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Sociology as Reflexive Science

On Bourdieu's Project

Derek Robbins

AT A ROUGH count, Pierre Bourdieu published about 40 books and 200 articles during his lifetime. When he was alive he vigorously resisted allowing this work to be described as his intellectual *corpus* because this implied that it was dead and inert. Since January 2002, of course, that situation has changed. What is contained in those texts will increasingly constitute what 'Bourdieu' denotes, however much a folk memory will continue amongst those who worked closely with him and were affected by his personal dynamism. Since social science 'beyond Bourdieu'¹ will necessarily have to be considered in terms of an interpretation of Bourdieu's significance based on his texts without personal acquaintance, I want to focus on the following issues. How well do we need to be informed about the contexts of production of Bourdieu's texts to be able to deploy his concepts? How far can reference to Bourdieu's texts constitute the pretext for our own researches? In what ways do our understandings of Bourdieu's works in their contexts, or as pretexts for our research, enable us to generate social science?

I want to look at a few early texts in some detail to try to trace the early stages of Bourdieu's own thinking on these questions. However, the questions raise philosophical issues concerning the nature and status of social scientific explanation in general, which were of importance for Bourdieu from the beginning to the end of his career. His philosophical reflections on social scientific theory and practice may well turn out to be his most significant legacy, as social scientific enquiry necessarily adjusts to the conditions of mass social democracy within states and, between states or globally, to the struggle after colonialism to acknowledge perspectival equality and recognize cultural diversity. I have recently argued elsewhere (Robbins, 2004–5, trans. in Robbins, 2006) that, as a student at the *École Normale Supérieure* in the early 1950s, leading up to his work for his

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diplôme d'études supérieures on Leibniz's critique of Cartesian epistemology, Bourdieu was influenced by those French academic philosophers who were particularly interested in reconsidering the status of mathematics, either as an a priori logical system or as an instrument for explaining the phenomenal realities of the external physical world. This was the focus of the interest of Martial Guéroult in his *Dynamique et métaphysique Leibniziennes* (1935) and of Jules Vuillemin in his *Physique et métaphysique Kantienne* (1955). Bourdieu referred specifically to these precursors, and their discussions informed his early thinking about the relative explanatory status of quantitative and qualitative analyses in social science. Whereas initially Bourdieu formulated the problem in terms of the parameters of utility for social understanding of statistical data or ethnographic case studies, in the last years of his life, following through personally his stated commitment to reflexivity, he became more specifically interested in the relationship between 'subjective' and 'objective' analyses, seeking to identify the objective conditions of possibility of his subjectively based researches and hence to clarify the grounds for making a transition from particular enquiry to universal theory. His late forays into what might appear to be autobiographical writing in parts of *Méditations pascaliennes* (Bourdieu, 1997; English trans. 2000a) and parts of *Science de la science et réflexivité* (Bourdieu, 2001) as well as, notably, in the posthumous *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse* (Bourdieu, 2004a), all have to be understood as attempts to explore the nature of the referentiality of social science. Social science texts do not represent the prior, objective realities of social relations, but nor are they expressive of the orientations of idiosyncratic, a-social individuals. They express the orientations of selves whose identities and intellectual perspectives are shaped by the phenomena that they seek to objectify. Objective analysis of the grounds of one's own subjectivity thereby becomes one analysis of objective conditions to be set alongside others within a community of participating perceptions.

As Bourdieu deliberately and playfully indicated at the front of *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse*: 'Ceci n'est pas une autobiographie' ('This is not an autobiography' – echoing Magritte's famous picture: *This Is Not a Pipe*). It was, rather, a form of self-analysis that was inseparable from the quest for objective science. If we can suggest that this aspect of Bourdieu's late work was an attempt to apply to himself and his work the conceptual framework which he had outlined in 1966 in 'Champ intellectuel et projet créateur' ('Intellectual Field and Creative Project'; Bourdieu, 1966, English trans. 1971a), it is also the case that Bourdieu was always as interested, to use the terms he offered in 'On Symbolic Power' (1977a), in the 'structured structure' of texts as much as their 'structuring structures'. What kind of meaning is effected in social scientific writing by the importation of terms and concepts whose meanings are predefined in independent intellectual contexts? This was an interest that clearly motivated the writing of 'The Genesis of the Concepts of Habitus and Field' (Bourdieu, 1985a) in respect of his own concepts and it relates to his earlier discussion of the use of

analogy in social science in ‘Structuralism and Theory of Sociological Knowledge’ (Bourdieu, 1968). The evidence that this remained a live concern for Bourdieu is somewhat tangential, but real. In 1999, Bourdieu published in his own *Éditions Raisons d’Agir* a text produced by his fellow professor at the Collège de France – Jacques Bouveresse. It was entitled: *Prodiges et vertiges de l’analogie* (1999), and was based on two articles published in *Cahiers rationalistes* in 1998, in which Bouveresse analysed the ‘Sokal affair’ in which two physicists had passed off a text containing ‘scientific errors’ as a postmodern contribution to ‘Cultural Studies’. The pastiche was entitled: ‘Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity’, published in 1996, and the authors, Sokal and Bricmont, followed it with an analysis of the deception, entitled *Impostures intellectuelles* (Sokal and Bricmont, 1999). Bouveresse discusses their analysis and it is significant that, in an early footnote, he quotes a remark of Loïc Wacquant, with whom Bourdieu was collaborating greatly at the time, to the effect that the ‘Sokal affair’ ‘would, in reality, be better called the Social Text affair’ (Bouveresse, 1999: 8) – acknowledging, in other words that the deception raised important general questions about the provenance of scientific meaning in the language deployed in social science texts. Bouveresse tries to hold to a middle position. On the one hand, by way of example, he subjects Régis Debray’s use of Gödel’s theorem in *Le Scribe, genèse du politique* (Debray, 1980) and *Critique de la raison politique* (Debray, 1981) to rigorous scrutiny, and argues that Gödel’s theorem pertains to ‘formal systems’ and demonstrates ‘absolutely nothing in relation to social systems’ (Bouveresse, 1999, 27). On the other hand, Bouveresse refers to the discussions of Maxwell, Hertz, Boltzmann, Mach and others concerning the role of comparison and analogy in the sciences, and acknowledges that there are metaphors which are ‘“constitutive of theory”, and not simply heuristic, pedagogical or exegetical’ (Bouveresse, 1999: 36). If Debray’s deployment of Gödel’s theorem exemplified a false conceptual appropriation across discourses, Sokal and Bricmont’s pastiche was equally wrong in supposing that scientific understanding is only achievable and valid as the product of non-metaphorical reasoning. Bouveresse’s recommended solution is expressed in terms that would have appealed to Bourdieu, not least in its use of Wittgensteinian thoughts. Three recommendations express sarcastically what postmodern philosophers should not do if they wish to appropriate scientific concepts:

1. Never especially look at the demonstration of the theorem, which would however be the best means of knowing whether what is demonstrated is valid. As Wittgenstein said: ‘if you want to know what a demonstration demonstrates, look at the demonstration’ . . .
2. Do not read any of the numerous serious and informed (but, it is true, unfortunately themselves rather technical) commentaries which have been written on the kind of philosophical meaning that can or cannot be attributed to Gödel’s theorem. . . .

3. Avoid as well looking at what Gödel himself said about the philosophical significance of his conclusion and about the extensions to it which might be dreamt up. (Bouveresse, 1999: 62–3)

Postmodern discourse, in other words, may be, for Bouveresse, a philosophical discourse *sui generis*, but the deployment of philosophical concepts so as to generate natural or social science requires the application of strict rules of conceptual transfer, involving rigorous thought rather than modish superficiality.

The purpose of my examination of some of Bourdieu's texts is to suggest that Bouveresse's recommended solution – turned into positive injunctions – articulated the underlying assumption of Bourdieu's practice on the boundaries between philosophy and science, and should also constitute the underlying assumption as we work with Bourdieu's work.

Bourdieu's Textual Practice – I

I will start with *Sociologie de l'Algérie* (Bourdieu, 1958), which was Bourdieu's first published book, a short text of 128 pages published in the popular *Que Sais-Je* series of the Presses Universitaires de France in 1958. Bourdieu had been trained in philosophy at the *École Normale Supérieure* in the early 1950s and had been conscripted for military service in Algeria in 1956. He had received no specifically sociological training which might have indicated what it might mean to write 'a sociology of Algeria'. The opening sentence ran as follows (in the 1962 translation):

It is obvious that Algeria, when considered in isolation from the rest of the Maghreb, does not constitute a true cultural unit. However, I have limited my investigation to Algeria for a definite reason. Algeria is specifically the object of this study because the clash between the indigenous and the European civilizations has made itself felt here with the greatest force. Thus the problem under investigation has determined the choice of subject. (Bourdieu, 1962: xi)

From the very outset, therefore, Bourdieu was sure that he was not offering an account of an Algeria that was objectively there. His account was not an attempt to represent a prior social reality on two counts. First, the diverse cultures of the North African geographical space were in the process, during the course of the War of Independence, of constituting themselves as an independent political entity. Algeria was in the process of self-constitution or, in 1958, of still resisting an identity imposed by the French. Second, the object of the enquiry for Bourdieu was not the static condition of Algeria but the processes of cultural adaptation within the geographical region whereby the indigenous inhabitants might gradually construct a self-determined national identity. The important thing for our purposes was that the text was not a representation of an existing reality. In relation to the Kabyles, for instance, Bourdieu's main source for his account of tribal customs was an ethnographic study produced in three volumes in the 1870s

by two colonial administrators (Hanoteau and Letourneau, 1873). Bourdieu certainly observed the actual situation in rural areas since he took 2000 photographs, some of which were exhibited at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris in January, 2003,² and some of which have been included in a publication introduced by Franz Schultheis, entitled *Images d'Algérie: une affinité elective* (Bourdieu, 2003). The fact of this photographic activity is significant. The photographs provided a visual account of particular human situations. Similarly, the text of *Sociologie de l'Algérie* was not an analysis of Algerian society in totality but a verbal description of particular tribal organizations. It was a kind of fiction, working from dated secondary sources. Nevertheless, in an importantly different sense for Bourdieu it was a representation. It was not a representation that was tied down empirically by facts to be represented. It was a representation of social conditions in Algeria which was designed to affect the mainland readership. It was intended to be a politically affective and effective intervention in the debate occurring in France about the appropriate strategy in relation to Algerian independence, the relinquishing of the notion of Algérie Française. It was designed to show that indigenous social organizations functioned adequately before the disenchantment of the world imposed by French colonialism, and that the challenge for the French was to allow these indigenous strengths to reassert themselves in constituting an independent state. Bourdieu's text was a representation which appeared in Paris at the same time as the *Chroniques Algériennes* (1958) of Albert Camus, which were his re-issued reports of poverty and suffering amongst the Kabyles in the 1940s. The political solutions proposed by Bourdieu and Camus were not the same, but the formal functions of their texts were not dissimilar.

Bourdieu's Textual Practice – II

Bourdieu's next major text – *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (1963) – was very different. It was a total of 567 pages, published in two parts – the first giving statistical data, authored by Alain Darbel, Jean-Paul Rivet and Claude Seibel who were administrators at INSEE (Institut National de Statistique et d'Études Économiques), and the second part, authored by Bourdieu, called a sociological study. Bourdieu wrote an introduction to the first part entitled 'Statistics and Sociology', which I translated several years ago (Bourdieu, 2006a [1963])³ and I have also recently translated Bourdieu's 'Foreword' to the second part under the title of 'Ethnography and Colonialism' (Bourdieu, 2006b [1963]),⁴ but I am very happy to say that there are now plans to publish the whole work in translation. It was clearly the first time that Bourdieu had worked with statisticians. His discussion of the relationship between statistics and sociology is a discussion of the necessary methodological reciprocity between statistical analysis based on large data sets and the use of ethnographic case studies to expose particular cultural traits. In other words, Bourdieu was now really coming to terms with how one might offer a sociology of Algeria in a way in that he had not in the book of that title. His solution was to argue that statisticians were able

to construct general social patterns, which needed to be tested against the observed experiences of individuals, while ethnographic case studies were, equally, necessary to check the validity of the bases of data construction developed by statisticians. What was involved was a process of methodological balancing, constantly juxtaposing the general and the particular. There was a strong sense that Bourdieu believed that the objectivity of his account of Algeria this time could not be received as such, as the end product of research, but should only be received within a text that graphically documented its own procedures. The account of the methodology adopted was an intrinsic part of the final text. Bourdieu described in detail the problems encountered by the team of researchers – mainly Algerian – as they conducted their interviews and there were appendices in which the responses of those interviewed were published verbatim. It was as if Bourdieu was seeking to present in writing an effect which was as near as possible to being a reconstruction of the process of the enquiry. ('If you want to know what a demonstration demonstrates, look at the demonstration.') He believed that the process of conducting the research was one which, for the researchers, was a process of political and social engagement rather than one of detached observation, and he sought to make the text a surrogate political action.

Bourdieu's Textual Practice – III

I want to make a few more brief points about some other Bourdieu texts before broadening the discussion. First of all, I want to draw attention to the relationship between *Les Étudiants et leurs études* (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964a) and *Les Héritiers* (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964b) and then the English translation, which was published as *The Inheritors* 15 years later (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979). The first of these texts was the first published Cahier (working paper) of the Centre de Sociologie Européenne. Its first sentence indicated that the working paper was presenting the results of two surveys carried out in several French universities in the academic years 1961–2 and 1962–3. The chapters of the working paper gave all the findings in tabular form with commentary, while two appendices gave statistical information about the samples and reproduced the questionnaires that had been used. There is only an 11-line general conclusion, which begins by saying that this is not the place to develop all the practical and pedagogical consequences which follow from the findings and this sentence has a footnote which comments:

Concerned to condense the facts as precisely as possible and to represent their diversity and their nuances, we are committed here to a literal exposé so as to develop elsewhere, in a systematic manner, the context within which these results will acquire their full meaning (cf. P. Bourdieu & J.-C. Passeron. *Les Héritiers. Essai sur les étudiants et la culture*). (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964a: 123)

The two French texts were published pretty much simultaneously in 1964 and each refers to the other. It was not a case of the one being a revised

version of the other so much as a conscious choice of dual modes of presentation. *Les Héritiers* (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964b) has a foreword which gives precise details of the surveys on which the book's argument is based, and it offers a caution about generalizing beyond the particular facts cited. Similarly, there are two appendices, the first of which gives statistical information about students in France between 1900 and 1963, and the second of which provides 'some documents and survey results'. In the main text, some of the tables of the Working Paper are reproduced, but the argument of the book is framed within three chapters which, in the subsequent English translation, were called 'Selecting the Elect', 'Games Students Play' and 'Sorcerers' Apprentices'. The first of these was headed by a quotation from Margaret Mead's *Continuities in Cultural Evolution*, the second with a quotation from Durkheim and the third with a quotation from Hegel. The second appendix did not simply offer the results of the surveys that had generated the presentation in *Les Étudiants et leurs études*, it also added findings from contemporary surveys of education in Poland and Hungary. The translation, which was published in the United States by the University of Chicago Press in 1979 (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979), faithfully followed the text of *Les Héritiers*, but there were some additions. Bourdieu wrote a one-page Preface to the American edition in which he offered a post hoc interpretation of the meaning of the text – a meaning which, I think, was only apparent to the authors after they had followed through their thinking to *La Reproduction* in 1970 (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970). *The Inheritors* additionally provided, as an epilogue, an edited version of an article that Bourdieu had written in 1978 with the title: 'Classement, déclassement, reclassement' (Bourdieu, 1978). Pursuing this theme further, Bourdieu took the opportunity of the publication in 1990 of the second English edition of *La Reproduction* (the first English edition of which had been published in 1977 as *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* [Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977]) to write a preface entitled 'Academic Order and Social Order'. This was a short text, dated May 1989, in which Bourdieu expressed pleasure that the product of his collaborative research with Passeron in the 1960s had stimulated a series of studies, both theoretical and empirical, in Great Britain and the United States, which had endorsed the original work. In the final sentences of the preface, Bourdieu, typically, regarded this consequence both as a form of retrospective validation of the earlier science and as indicative of the susceptibility of different cultural traditions to respond to the deployment of common analytical instruments. This was the period in which Bourdieu was exploring the limits of the transcultural transferability of social science concepts in dialogue with American colleagues at Chicago and he concluded:

This empirical validation of the model outlined in *Reproduction* in the very society that was for so long held up as its living refutation would appear to be worth all the proofs and procedures of conventional empiricist methodology. And we shall not despair that America loses yet another parcel of its

'exceptionalism' when this loss contributes to the greater unity of social science. (Bourdieu, 1990a: xi)

The main thing I want to take from this commentary is that, in his early work, Bourdieu made a clear distinction between the logic of scientific discovery and the rhetoric of intellectual communication. Simultaneously, in Bourdieu's work, there was a desire to legitimize the scientificity of his findings by meticulously representing the instruments that had generated those findings, while the representation of the scientificity was itself part of a rhetorical strategy to generalize more effectively, both philosophically and politically. He was also experimenting with different strategies for generalizing beyond particular facts. In the same period, the text of *L'Amour de l'art* (Bourdieu et al., 1966), for instance, has five detailed statistical and operational appendices and a third part – the laws of cultural diffusion – which is heavily mathematical. These procedures, which seem to owe much to methods developed by Lazarsfeld, coexist with opening chapters in which findings are related to generalized thinking about art and art appreciation, which seem to be derived from Bourdieu's reading at the time of the work of Panofsky. Again, in the same period, there is the famous mode of presentation adopted in *La Reproduction* (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970), in which the second part is a discursive reflection on empirical findings while the first offers the 'foundations of a theory of symbolic violence' in a series of propositions and sub-propositions – adopting, that is, a propositional form of generalization which, it has been suggested, derives from Spinoza.

The Context of Bourdieu's Textual Practice

While the empirical work on education, photography and museums was going on in the 1960s, Bourdieu's work on Algeria was on the backburner. His reflection on that work was to surface in *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* in 1972 (Bourdieu, 1972), but before that there seem to me to have been two important strands that need to be noted. The first is the publication, in 1966, of 'Champ intellectuel et projet créateur' (Bourdieu, 1966), with which we are very familiar as a result of its early publication in English in 1971 as 'Intellectual Field and Creative Project' (Bourdieu, 1971a). The second is the publication, in 1968, of *Le Métier de sociologue* (Bourdieu et al., 1968), which is perhaps better known in the 1991 translation as *The Craft of Sociology* (Bourdieu et al., 1991). In the 'Champ intellectuel' article, Bourdieu considered the way in which the context in which a work is published is partially constitutive of the work itself, or, to put it differently, that artists internalize an anticipated reception of their work as a part of the process of production. Incidentally, Bourdieu was also arguing that the ways in which artists locate themselves immanently within a communicative field is different from the ways in which observers – contemporaries or subsequent academic critics – might seek to impose a structural conceptualization of that relationship. It was significant that the article was about artists

or creative writers, although it was clear from the title that Bourdieu was willing to extend his point to apply to the production and reception of intellectual work. There was, however, no explicit mention of whether or not intellectual work could be considered to include scientific work. The underlying assumption was that texts do not refer to any external or prior reality but are constituted within communicative systems which are themselves the results of social and historical production. The influence of Bachelard, which was only tacit here, became explicit in *Le Métier de sociologue*. Subtitled ‘epistemological preliminaries’, the interest of this text is that it was intended to be the first of three, which would act as handbooks for post-graduate students to assist in the preparation and conduct of empirical research. It tried to argue that social science discourse had to be constructed against the prenotions that might be prevailing within society. The ambivalence of *Le Métier de sociologue* (Bourdieu et al., 1968) is that it seems to be trying to apply Bachelard at two levels. On the one hand, following Bachelard, the construction of the field of social science is something that occurred contingently, both socially and historically. On the other hand, within this constructed discourse, social science itself advances by applying Bachelard’s methodological formula that scientific facts have to be ‘won, constructed, and confirmed’. *Le Métier de sociologue* was anxious to push an anti-positivist theory of science, non-prescriptively to provide materials by which researchers could practise their own *ars inveniendi*. It had an agenda within the established field of social science, but it seems also apparent that there was an agenda which would involve the creative deconstruction and reconstruction of the field itself. Researchers were encouraged to reflect sociologically on their own practice within the constituted field of social science, but no explicit attention was paid to reflection on the contingency of that field. *Le Métier de sociologue* did not discuss at all the transmission of social science findings, except in as much as transmission was part of the process whereby, within the field, findings are falsified or verified.

As I see it, therefore, Bourdieu was working with a logic of discovery within the defining rules of social science and also with a rhetoric of transmission beyond the autonomous field of social science, which might involve scepticism about the epistemological status of that science. It is significant that, at about this time, he started his analysis of the work of Flaubert because he wanted to consider whether the accounts of society provided by Flaubert or, later, Zola, in accordance with the ‘rules of art’ at the end of the 19th century, were more socially and politically potent than the accounts of society provided contemporaneously within the emerging discourse of social scientific explanation.

In parenthesis, we have to remember (or perhaps, whether or not we *have* to remember is precisely the question I am asking) that the development of Bourdieu’s thinking at this time was framed by the legacy of various responses to Husserl or various versions of phenomenology. Sartre’s *Qu’est-ce que la littérature?* of 1948 (Sartre, 1948) had differentiated between the ways in which poets and prose writers make use of words. Poets, according

to Sartre, use words materially without choosing between them on the basis of prior referential meaning. By contrast, as Sartre put it:

The art of prose is employed in discourse; its substance is by nature significative; that is, the words are first of all not objects but designations for objects; it is not first of all a matter of knowing whether they please or displease in themselves, but whether they correctly indicate a certain thing or a certain notion. (Sartre, 1967: 11)

Nevertheless, Sartre did not talk explicitly about science. He may have been able to differentiate between the functions of language in Flaubert or Mallarmé, but he did not consider the relationship between the function of significative language in the work of Flaubert or Durkheim, for instance. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Pierre Macherey, then an Althusserian, tried to develop a theory of literary production which argued that texts, as it were, announce themselves, state within themselves their truth claims.⁵ For him, it was the task of philosophy to adjudicate between these truth claims, to judge whether, for example, the work of Marx announced itself as political philosophy or political science. Again, Lyotard published his *Discours, figure* in 1971 (Lyotard, 1971), which was the first stage in the thinking which was to lead to the argument of *La Condition postmoderne* at the end of the decade (Lyotard, 1979). Autonomous figurative language has to be liberated from the oppression of significative discourse. The nature of the scientific, explanatory use of language was an issue in the period. Bourdieu differed from Sartre, Macherey and Lyotard, but his response was a response to the problems that they were articulating. The key common factor in the mediation of the philosophy of Husserl was Merleau-Ponty. We know of Bourdieu's acknowledgement of the influence of Merleau-Ponty's early work – *La Phénoménologie de la perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 1945; English trans. 1962a) and *La Structure du comportement* (Merleau-Ponty, 1942; English trans. 1965) – and its significance for Bourdieu's development of the notions of *habitus* and *hexis*, but I want to focus on Merleau-Ponty's last text, published posthumously in 1962, as *L'Oeil et l'esprit* (Merleau-Ponty, 1962b). This essay focuses on the work of Cézanne and recommends the primacy of visual perception as a form of bodily knowing of the world. Importantly, there is a section of the essay in which Merleau-Ponty analyses the attitude towards vision contained in the *Dioptrics* of Descartes. This discussion becomes an overt attack on the way in which the development of Western science has been predicated on the Cartesian mind/body dualism. According to Merleau-Ponty, Descartes only talked about painting *en passant*. It was not, for him, 'a central operation which contributes to defining our access to being' but simply 'a mode or a variant of thought canonically defined by intellectual possession and evidence' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962b: 42). If Descartes had appreciated colour he would have been confronted by the possibility of 'openness to things without concept' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962b: 43).

I have no evidence that Bourdieu read this specific text of Merleau-Ponty, but the drift of Merleau-Ponty's thinking was becoming clear in the last few years of his life and Bourdieu would undoubtedly have been aware of this drift. It was not just that *habitus* and *hexis* were useful concepts for understanding human behaviour scientifically. It was much more that *habitus* and *hexis* were ways of advocating a form of integration of rationality and experience which was superior to the humanly unsatisfactory post-Cartesian divorce of scientific reason from the processes of biological adaptation. This was the kind of thinking that led towards Bourdieu's articulation of 'The Three Forms of Theoretical Knowledge' in 1973 (Bourdieu, 1973); to the position outlined in 'On Symbolic Power' (Bourdieu, 1977a), which was a paper that had been given in 1973; and also to 'The Specificity of the Scientific Field and the Social Conditions of the Progress of Reason' (Bourdieu, 1975). It wasn't that Bourdieu was opposing structuralism as a theoretical position within social science, but much more that he was opposing the assumption that structuralist objectivity should be thought to be synonymous with science. As we know from Bourdieu's much later acknowledgement of his affinity with Pascal, he was taking Pascal's view that 'the heart has its reasons of which reason is unaware' and opposing the assumption that scientific rationality defines the limits of knowledge (Bourdieu, 1977).

To summarize what I am saying so far. We know that Bourdieu's initial orientation was philosophical – to undertake an empirical investigation of the phenomenology of affective life. The problem in Algeria was to think through how it becomes possible to write an account of the affective lives of others. He generated an instrumental method of seeking to let the phenomena speak for themselves through his texts but, equally, he sought to transmit these texts within fields of intellectual reception. We know from Bourdieu's later articulation of a reflexive methodology, involving conscious 'epistemological breaks', that he was as dissatisfied with an ethnomethodological approach that might suppose that phenomena could absolutely speak for themselves as he was with the detachment of structuralist objectivity. As a method of enquiry, Bourdieu's 'post-structuralism' sought to integrate both aspirations, but it was also always the case that he saw his texts as products generated within a system of communication where meaning is constructed reciprocally in the way in which he had outlined in 'Champ intellectuel et projet créateur' (Bourdieu, 1966). The situation of the Algerian fieldwork enabled Bourdieu to work for a while with an assumed separation of the Algerian field of observable phenomena from the field of French reception. On returning to France, this methodological position based on geographical accident was no longer sustainable. Initially, he felt the need to institutionalize a field of observational detachment in France, which would seem to provide him within France with a functioning spatial detachment that was equivalent to the detachment of the colonial anthropologist. Hence the endeavour of the 1960s, culminating in *Le Métier de sociologue*, to consolidate the rules and procedures of discrete sociological enquiry. Social

science advances by constructing hypotheses, often deploying concepts derived analogously from other discourses, and these hypotheses are tested within a community sharing a common discourse. However, I think it became clear to Bourdieu that this functional separation of social science discourse was potentially a recipe for intellectual sterility and a recipe for the cultivation of a social elite of social science observers. By the mid-1970s, Bourdieu was reflecting on the relations between prophets and priests and, in his work on fashion and Manet, exploring the ways in which both had used their initiation into consecrated practices to give credence to their expressions of contact with wider populations. In the case of fashion, Bourdieu felt an affinity with Courrèges, a fellow Gascon who ‘tapped’ into an incipient demand for fashion clothing that responded to the needs of increasingly sexually emancipated women. In short, the foundation was laid for the rest of Bourdieu’s career, in which he sought to understand and deploy intellectual discourses not as ends in themselves but as means to tapping into what might be called a ‘social ontology’.

Responding to Bourdieu’s Texts

How does all of this affect the ways in which we should respond to Bourdieu’s texts or deploy them for our own purposes? How does Bourdieu’s conception of his own activity relate to the ways in which we should contemplate a future for social science beyond Bourdieu?

The first thing to say is, of course, that I have approached these questions by attempting to offer an interpretation of some of Bourdieu’s texts and their contexts. You may say that I am simply acquiescing in the way in which Bourdieu wanted to be read. My contention here would be that the way in which he wanted to be read was inseparable from what he was trying to say and from the way in which he managed his career and conceptualized his career trajectory. You might argue that this is still accepting his self-presentation and that what we need is criticism of Bourdieu which objectively evaluates his achievement. The problem is to know what might constitute the criteria for such an objective evaluation. Richard Jenkins (1992) attempted a critical evaluation which was also sympathetic but, in Bourdieu’s terms, this was an evaluation within the discourse of sociology that failed to accept the extent to which Bourdieu was questioning the norms of social science. Bourdieu genuinely could not understand how someone could spend time in writing a book on someone in order to expose the shortcomings of that person’s endeavour. That is to say that Bourdieu assumed that any engagement with the work of another author was a form of interpersonal engagement, involving an elective affinity. Responses to texts had to be the responses of persons to persons, and he had little interest in ‘critiquing’ the positions of others by reference to supposed meta-criteria of validity. This is why Bourdieu himself did not spend much time criticizing the intellectual positions held by his contemporaries. There was a sense in which he recognized the logic of the production of Derrida or Deleuze or Lyotard or Foucault without finding it possible or desirable to reach any

absolute judgement of the value of what they said. As we know from *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu, 1984a; English trans. 1988), their intellectual positions were understandable for Bourdieu predominantly in terms of their social trajectories, just as his own opinions or theories had to be understood reflexively in relation to his career.

What I am suggesting, therefore, is best expressed through the distinction which Bourdieu made himself in ‘On Symbolic Power’ between ‘structuring structures’ and ‘structured structures’. In order to respond adequately to a Bourdieu text, we have to see it as the outcome of a process of construction whereby Bourdieu reconciled the creative project that was the consequence of his *habitus* with the predispositions of the anticipated field of reception. It was the need to see his texts as ‘structuring structures’ that caused him to write, with some exasperation in his postscript to *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives* (Calhoun et al., 1993), that he advocated ‘a socio-genetic understanding of intellectual works’. This means that we are bound to recognize two kinds of context in responding to his texts – the context relating to the point of the text in his career trajectory from the Béarn to professor at the Collège de France, and the context of the historical situation of the field of reception within which the text was inserted. Here we also have to remember that Bourdieu cumulatively constructed the field within which his works were received, and, perhaps more importantly, we have to realize that, steeped as he was in phenomenology, Bourdieu took the view that an understanding of these contextual fields – of production and reception – said as much about social phenomena as the accounts of reality ostensibly contained within the texts. Nevertheless, Bourdieu did also recognize that texts require scrutiny in their own terms or, perhaps, by reference to the rules governing their existence. He recognized that what he called here a ‘tautegorical’ reading of texts was necessary if the consideration of texts was not to collapse into social process, as he thought had been the case with crude Marxist reductive analyses of thought and literature.

I submit that Bourdieu’s position would have been that we have to respond to his texts reflexively. We have to consider his texts both tautegorically and contextually, and this should involve us in specifying the rules of the objective discipline within which we are seeking to make an evaluation of his work, as well as specifying the social ontological roots of his and our deployment of that discipline in seeking to comprehend life experiences. I haven’t said anything yet about pretexts. By this I mean the use of Bourdieu’s texts as springboards for our own research. I think it follows from what I have been saying that the crucial basis of distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate pretextual practices is whether or not texts are used with or without the kind of contextual sensitivity that I have been outlining. I want to give three brief examples of pretextual practice. These are just examples and I do not want to censure individuals. In referring to these examples of pretextual practice, in other words, it is important to adopt the procedure followed by Bourdieu himself in the first edition of *Homo Academicus* (1984a), where he sought to represent the positions of

individuals within the field of intellectual production without naming names, so as to acknowledge explicitly the dominant effects of the contexts within which individuals work and the external constraints on their communicated meanings. I refer to individuals only to particularize those 'types' or categories of response to Bourdieu that I seek to identify.

Academic Exploitation

First, I read recently *Ambivalent Europeans: Ritual, Memory and the Public Sphere in Malta*, by Jon Mitchell (2002). As the title suggests, the book writes up social anthropological research carried out in Malta which focused on the ambivalence between an indigenous cultural identity reinforced by traditional rituals associated with feasts in commemoration of St Paul, and a potential political identity defined by membership of the European Union. The preface indicates that the published text was the culmination of a long period of research and thinking that had commenced in 1992. It acknowledges ESRC funding and indebtedness to supervisors at the University of Edinburgh as well as to colleagues at that university and at University College London and the University of Sussex. It is the product of fieldwork in Malta, most of which was conducted in the Maltese language, and of engagement with the field of transmission and reception of British academic social anthropology. Chapter 8 is devoted to St Paul's *fešta* which takes place every year in Valletta on 10 February. The chapter begins with a general account of the significance of the *fešta* for participants:

The effectiveness of the memories produced during *fešta* derived from their polyvalence – their invocation of the national, the local, the familial and the gendered. (Mitchell, 2002: 212)

This is followed by a short case study of one participant, based on fieldwork conversation that took place after the main *fešta* procession in 1993. This participant, aged 26, had recently returned to Malta after living for five years in Australia. Mitchell elaborates on some of the participant's comments to conclude that:

He therefore saw his engagement with the statue as a form of home-coming. (2002: 214)

This section of ethnography and interpretation is immediately followed by a section which is sub-titled; 'Ritual, artefact, experience'. Mitchell briefly outlines the position on ritual advanced in Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* and by Turner in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967) and *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (1969). He comments:

Both assume that at the centre of religion – or even society as a whole – lies a series of intense emotional experiences gained during important rituals, but neither manage to explain how these experiences work. (Mitchell, 2002: 216)

Remedying this shortcoming so as to locate explanations in ‘theories of memory and embodiment’ is, for Mitchell, crucial to reaching an understanding of the function of the *festa* in Malta in the early 1990s. A ‘Durkheimian, totemic reading of Maltese festa’ is inadequate because it limits the function of the patron saint to representation of the collectivity, whereas the kind of theory developed by Miller in *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1987) and elsewhere allows for the recognition of a process described as ‘the introjection of a projection’. Miller’s text contains a detailed discussion of Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (1984b) and Mitchell summarizes Miller’s contribution to theory – producing ‘a theory of culture that amounts also to a theory of praxis’ – in terms which recollect and are sympathetic to the achievement of Bourdieu’s *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977b), proceeding also to refer to Miller’s analysis of the “‘framing” mechanisms by which objects become set aside as special’ (which, again, Bourdieu explored in detail in ‘Piété religieuse et dévotion artistique: fidèles et amateurs d’art à Santa Maria Novella’ [1994]). However, it becomes clear that Mitchell’s orientation is to construct a generalizable *theory*. Having deployed the notion of ‘framing’ to explain the physical engagement of participants with the embodiment of the saint in the *festa*, Mitchell moves straight into the following paragraph:

Physical engagement with objects is central not only to the ritual process, but also learning more generally. Alongside the experience of special objects that are set aside or framed, goes the more everyday, mundane engagement with the world around us that for Piaget is central to the learning process (1977). Piaget focuses on childhood learning, but there is evidence that this spatio-visual cognition persists beyond childhood, remaining central to human sociality or ‘culture’ (Arnheim 1986, Bourdieu 1990, Csordas 1994, Mitchell 1997, Toren 1990). This is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in Bourdieu’s celebrated example of the Kabyle house (1990: 271–283), that is not only a concrete manifestation of a particular conceptual framework, but also the means by which that framework is learned. (2002: 217–18)

The focus of Mitchell’s attention has suddenly shifted away from an attempted exposition of particular Maltese practice towards a deduction of the general characteristics of human behaviour. The work of some authorities (such as Piaget) is de-historicized and deployed to suggest a universal, theoretical truth. Crucially, the work of Bourdieu is de-historicized. Bourdieu’s ‘celebrated example’ of the Kabyle house was published originally in 1970 in a collection of articles offered to Lévi-Strauss on the occasion of his 60th birthday. Bourdieu reproduced it in the first part of *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique* (1972) as one of three ethnological studies that he wished methodologically to transcend. The article was one which Bourdieu was particularly fond of using to indicate the way in which his subsequent post-structuralist analyses superseded, without negating, those early structuralist exercises, which had been written under the influence of Lévi-Strauss. Bourdieu realized that ‘La Maison kabyle ou le

monde renversé' privileged the academic gaze of the anthropologist and unwittingly subordinated indigenous experience to the intellectual preoccupations of Western European intellectual discourse. Mitchell cites Bourdieu's further reproduction of the article in *Le Sens pratique* (Bourdieu, 1980b), translated as *The Logic of Practice* (1990b) – a text which elaborates Bourdieu's contention that anthropologists should observe practices and only reflexively generate theories – but he uses Bourdieu in such a way and with such company as to re-appropriate Bourdieu's post-structuralism for a new kind of structuralist purpose, one in which pedagogical research and ethnographic observation are synthesized theoretically. Although Mitchell appreciates Bourdieu's observation of the integration of subjective experience and objective structure, and recognizes the affinity between this observation and Miller's notion of the introjection of a projection, nevertheless he does not appear to be as sensitive to Bourdieu's awareness of the institutionalized ethnocentricity of much university anthropology. Bourdieu's rejection of the undeconstructed version of the Kabyle house article was the prelude to his analysis of the perspective of Western intellectuals that was most clearly expressed in *Homo Academicus* (1984a). The coherence of Bourdieu's work derived from the fact that he never allowed himself to think that his own practices were formally anything other than those he observed. Bourdieu's anthropological, sociological or cultural analyses became increasingly inseparable from his analyses of the social or institutional contexts in which they were generated. To ignore this is to expose Bourdieu's work to a slow death by academic exploitation.

Nominal Appropriation

My second example is a notorious one. In a long footnote to the chapter on 'Social Capital' in Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (1993), he gave details of the provenance of the concept – acknowledging in particular the work of J.S. Coleman and his *Foundations of Social Theory* (1990). This is not the place to try to go into detail about the way in which the concept of 'social capital' has been taken up by social theorists in the Anglo-Saxon world, as if Putnam and Coleman were using the term in the same way as Bourdieu had in the article called 'Le Capital social: notes provisoires' (1980a), which he wrote for a whole number of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* devoted to 'le capital social'. Equally, I have seen no attempt to clarify in detail the emergence of Bourdieu's concept of social capital as a development from the concept of 'cultural capital', which he had advanced in 1964 in opposition to Gary Becker's *Human Capital*. Bourdieu and James Coleman co-edited a book entitled *Social Theory for a Changing Society* following a conference in Chicago in 1989 (Bourdieu and Coleman, 1991), but I have seen no discussions of 'social capital' which recognize that Coleman was talking about a social process pertaining to what he called a 'constructed social organization' and that, for him, Bourdieu's social theory erroneously tried to apply concepts appropriate to 'primordial and spontaneous social

organization'. In other words, there is a major debate to be had about the deployment of the concept of 'cultural capital' and about the competing theories of society or ideologies which underlie the competition. Contextual analysis would indicate the legitimacy of the cross-cultural transfer of the concept, but there has been pretextual abuse in that the concept has been used instrumentally without any determined attempt to identify the different significances of the different contexts of conceptual development. One might call this an instance of nominal appropriation or, indeed, what Bourdieu would have described as 'symbolic violence'.

Informed Divergence

My third example is the text of Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello: *Le Nouvel Esprit du capitalisme*, published in 1999. Boltanski worked closely with Bourdieu in the mid-1970s, particularly on the research project on Le Patronat and his book entitled *Les Cadres: la formation d'un groupe social* (Boltanski, 1982) acknowledged the influence of Bourdieu and was clearly the product of shared thinking with Bourdieu in the 1970s. *Le Nouvel Esprit du capitalisme* is explicit in its indebtedness to Albert Hirschman and one element of the analysis is a section in which Boltanski discusses the work of Bourdieu, Derrida and Deleuze as products of '68 thought'. Part 4 ('La neutralisation de la critique de l'inauthenticité et ses effets perturbants' – 'the neutralization of the inauthenticity critique and its disturbing effects') of Chapter 7 ('A l'épreuve de la critique artiste' – 'putting the artistic critique to the test') specifies that it is one of the principal arguments of the whole book that 'le redéploiement du capitalisme a été associé à la récupération de la figure du réseau' ('the revival of capitalism has been associated with the recovery of the notion of the network') (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999: 547). The work of Bourdieu is briefly considered in the main text and in three detailed footnotes, in as much as he was historically involved in opposing Sartrean notions of authenticity. This denunciation of an existentialist view of personal identity in favour of an understanding that identities are constructed within systems of relational exchange contributed to the development of the new, non-puritanical, spirit of capitalism which is reliant on hedonistic play and the commodification of values. To put this crudely in an explicit manner not used by Boltanski and Chiapello, Bourdieu's deployment of the terminology of economics in, for instance, 'Le Marché des biens symboliques' (Bourdieu, 1971b) backfired; that is, his analytical language helped to engender what it labelled in a way in that he could not reverse in his late attempts, particularly in *Les structures sociales de l'économie* (Bourdieu, 2000b), to resurrect the pre-eminence of the social over the economic.

In other words, Boltanski was prepared to develop what he took from Bourdieu's thinking and apply it to social phenomena which, in his view, were in part the consequences of the social theory advanced by Bourdieu and others at a particular historical moment under specific social conditions. In no sense is Boltanski working with disembodied concepts derived from

Bourdieu's work. He has developed an understanding of the significance of Bourdieu's work and has accepted that Bourdieu's analyses were partly responsible for constituting the new phenomena to be analysed. I am not here discussing the pros and cons of Boltanski's deviation from Bourdieu's position, but I am recommending the nature of his style of response. It is a response, applied to Bourdieu, which owes much to Bourdieu's thinking in that it takes for granted that social science and social theories are socio-historically situated. It is a response that Bourdieu might readily have accepted intellectually and methodologically, although, of course, the substance of Boltanski's argument was a form of political subversion which was understandably unpalatable. The pretextual methodology could be described as one of informed and engaged divergence.

Conclusion

In preparing the conference held in memory of Bourdieu at the University of East London in June 2003, the organizing team was unsure whether it should be called 'Social Science Beyond Bourdieu' or 'Social Science After Bourdieu'. I am not sure about the nuances, whether or not one implies more than the other the sense that his work is simply ended or *passé*. I would defend the former title, which we adopted, by suggesting that it invites the reaction to Bourdieu's work that he recommended in relation to structuralism. He always insisted that it was not possible to negate structuralism but, instead, to use the insights to be derived from structuralism to go beyond it, to supersede it. For Bourdieu, conceptual progress advanced not by thesis and antithesis but by gradual assimilation and reform, the gradual incorporation of ideas that had gone before. Bourdieu's work, the body of his texts, are parts of our intellectual landscape. My personal view is that Bourdieu's work strived to go beyond social science, to touch on ethical issues and questions of cultural difference and identity which transcend the concerns of the system world of state governments and bureaucracies. He sought to infiltrate that system world in order to generate a kind of sociology that might function as an emancipatory conceptual apparatus for all inhabitants of the life-world. Attempts to appropriate his texts for social science which pay no attention to his radical scepticism about the professionalization of social science are in danger of reinforcing the kind of social control that he fought against. His last course of lectures at the Collège de France was published before his death as *Science de la science et réflexivité* (Bourdieu, 2001). Typically, the lectures contained a passionate restatement of his commitment to scientific rigour and then moved into passages of autobiographical reflection. There was no contradiction because he simply presented himself as an individual for whom rational enquiry was paradigmatically an expression of social being. We can generate a social science that may account for all of our situations within mass democracy better than the institutionalized social science that we have inherited from the 19th century. We can do this by responding to Bourdieu's texts as by-products of his social trajectory, integral parts of his contexts. His texts have now become our

pretexts. We should use them reflexively to restructure our social world to meet our needs.

Notes

1. This text is an amended version of a keynote address given to a conference on ‘Social Science Beyond Bourdieu’, which took place at the University of East London, 19–20 June 2003.
2. And, subsequently, as part of the European Capital of Culture Programme in Graz (14 November 2003–February 2004), and in London (14 October–28 November 2004) at the Photographers’ Gallery, as part of its season of exhibitions of views of the Mediterranean.
3. This translation was first published in 1999, Social Politics Papers No. 10, University of East London.
4. This translation was first published in 2003 in *Anthropology Today* 19(2).
5. See Macherey (1974; English trans. 1978). Note also that Macherey (1966) was a contribution to the same number of *Les Temps Modernes*, devoted to the ‘problems of structuralism’, as was Bourdieu (1966). For a short discussion of Macherey and Bourdieu, see Robbins (2000: 47–51).

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