacy from the hidden correspondence between the structure of the social space within which they are produced – the political field, the religious field, the artistic field, the philosophical field, etc. – and the structure of the field of social classes within which the recipients are situated and in relation to which they interpret the message. The homology between the oppositions constitutive of the specialized fields and the field of social classes is the source of an essential ambiguity which is particularly apparent when esoteric discourses are diffused outside the restricted field and undergo a kind of automatic universalization, coming to be merely the utterances of dominant or dominated agents within a specific field and becoming statements valid for all dominant or all dominated individuals.

The fact remains that social science has to take account of the autonomy of language, its specific logic, and its particular rules of operation. In particular, one cannot understand the symbolic effects of language without making allowance for the fact, frequently attested, that language is the exemplary formal mechanism whose generative capacities are without limits. There is nothing that cannot be said and it is possible to say nothing. One can say everything in language, that is, within the limits of grammaticality. We have known since Frege that words can have meaning without referring to anything. In other words, formal rigour can mask semantic free-wheeling. All religious theologies and all political theologies have taken advantage of the fact that the generative capacities of language can surpass the limits of intuition or empirical verification and produce statements that are formally impeccable but semantically empty. Rituals are the limiting case of situations of imposition in which, through the exercise of a technical competence which may be very imperfect, a social competence is exercised – namely, that of the legitimate speaker, authorized to speak and to speak with authority. Hencepoint out that in Indo-European languages the words which are used to utter the law are related to the verb 'to speak'. The right utterance, the one which is formally correct, thereby claims,