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## INTRODUCTION.

### **Bourdieu's practical logic of the social sciences and its implications for international, cross-cultural understanding.**

#### **Preamble.**

The first collection of articles on Bourdieu in this series (Robbins, 2000) was divided into 7 parts. The first two parts were devoted to articles on Bourdieu's 'life and career' and his 'philosophy of science/knowledge and his methodology'. The last three parts were devoted to articles on the 'transnational transmission' of his work; on 'applications' of his concepts; and on suggested 'ways of reading Bourdieu'. The core of the collection was provided in parts Three and Four which, respectively were devoted to articles on Bourdieu's 'Key concepts' – 'cultural capital', 'habitus', 'field', and 'reproduction' – and on the 'intellectual fields' within which his work had made the greatest impact – Education, Anthropology, Philosophy, Sociology, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies. This organisation was an attempt to stimulate consideration of the validity of Bourdieu's philosophy of social science whilst, at the same time, following his theory in seeking to show how he regarded his concepts as analytical tools to be deployed strategically by means of the socially and historically contingent discourses of academic disciplines. Whilst preparing this first collection I had, on one occasion, the opportunity to discuss the table of proposed contents with Bourdieu. He had little interest in articles which sought to offer an exegesis of his meaning, and he feared the reification of his concepts and of the discourses by means of which they functioned pragmatically in producing social understanding or social change. He was primarily interested in the part on 'applications' and believed that this should be extended. The criterion for judging his own significance that he wanted to adopt was whether the paradigm of his own research endeavour successfully affected the capacity of other researchers to analyse their own situations and engage critically as social agents with their social structures. The retrospective understanding of what he might have meant in developing his concepts at various stages of his career and of the fluctuating power relations between academic disciplines or intellectual fields was primarily of interest only as a means to an end. That end was that followers should generate their own concepts and work the system of intellectual fields in order to engage with changing social reality. It was not his intention that his texts should become consecrated library items. His conceptualisation had become socially and politically dominant, but he was eager to keep alive the hope that the influence of his dominance would be to encourage continuous subversion. In spite of his 'success', his international reputation as a Master of Contemporary or Modern Social Thought, Bourdieu did not lose sight in relation to his own work of the theoretical position that he advanced in "Champ intellectuel et projet créateur" as early as 1966. Announcing his lifetime conviction that 'even the "purest" artistic intention cannot completely escape from sociology', he continued:

"Even the author most indifferent to the lure of success and the least disposed to make concessions to the demands of the public is surely obliged to take account of the social truth of his work as it is reported back to him by the public, the critics or analysts, and to redefine his creative project in relation to this truth". (Bourdieu, 1969, 97)

Bourdieu's work was always strategic and his texts were instruments. It was as if he regarded the texts as catalysts which acquired significance in social exchange but which could not be pinned down objectively in themselves.

This second collection of articles on the work of Bourdieu is published almost three years after his death in January, 2002. There is no more dialectic between his living production and our current reception. The challenge now is to facilitate a response which remains dynamic, maximising the utility of his thinking and resisting its canonisation. To a large extent, therefore, this new collection tries to move on beyond exegesis and debate concerning the substance of Bourdieu's thinking. It concentrates, instead, on his philosophy of the social sciences and on their methodology, recognizing that these underpin his vision of an egalitarian, socio-analytically inter-active mass society. It seeks to place the philosophy centre-stage, recognizing that new situations will demand new concepts and that the struggle between intellectual fields is also, globally, a struggle between national sub-fields - that, for instance, in cross-cultural encounter internationally, one person's anthropology is another person's sociology. The collection reflects some of the continuing debates about Bourdieu's concepts and some of the criticisms of his work, and it also gives access to some of the obituaries written immediately after his death, but the focus is on his engagement – with other people in interviews or through political action – and on the extent to which his particular philosophy of the social sciences enables his work still to relate powerfully to social conditions and traditions of thought in non-Western as well as Western societies. There is still, however, the risk of reification, of inviting the reception of Bourdieu's philosophy of social science as his contribution to an ongoing academic discourse of the 'philosophy of social science'. By looking at Bourdieu's work by reference to that of Habermas, the purpose of this introduction is two-fold. It is, first of all, to offer a juxtaposition of the work of the two thinkers as a case-study of an encounter between different intellectual traditions<sup>1</sup>, and, secondly, to try to make clear that the global relevance of Bourdieu's work today arises not from his *contribution* to an intellectual tradition that has developed in Western Europe but from his capacity both to relate to that tradition and to use it critically as a reflexive social agent. Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu, 1977) was only a transitional 'theoretical' moment. It was a text in which he rejected the explanatory claims of structuralism as such and proposed that objective social relations could be understood as a dialectical relationship between agents and structures. It was only a short, but brave and defining, step to acknowledge that social theorists themselves are social agents. There is a dialectical relationship between their theories and actions which puts in question the absoluteness and universality of the theories. Bourdieu did not present himself thereafter as a theorist of practice but as a theorist who practised the relationship between the two that he had articulated, recognizing that his theory was integrally related to the conditions from which it emerged and to which it was applied. Emphasizing the contrast between the works of Bourdieu and Habermas leads inevitably to the question of the universal applicability of theories generated within competing Western European cultures. The contention of this introduction is that Bourdieu's emphasis of theoretically reflexive practice offers the possibility of analytically problematising the universality of the tradition which generated that emphasis in such a way as to contribute towards a participatory intellectual universalisation. By contrast, Habermas provides an epitaph for eurocentric rationality.

### **Setting the comparative scene: Bourdieu and Habermas.**

Jürgen Habermas's *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften* (On the Logic of the Social Sciences) was first published in February, 1967 as a special supplemental volume of the journal *Philosophische Rundschau*. It was published, with related essays, in book form by Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, in 1970. Born a little earlier than Bourdieu, in 1929, Habermas had submitted a

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<sup>1</sup> This extends further – and more positively – the line of argument I followed in Robbins, 2000, Part IV, (see xxxx of this collection).

doctoral dissertation to the Philosophy Faculty of the University of Bonn in 1954 on “Das Absolute und die Geschichte: von der Zwiespältigkeit in Schellings Denken” (The Absolute and History: on the conflict in Schelling’s thought). In the same year, after studying under the supervision of the philosopher or historian of philosophy, Henri Gouhier, Bourdieu had submitted a dissertation for the *diplôme d’études supérieures* which was a translation of, and commentary on, Leibniz’s *Animadversiones in partem generalem Principiorum cartesianorum*. After the completion of his doctoral dissertation, Habermas became research assistant to Theodore Adorno and proceeded to position himself philosophically by reference to the thinking of German philosophers of the previous generation and to the German philosophical tradition – writing on Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Ernst Bloch, and “The German Idealism of the Jewish Philosophers” before publishing *Student und Politik* (Habermas, 1961), *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Habermas, 1962) and *Theorie und Praxis* (Habermas, 1963). By 1965, Habermas had been appointed to the Chair in Social Philosophy at the University Frankfurt, delivering, in June 1965, an inaugural lecture entitled “Knowledge and Human Interests: A General Perspective” which was to be published that year in the journal *Merkur*, reprinted in 1968 in his *Technik und Wissenschaft als ‘Ideologie’*, and presented as an appendix to the English translation, as *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1971), of *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (1968). Bourdieu’s professional trajectory was initially very different. Conventionally, he took up a post as a lecturer in philosophy at a regional lycée (at Moulins in the Bourbonnais, north of the Auvergne) on leaving the Ecole Normale Supérieure. He almost registered to undertake doctoral research, under the supervision of Georges Canguilhem, on “Les structures temporelles de la vie affective” (the temporal structures of affective life), but this did not materialise. Instead, he was conscripted in 1955 to serve in the French army in Algeria. Whilst on military service and, subsequently, in an academic post at the University of Algiers, he contrived to carry out what he was later to call ‘fieldwork in philosophy’, seeking to undertake research on the “‘phénoménologie de la vie affective’, ou plus exactement sur les structures temporelles de l’expérience affective”<sup>2</sup> (Bourdieu, 1990, 6-7). He was seeking, in other words, not to follow Husserl as a theoretician but as a practitioner of phenomenological method. Bourdieu recalls, in his posthumously published *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse* (2003), how

“... pendant tout le temps que j’écrivais *Sociologie de l’Algérie* et que je menais mes premières enquêtes ethnologiques, je continuais à écrire chaque soir sur la structure de l’expérience temporelle selon Husserl”<sup>3</sup> (Bourdieu, 2003, 57)

*Sociologie de l’Algérie* (Bourdieu, 1958) was, amongst other things, an attempt to represent the ‘base-line’ or *status quo ante* of Algerian culture so as to make possible a phenomenological acculturation study, an analysis of culture change or adaptation as an affective process occurring over time. Operating behind the doors of a German academic institution and within the intellectual confines of a self-confidently parochial, national philosophical tradition, Habermas sought theoretically to articulate a position concerning the relationship between theory and practice, knowledge and human interests. Struggling with a sense of guilt at French colonial presence in North Africa, constantly aware of the risks and dangers inherent in seeking to make social observations in the midst of military conflict, Bourdieu sought to deploy theory to articulate vicariously the a-theoretical practical interests of the indigenous peoples whose lives he found himself observing.

## Habermas on Knowledge and Human Interests.

<sup>2</sup> See the discussion later of the article within which Bourdieu made this statement.

<sup>3</sup> ‘...the whole time that I was writing *Sociologie de l’Algérie* and undertaking my first ethnological enquiries, every evening I carried on writing about Husserl’s account of the structure of temporal experience.’ (*my translation*)

Habermas begins the text on which his inaugural lecture was based with the following quotation from Schelling's *Lectures on the Method of Academic Study*:

“The fear of speculation, the ostensible rush from the theoretical to the practical, brings about the same shallowness in action that it does in knowledge. It is by studying a strictly theoretical philosophy that we become most immediately acquainted with Ideas, and only Ideas provide action with energy and ethical significance.” (Schelling, 1958-59, 299, quoted in Habermas, 1971, 301)

In introducing this passage, Habermas comments that

“In the language of German Idealism he emphatically renewed the concept of theory that has defined the tradition of great philosophy since its beginnings” (Habermas, 1971, 301)

and he defines that concept of theory as one in which

“The only knowledge that can truly orient action is knowledge that frees itself from mere human interests and is based on Ideas – in other words, knowledge that has taken a theoretical attitude.” (Habermas, 1971, 301)

It followed from the religious origins of the word ‘theory’, Habermas continues, that a separation is posited between the *logos* which is ‘a realm of Being purged of inconstancy and uncertainty’ and *doxa* which is ‘the realm of the mutable and perishable’. Horkheimer had distinguished between theory in this traditional sense and ‘theory in the sense of critique’ and, a generation later, Habermas set himself the task of re-examining this distinction, starting with a consideration of Husserl's *The Crisis of the European Sciences* (Husserl, 1970). Habermas contends that Husserl took for granted for most of his career the traditional link between the cultivation of theoretical knowledge and consequential moral and civilised behaviour but that, after 1933 and in the period in which he was writing *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, he began to fear that the ‘most advanced disciplines, especially physics, had degenerated from the status of true theory’. (Habermas, 1971, 302). This was the thesis which Habermas proceeded to consider in detail. He distinguishes between the *empirical-analytic* and the *historical-hermeneutic* sciences. In their attempts to establish laws independent of human interest, the former have an affinity with the traditional, theoretical function of philosophy, logically concerned with unchanging certainties. The latter are concerned with the uncertainty and contingency of human behaviour but they, too, ‘comprise a scientific consciousness, based on the model of science’. (Habermas, 1971, 303). The development of the concept of ‘value-freedom’ in the social sciences is indicative of an inclination to adhere to the tradition of theoretical detachment even in a field of enquiry that is primarily concerned with practice. However, Habermas insists, the separation of ‘values’ from the facts or laws established by ‘neutral’ social science demonstrates the extent to which the original, ethical implication of theoretical knowledge has been lost. In appropriating from traditional theoretical knowledge the capacity to give an account of natural constancy and uniformity, the sciences forfeited the integral relationship between theory and moral behaviour, the original harmony between theory and values. In turning specifically to Husserl's argument, Habermas identifies three steps. Firstly, Husserl claimed that ‘the possible objects of scientific analysis are constituted a priori in the self-evidence of our primary life-world’ (Habermas, 1971, 304), or, in other words, that objective scientific explanations are ‘the products of a meaning-generative subjectivity’ which is disclosed by phenomenological analysis. Secondly, Husserl tried to show that this productive subjectivity remained concealed by the objective sciences because those sciences had not ‘radically freed themselves from interests rooted in the primary life-world’. Only phenomenology frees knowledge from interest and, thirdly, therefore, Husserl identified ‘transcendental self-reflection, to which he accords the name of phenomenological description, with theory in the traditional sense’.

For Habermas, Husserl's mistake was a consequence of his failure to realize that the objective sciences - which he attacked, and the phenomenological reduction - which he embraced, both shared a common desire to exclude everyday human interests and practices. Both were theoretical rather than practical, logical rather than doxic. Nevertheless, Husserl believed that the pure theory achieved by phenomenology by blanking practical interests would have the same moral benefits that had supposedly been the consequence of the theoretical orientation in Greek society. Habermas argues, however, that theory was only capable of orienting human action in the classical tradition because it was a cosmology. It was influential because it concealed the interest which it was representing.. It 'derived *pseudonormative power* from the *concealment of its actual interest*'. (Habermas, 1971, 306). In seeking, therefore, to generate a modern form of pure theory which would have a status and efficacy equivalent to that of the classical, cosmologically based pure theory, and would resuscitate pure theory in opposition to the false usurpation of theory by objectivist science, Husserl, in Habermas's view, sought to emulate a wrongly conceived notion of classical theory and to erect a false idol of interest-free theory which was in denial of its interests as much as objectivist science. As Habermas cogently summarises:

“Our reason for suspecting the presence of an unacknowledged connection between knowledge and interest is not that the sciences have abandoned the classical concept of theory, but that they have not completely abandoned it. The suspicion of objectivism exists because of the *ontological illusion of pure theory* that the sciences still deceptively share with the philosophical tradition *after casting off its practical content.*” (Habermas, 1971, 307).

Husserl was as guilty of sustaining the ontological illusion as were the sciences which he criticised. Habermas differs from Husserl in insisting that the objectivist claims of the sciences have to be counteracted by making explicit their basis in what he calls 'knowledge-constitutive interests' rather than by seeking to identify an interest-free, universal and transcendental, pre-predicative form of understanding. Husserl's notion of 'intentionality', which he derived from Brentano, meant that the way in which we know phenomena is derived from the way in which the phenomena present themselves to us rather than from what they might be said to represent. For phenomenology, the categories of our understanding of phenomena are intrinsic to the phenomena themselves. It supports neither the empirical investigation of reality nor the solipsistic emphasis on mental construction. It posits a correlation and reciprocity between the way in which objective phenomena present themselves to be observed and the way in which subjective observers perceive them. What was lacking in the work of Husserl – although it was perhaps developing in his late work – was the sense that the correlation might be socially and historically contingent rather than universally absolute.

Habermas argued that different kinds of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' should be acknowledged without this implying any quest for a-historical, universal, transcendental, or idealist theory. As he put it, 'There are three categories of processes of inquiry for which a specific connection between logical-methodological rules and knowledge-constitutive interests can be demonstrated' (Habermas, 1971, 308). These three categories were the approach of the empirical-analytic sciences which incorporate 'a *technical* cognitive interest; the approach of the historical-hermeneutic sciences which incorporate a *practical* cognitive interest; and the approach of critically oriented sciences which incorporate an *emancipatory* cognitive interest. There is, in other words, one kind of knowledge which derives its character from the human interest in controlling the natural world. There are laws of deduction peculiar to this technical interest, and Habermas cites Popper's *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* as well as his own "Analytische Wissenschaftstheorie" (1963) There is another kind of knowledge which derives from the human interest in defining meaning, and Habermas registers here his agreement with Part II of Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode*. The world of traditional meaning

‘discloses itself to the interpreter only to the extent that his own world becomes clarified at the same time’. (Habermas, 1971, 309-10) Importantly for our purposes, Habermas elaborates his point here in the following way:

“The subject of understanding establishes communication between both worlds. He comprehends the substantive content of tradition by applying tradition to himself and his situation. ...The understanding of meaning is directed in its very structure toward the attainment of possible consensus among actors in the framework of a self-understanding derived from tradition. This we shall call the practical cognitive interest, in contrast to the technical.” (Habermas, 1971, 310).

There is, further, a third kind of knowledge. The systematic sciences of social action strive to emulate the empirical-analytic sciences, but critical social science recognizes that ‘information about lawlike connections sets off a process of reflection in the consciousness of those whom the laws are about’ (Habermas, 1971, 310) – a process of ‘self-reflection’.

Having identified these three categories of knowledge-constitutive interest, Habermas returns to the task of defining the nature of the relationship between knowledge and interest. We know from our everyday experience that knowledge provides reasons for actions which are other than the real reasons. Consequently, all sciences have developed procedures to reject subjectivity and make an ostentatious break from subservience to interests. Interestingly, Habermas refers to the development of a new discipline, the sociology of knowledge, which ‘has emerged to counter the uncontrolled influence of interests on a deeper level, which derive less from the individual than from the objective situation of social groups’ (Habermas, 1971, 311). More importantly, Habermas contends, in seeking to secure its objectivity against the influence of particular interests, science ‘deludes itself about the fundamental interests to which it owes not only its impetus but the conditions of possible objectivity themselves.’ (Habermas, 1971, 311).

By recognising that our ways of apprehending reality are circumscribed by the transcendental limits imposed by the three kinds of knowledge-constitutive interests, Habermas argues that we are confronted by the need to understand the fundamental interest which drives the human orientation towards scientific objectification in each and any of the three kinds. He advances five theses. The first is that ‘*The achievements of the transcendental subject have their basis in the natural history of the human species.*’ (Habermas, 1971, 312). This might seem to imply that human reason is an organ of biological adaptation, but Habermas insists that knowledge is not simply a biological instrument but has an autonomous function in shaping the ideals which direct self-preservation. This leads to his second thesis which is that ‘*knowledge equally serves as an instrument and transcends mere self-preservation*’ (Habermas, 1971, 313). The three categories of knowledge are grounded in the interests of a species situated within the interlocking aspects of social organization: work, language, and power, which leads Habermas to formulate his third thesis which is that ‘*knowledge-constitutive interests take form in the medium of work, language, and power*’. They are not, in other words, Kantian ‘categories’ indicative of the characteristics of the universal human mind, but they are, however, related to archetypal elements of social organization rather than to the multiplicity of human practices. Asserting that the human interest in autonomy and responsibility ‘can be apprehended a priori’ since they are posited in language – ‘Our first sentence expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus’ – Habermas moves towards his fourth thesis which is that ‘*in the power of self-reflection, knowledge and interest are one*’ (Habermas, 1971, 314). This is an ideal unification which will only become possible when philosophy explores the historical struggles to realize the ideal instead of suppressing knowledge-constitutive interests in advancing ‘the ontological illusion of pure theory’. Habermas’s fifth thesis, therefore, is that ‘*the unity of knowledge and interest proves itself in a dialectic that takes the historical traces of suppressed dialogue and reconstructs what has been suppressed*’. (Habermas, 1971, 315)

In the last section of “Knowledge and Human Interests: a General Perspective”, Habermas reaches his conclusions. The sciences have achieved success by denying the knowledge-constitutive interests on which they are based. This has historically had beneficial aspects: fascist abuses of science were only possible because science had lost its confidence in ‘the illusion of objectivism’. This pragmatic defence of an illusion, however, is not acceptable. Husserl was right to attack the objectivism of the sciences but wrong to seek to do so by resurrecting an underlying objectivism which corresponded with the *theoria* of the classical tradition. This was to counter scientific objectivism with a philosophical objectivism which equally denied its origin in human interests. For Habermas, both the *nomological sciences* and the *hermeneutic sciences* exclude the possibility of enlightened action, since the former operates on the assumption that ‘the practical mastery of history can be reduced to technical control of objectified processes’ whilst the latter ‘defends sterilized knowledge against the reflected appropriation of active traditions and locks up history in a museum’ (Habermas, 1971, 316). He concludes, therefore, that the ‘practical consequences of a restricted, scientific consciousness of the sciences can be countered by a critique that destroys the illusion of objectivism’, and states clearly that ‘contrary to Husserl’s expectations, objectivism is eliminated not through the power of renewed *theoria* but through demonstrating what it conceals: the connection of knowledge and interest.’ (Habermas, 1971, 316-7)

### **Habermas on the Logic of the Social Sciences.**

In his preface of 1982 to the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of *On the Logic of the Social Sciences*, Habermas described the original text of 1967 as a ‘review of literature pertaining to the logic of the social sciences’. The first chapter of that original text – ‘The Dualism of the Natural and Cultural Sciences’ - began by claiming that

“The once lively discussion initiated by Neo-Kantianism concerning the methodological distinctions between natural-scientific and social-scientific inquiry has been forgotten; the problems that gave rise to it no longer seem to be of contemporary relevance.”  
(Habermas, 1988, 1).

A triumphant positivism had dispensed with argument about the logics of different sciences by contending that the differences between sciences were the consequence of their relative degrees of development. At the same time, the nomological sciences had been indisputably successful and were extending into ‘psychology and economics, sociology and political science’. The historical-hermeneutic sciences no longer attempted to dispute the same territory. Epitomised in the work of Karl Popper and Hans Georg Gadamer respectively,

“... neither analytic philosophy of science nor philosophical hermeneutics takes any notice of the other; ...” (Habermas, 1988, 2)

There would be no reason to disturb this co-existence, Habermas suggests, were it not for the fact that the social sciences sit uneasily between the opposing positions. According to latter-day positivists, a general and unified empirical-analytic behavioural science can be produced, but different disciplines within the social sciences have developed different models such that Habermas is forced to conclude that ‘the competing approaches that have been developed within the social sciences are negatively interrelated, in that they all stem from the fact that the apparatus of general theories cannot be applied to society in the same way as to objectified natural processes.’ (Habermas, 1988, 3).

Habermas immediately embarks on ‘a historical reconstruction’ of the development of the situation which he had initially summarised. He begins with a consideration of the work of Rickert who tried to confine the applicability of Kant’s critique of reason to the nomological sciences so as to make space for the cultural sciences which should be seen to be based on the



relationship between facts and values. For Habermas, Rickert's mistake was that he began 'by constructing the concept of culture on the basis of transcendental idealism' (Habermas, 1988, 4). This was an incomplete transition from Kant to Hegel. Contemporary thinking, as Habermas's introduction had suggested, had renounced the attempt to find any unifying logic of all the sciences, but Habermas was eager to take up the challenge again, seeking resolution by endeavouring to dismiss Kant finally and to complete the movement to Hegel. 'Today' he argued 'such a movement can no longer begin with a critique of consciousness; it must begin with a transcendental critique of language'. Habermas suggests that Marburg neo-kantianism (as opposed to the Heidelberg neo-kantianism of Rickert) had reached this point in the work of Ernst Cassirer who avoided the category of 'value' and, instead, analysed 'the logical structure of symbolic forms' (Habermas, 1988, 6). For Cassirer, the transcendental is made manifest through symbolic representations or objectifications. Sciences, myths, religion, and art are all symbolic forms which have their particular perspectives without any of them possessing privileged access to 'things in themselves'. In spite of Cassirer's advance over Rickert, his philosophy of symbolic forms remained a-historically concerned with the statically transcendental and, as such, still resisted any accommodation of historical dialecticism, whether Hegelian or Marxist. Hence, 'Both of Neo-Kantianism's attempts to account for the dualism of the sciences were fruitless' (Habermas, 1988, 10) and the only exception to the indifference to the problem which developed is found in the work of Max Weber who, as a pupil of Rickert, developed a methodology which sought to recognise 'the 'interdependence of social-scientific inquiry and the objective context to which it is directed and in which it itself stands, ...' (Habermas, 1988, 16).

The corollary of Habermas's 'historical reconstruction' was that he should seek to analyse whether social inquiry 'is in the last analysis reducible to a systematized historical research or whether sociology as a rigorous science can purge itself of historical contamination to the point where, methodologically speaking, the natural sciences and the sciences of action have the same status' (Habermas, 1988, 43). In exploring the methodology of general theories of social action in the second part of the book, Habermas devoted chapters to 'Normative-Analytic and Empirical-Analytic Approaches to Social Science', 'Intentional Action and Stimulus-Response Behavior', and 'Three Forms of Functionalism'. The next book was devoted to the problem of understanding meaning in the empirical-analytic sciences of action, and this involved chapters on 'The Phenomenological Approach', 'The Linguistic Approach', and 'The Hermeneutic Approach'. Whereas in his "Knowledge and Human Interests: A General Perspective", Habermas had defined his own position through a critique of Husserl, in *On the Logic of the Social Sciences*, his chapter on the phenomenological approach offers a close analysis of, instead, the work of Cicourel, Schutz, Garfinkel and Goffman. Habermas identified two major shortcomings in the work of these followers of Husserl. Both pointed towards the need for analysis of language independent of notions of consciousness. The first shortcoming was the consequence of the disposition of phenomenologists to proceed 'from the experience of their own individual lifeworld in order to reach, through abstraction and generalization, the accomplishments of the subjectivity that creates meaning'. (Habermas, 1988, 112). This is Cartesian and solipsistic and, in Habermas's view, by contrast,

"... the phenomenologically oriented sociologist must converse with the Other. He must engage in a communication that links him with an other, and that, if the individuality of the lifeworld is of any importance, is also the only way to encounter the particular through the mediation of general categories; for the spoken language in which we maintain our own identity and that of others is the only medium in which the dialectic of the general and the particular is carried out every day. We do not satisfy the methodological conditions of communicative experience by evading them phenomenologically. If this experience is not to be prematurely cut off through seeming

objectivation, it requires training in an already constituted realm, that of the intersubjectivity of acting subjects who live together and interact with one another; it demands, then, the learning of concrete language patterns.” (Habermas, 1988, 112-3).

Habermas’s inclination to turn to linguistic analysis is most explicit in elaborating his main objection both to phenomenology and to neo-kantianism (connected, of course, to his disposition to perceive a neo-kantian orientation in Husserl’s work) – the objection that ‘the phenomenological approach remains within the limits of the analysis of consciousness’ (Habermas, 1988, 116). Habermas claims that, following Husserl, Schutz saw the symbolic structure of the lifeworld as ‘constituted on all levels as a referential context in which every element perceived is grasped within a halo of other elements that are also given but not immediately intuited’. He concludes:

“Because primary experience is characterised by relationships of appresentation in this way, there can be systems of signs that become autonomous on the level of symbols in the form of a language. Just as for Cassirer language, as *one* symbol system among others, is grounded in the representational function of consciousness, and the structuring of consciousness cannot be derived from linguistic communication, so for Husserl and Schutz as well, linguistic symbols are grounded in the comprehensive appresentational activity of the transcendental ego. Monadological consciousnesses spin linguistic intersubjectivity out of themselves. Language has not yet been understood as the web to whose threads subjects cling and through which they develop into subjects in the first place.” (Habermas, 1988, 116-7).

### **The Franco-German encounter: Bourdieu and Habermas.**

As we have seen, Habermas originally held out the prospect of ‘grounding the social sciences in a theory of language’ (in his words in the preface to the 1970 edition of *On the Logic of the Social Sciences*). But, as he says in the later preface to the fifth edition (1982), ‘This is a prospect I no longer entertain’, and he continued:

“The theory of communicative action that I have since put forward is not a continuation of methodology by other means. It breaks with the primacy of epistemology and treats the presupposition of action oriented to mutual understanding *independently* of the transcendental preconditions of knowledge. This turn from the theory of knowledge to the theory of communication makes it possible to give substantive answers to questions that, from a metatheoretical vantage point, could only be elucidated as questions and clarified in respect to their presuppositions.” (Habermas, 1988, xiv)

The last thing Bourdieu ever wanted to acquire was a ‘metatheoretical vantage point’ and he might well have welcomed Habermas’s new desire to renounce the theory of knowledge in favour of the theory of communication were it not for the fact that, in his discourse and professional practice, Habermas seemed incapable of relinquishing a theoretical stance in spite of his theoretical rejection of it. Partly by re-visiting his Algerian research, Bourdieu, as we shall see, spent most of the 1970s struggling to express what he wanted to say about social practice, firstly in *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique, précédé de trois études d’ethnologie kabyle* (1972), to be translated into English as *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), and then in an article of 1976 with a title - “Le sens pratique” – to be adopted in a book, published in 1980, which was to be translated into English as *The Logic of Practice* (1990). *Esquisse* was translated into German and published by ‘Habermas’s publishers’ – Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, with the title: *Entwurf einer Theorie der Praxis auf der ethnologischen Grundlage der kabyliischen Gesellschaft* (Outline of a theory of practice on the ethnological basis of Kabyle

society) in 1976. Notice that the German title situates the study within an *a priori* *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* conceptualisation whilst, however, it also acknowledges explicitly that the theory of practice which is proposed is not, like Habermas's study of 1963, a theoretical study of *Theorie und Praxis* (theory and practice) but, rather a presentation of ethnological findings. This was a significant acknowledgement. The first German publication of Bourdieu's work – published by Suhrkamp in 1970 as *Zur Soziologie der symbolischen Formen* – had assembled five articles written by Bourdieu in the second half of the 1960s, some of which have not yet been translated into English. These were: “Structuralism and Theory of Sociological Knowledge” (Bourdieu, 1968); “Condition de classe et position de classe” (Bourdieu, 1966); “Champ intellectuel et projet créateur” (Bourdieu, 1966); postface to E. Panofsky: *Architectur gothique et pensée scolastique* (Bourdieu, 1967) – translated as “Der Habitus als Vermittlung zwischen Struktur und Praxis” (habitus as mediation between structure and practice); and “Eléments d'une théorie sociologique de la perception artistique” (Bourdieu, 1968). The German title – for a sociology of symbolic forms – was deliberately suggestive of the work of Cassirer who had attempted to elaborate a philosophy of symbolic forms. This was a legitimate suggestion, given that Bourdieu had translated and commented on the work of Panofsky, who was a disciple of Cassirer; that he refers to Cassirer's texts in “Structuralism and Theory of Sociological Knowledge” and that, as editor of the *Le Sens Commun* series for the Editions de Minuit, was about to sponsor, through the 1970s (between 1972 and 1983), translations into French of seven texts of Cassirer<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, Bourdieu's work was also known in Germany with the publication, in 1971, of *Die Illusion der Chancengleichheit* which assembled extracts derived from *Les héritiers* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964), *La reproduction* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970) as well as other examples of their educational research. It was Suhrkamp, again, however, which sought to emphasize the symbolic dimension of the theory offered by Bourdieu and Passeron, particularly in *La reproduction*. 1973 saw the publication of *Grundlagen einer Theorie der symbolischen Gewalt* (Foundations of a theory of symbolic power) which contained extracts from *La reproduction* as well as “Reproduction culturelle et reproduction sociale” (Bourdieu, 1971).

My purpose in specifying this information about the reception of Bourdieu's work in Germany is to suggest that Bourdieu's work was first absorbed into German thinking in part in relation to educational change associated with the movements of May, 1968, but, more importantly, in relation to one of the strands of the philosophy of the social sciences which Habermas was examining abstractly at the same time. We should recall that Habermas thought that Cassirer's form of Marburg neo-Kantianism was as ‘fruitless’ (Habermas, 1988, 10) in resolving the dualism of the natural and social sciences as Rickert's form of Heidelberg neo-Kantianism. Both were still attached to a form of a-historical transcendentalism in spite of their interests in history. In the perception of the Germans in the 1970s, Bourdieu was seeking to develop a sociology of symbolic forms which would be in the spirit of Cassirer's philosophy but which would reject the vestiges of Kantian transcendentalism and become resolutely socio-historical.

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<sup>4</sup> Ernst Cassirer. *La Philosophie des formes Symboliques*: I. *Le Langage*, translated from the German by Ole Hansen-Love and Jean Lacoste (1972); II. *La Pensée Mythique*, translated from the German by Jean Lacoste (1972); III. *La Phénoménologie de la connaissance*, translated from the German by Claude Fronty, 1972.

Ernst Cassirer. *Langage et Mythe. A propos des noms de dieux*, translated from the German by Ole Hansen-Love, 1973.

Ernst Cassirer. *Essai sur l'Homme*, translated from the English by Norbert Massa, 1975.

Ernst Cassirer. *Substance et Fonction. Eléments pour une théorie du concept*, translated from the German by Pierre Caussat, 1977.

Ernst Cassirer. *Individu et cosmos dans la Philosophie de la Renaissance*, translated from the German and presented by Pierre Quillet, 1983.

This perception, however, showed little awareness of the origins of Bourdieu's thinking in phenomenological philosophy, mediated by Merleau-Ponty; in ethnographic studies in Algeria (until the translation of *Esquisse*); and, equally, neither did it reconcile Bourdieu's philosophy with the empirical sociological research which he undertook in Paris during the 1960s in the Centre de Sociologie Européenne. My endeavour is to show that the thinking of Habermas provides a framework for understanding elements of Bourdieu's practice but, importantly, to suggest that Bourdieu's work went beyond Habermas's general categorisation precisely by emphasizing the 'practical logic' of socio-analytic encounter rather than the philosophical logic of the social sciences.

### **The Bourdieu – Honneth encounter, April, 1985.**

The key meeting-point for the encounter between conceptions of social science and for consideration of the social purpose of philosophical reflection on the validity of social scientific explanation comes in the interview which took place in Paris in April, 1985, between Bourdieu and three German interviewers: A. Honneth, H. Kocyba and B. Schwibs. Schwibs had already translated *La Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1979) into German as *Die feinen Unterschiede, Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft* (1982); was to translate Bourdieu's *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu, 1984) as *Homo Academicus* (1988), and was to publish later in 1985 another interview with Bourdieu entitled: "Vernunft ist eine historische Errungenschaft, wie die Sozialversicherung" (reason is an historical achievement, like social insurance) (Bourdieu, 1985). Honneth was at the time of the interview an assistant in Habermas's department at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt, and was to succeed Habermas in the Chair of Social Philosophy there in 1996. Honneth had already published in 1984 in the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* an article which appeared subsequently in translation in English in *Theory, Culture and Society* as "The Fragmented World of Symbolic Forms; Reflections on Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture" (Honneth, 1986)<sup>5</sup>. The interview with Bourdieu was published in a 1986 number of *Asthetik und Kommunikation* which was partly devoted to the work of Bourdieu within a section which asked the question: 'Wiederkehr des Intellektuellen?' (The return of the Intellectuals?). The section included two articles by Bourdieu, a review of *Homo Academicus*, Martin Schmeiser's "Von der Sozio-Ethnologie Algeriens zur Ethno-Soziologie der französischen Gegenwartsgesellschaft"<sup>6</sup>, as well as the extended interview which was entitled "Der Kampf um die symbolische Ordnung" (The struggle for symbolic order). The interview was translated into English and appeared in the same number of *Theory, Culture and Society* as Honneth's "The Fragmented World of Symbolic Forms" as "The Struggle for Symbolic Order" (Bourdieu, 1986) before it was published in French in *Choses Dites* (Bourdieu, 1987) as "Fieldwork in Philosophy", which it was entitled when it was published again in the English translation of *Choses Dites* as *In Other Words* (Bourdieu, 1990). In contextualising the interview, we have, finally, to remember that Habermas had given four lectures at the Collège de France, Paris, in March 1983 – perhaps, it has been suggested, at the invitation of Bourdieu who had been appointed to the Chair of Sociology at the Collège in the previous academic year. These were published as the first four lectures of *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne. Zwölf Vorlesungen* (Habermas, 1985), to be translated as *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Habermas, 1987). On his own admission in the Preface, the starting point for Habermas for these lectures (and those other eight added subsequently and, in part, delivered at Cornell University in September, 1984) was a speech which he had given in September, 1980 entitled "Modernity – an Unfinished Project" which had already been separately published as

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<sup>5</sup> included in PB1, Vol 3, pp.3-19.

<sup>6</sup> included in this collection as xxxxx

“Modernity versus Postmodernity” (Habermas, 1982). This disposition to argue that modernity had taken a wrong turning was a theme, he argued, which

“... never lost its hold on me. Its philosophical aspects have moved even more starkly into public consciousness in the wake of the reception of French neostructuralism – as has the key term ‘postmodernity’, in connection with a publication by Jean-François Lyotard.” (Habermas, 1987, xix).

As summarised by Thomas McCarthy in his Introduction to the English translation, Habermas was concerned

“... to respond to the challenge posed by the radical critique of reason in contemporary French thought by re-examining ‘the philosophical discourse of modernity’ from which it issues. His strategy is to return to those historical ‘crossroads’ at which Hegel and the Young Hegelians, Nietzsche, and Heidegger made the fateful decisions that led to this outcome; his aim is to identify and clearly mark out a road indicated but not taken: the determinate negation of subject-centred reason by reason understood as communicative action.” (Habermas, 1987, vii).

Habermas clearly regarded his young assistant – Honneth – as an ally in his campaign against French postmodernism. The above reference to the publication of Lyotard’s *La condition postmoderne* (1979) has a footnote which, in part, reads:

“... On this see Axel Honneth, “Der Affekt gegen das Allgemeine<sup>7</sup>,” *Merkur* 430 (December, 1984): 893ff; ...”

It seems clear that the interview between Bourdieu and Honneth, Kocyba, and Schwibs was, on both sides, a conscious representation of an encounter between intellectual traditions and, tacitly, an opportunity for both sides to seek to define their attitude towards Habermas’s incipient resolution of the modernity/postmodernity debate.

It is possible to try to analyse the development of Bourdieu’s thinking by reference both to the terminology adopted by Habermas in *On the Logic of the Social Sciences and Knowledge and Human Interests* (that is, in the 1960s) and to the categorisation of 19<sup>th</sup> century German thought presented in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. The form of questioning adopted by Honneth and his colleagues colluded, as it were, in this operation. As published in German (but neither in the French nor English translations), Honneth introduced the discussion by indicating that he and his colleagues wanted to pursue four main strands of enquiry. The first was that they wanted to find out more about ‘das geistige Klima ... in dem Ihre Theorie entstand’ (the intellectual climate in which Bourdieu’s theory originated) From the outset, therefore, the attempt was being made to understand Bourdieu’s ‘theory’ even though his rejection of social theory in favour of sociological method in his article of 1968 entitled “Structuralism and Theory of Sociological Knowledge” (Bourdieu, 1968) had already appeared in German translation in *Zur Sociologie der symbolischen Formen* (Bourdieu, 1970). It was in response to this initial line of enquiry that Bourdieu first explicitly made public the extent of the influence of Husserl and Heidegger in his intellectual formation. (It was only after the reissue of his 1975 article on “L’ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger” (Bourdieu, 1975) [the political ontology of Martin Heidegger] in 1988 (Bourdieu, 1988) as a book with the same title that Bourdieu was prepared to articulate in a subsequently untranslated conversation, published in German, with H. Woetzel about the ‘Heidegger Controversy’, that ‘... ich glaube, ich wäre sein bester Verteidiger’ [I think I could be his best defender] (Bourdieu, 1988). Similarly, it was here that Bourdieu admitted that although, during his student days in the early 1950s, he had “... never really got into the existentialist mood”, nevertheless,

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<sup>7</sup> (feeling/affectivity versus the universal) – see later for a discussion of the correspondence between Honneth’s title and the implicit structuring of the 1984 interview with Bourdieu.

“Merleau-Ponty was something different, at least in my view. He was interested in the human sciences and in biology, ...” (Bourdieu, 1990, 5).

Although it is patently clear from reading Bourdieu’s work on art perception of the 1960s and from the development of the concepts of ‘habitus’ and ‘hexis’ that Bourdieu had been well aware of, respectively, Merleau-Ponty’s *La phénoménologie de la perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 1945) and his *La structure du comportement* (Merleau-Ponty, 1942), it is significant that Bourdieu emphasizes that the interest of Merleau-Ponty was that he made contacts between biology and the human sciences. We know from Bourdieu’s posthumously published *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse* (Bourdieu, 2003) that he registered to carry out doctoral research under the supervision of Georges Canguilhem whose specialist interest was in philosophy and the history of medical science and who was to support Foucault in his early studies of madness and civilisation. In short, Bourdieu’s responses indicated that, through the mediation of Merleau-Ponty, he was familiar with the French post-war interpretation of Husserl which established links between Husserl’s methodology and elements of Bergson’s vitalism. In other words, the version of Husserl’s philosophy with which Bourdieu had become familiar was a version which did not correspond with that criticised by Habermas in *Knowledge and Human Interests*. It was, as Habermas wanted, a Husserl stripped of his transcendentalism but, as Habermas did not want, it was also a Husserl integrated with a tradition of irrationality.

The second strand of questioning proposed by Honneth was designed to situate the ‘theoretischen Grundannahmen Ihrer soziologischen Forschungen’ (the fundamental, theoretical assumptions of your sociological researches). It was here that Bourdieu was cross-examined about the transition in his professional stance from ‘philosophy’ to ‘sociology’. He discussed the part played by Lévi-Strauss in making a social science ‘respectable’ (Bourdieu, 1990, 6) and also referred to Foucault’s translation of Kant’s *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique* (Foucault, 1964) for which Foucault had also prepared a *thèse complémentaire* (unpublished, known or not known by Bourdieu?) in which he had argued that Kant’s late inclination to develop a pragmatic anthropology which would analyse what ‘man has made of man’ was inhibited by his prior critical philosophy which predisposed him to operate with a view of an a-historical, non-contingent notion of man possessing universal characteristics, particularly transcendental rationality. Foucault had argued that the only way out of Kant’s impasse was to follow the path taken by Nietzsche. Bourdieu suggested, therefore, that there had been social factors which had led him to make the transition from philosophical training to sociological research. It was Honneth who pursued this point and probed Bourdieu as to why he had first undertaken research which was ethnological, eliciting the response:

“Ich hatte Untersuchungen zur ‘Phänomenologie des Gefühlslebens’ unternommen, oder genauer: zu den Zeitstrukturen der affektiven Erfahrung.” Bourdieu, 1986, 146) where the French and English rendering of ‘Gefühlsleben’ is, respectively, ‘la vie affective’ and ‘emotional life’ and of ‘affektiven Erfahrung’ is ‘l’expérience affective’ and ‘emotional experience’. The important point is that Bourdieu was wanting to insist that he had not conducted research primarily as an ethnologist but as a philosopher who was seeking to explore philosophical problems empirically. (The subsidiary point is that the English translations as ‘emotional’ wrongly push Bourdieu’s interest towards that of Sartre in his *Esquisse d’une théorie des émotions* (Sartre, 1939) [Outline of a Theory of the Emotions] whereas Bourdieu’s interest was in the phenomenological analysis of inter-subjective or cross-cultural affectivity). Bourdieu continued:

“To reconcile my need for rigour with philosophical research, I wanted to study biology and so on. I thought of myself as a philosopher and it took me a very long time to admit to myself that I had become an ethnologist. ... I undertook both research that could be called ethnological – on kinship, ritual and the pre-capitalist economy – and research that could be described as sociological, especially statistical surveys that I carried out with

my friends from the INSEE<sup>8</sup>, Darbel, Rivet and Seibel, from whom I learned a great deal.” (Bourdieu, 1990, 7)

There is an important sense, of course, in which Bourdieu never ‘became an ethnologist’. Kocyba interjected to ask whether, as an ethnologist, Bourdieu was really self-taught (‘Autodidakt’), to which Bourdieu replied: ‘Nicht nur in Ethnologie’ (not only in ethnology). I have argued recently in several articles that Bourdieu’s time in Algeria is to be seen as one of methodological apprenticeship in which he tested the utility of various conceptual frameworks in trying to represent the condition of pre-colonial Algerian societies (in *Sociologie de l’Algérie*) as a prerequisite for understanding the processes of cultural adaptation imposed on indigenous populations by colonial control. I have suggested that he explored the validity of the Weberian interpretation of protestantism in his representation of the Islamic fundamentalism of the Moabites<sup>9</sup>, and explored the validity of the Durkheimian notion of ‘mechanical solidarity’ in his account of the social organisation of the Kabyles<sup>10</sup>. Equally, what had originally been ‘pure’ photographic observation<sup>11</sup> was modified in the second edition of the text, following his attendance at Lévi-Strauss’s seminar at the Collège de France in 1960, so that his findings were presented diagrammatically as a series of binary oppositions. This was in 1962, a year before Bourdieu wrote his quintessentially structuralist analysis to be published later in the decade in a collection celebrating Lévi-Strauss’s 60<sup>th</sup> birthday: “La maison kabyle ou le monde renversé” (Bourdieu, 1970).

Having ‘become’ an ethnologist, Bourdieu was invited by Raymond Aron to become secretary to his research group – the Centre de Sociologie Européenne. In accordance with Aron’s wishes, Passeron – whose trajectory had not been unlike Bourdieu’s, passing from philosophical training at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, through military service in Algeria, to a post in Aron’s research group – rapidly acquired the competence to teach Weber. Together, Bourdieu and Passeron sought to carry out sociological research, in relation to students, photography and museums. Together, they attempted to carry out the kinds of neo-positivist, quantitative analyses which seemed to be the norm for sociological research imposed at the time through American influence. Together, they wrote “Sociology and Philosophy in France since 1945: Death and Resurrection of a Philosophy without Subject” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1967) in which they sought to redefine Durkheimian positivism by accommodating it to a ‘relationalism’ derived from Cassirer and also sought to situate their own work in an exemplary relational manner in relation to the competing fields of Philosophy and Sociology in post-war France. Together, and with J.-C. Chamboredon, they produced *Le métier de sociologue: préalables épistémologiques* (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron, 1968) in which, in concluding the introduction on ‘epistemology and methodology’, they argued that, as Bourdieu would later put it, sociology had to constitute itself as an autonomous field. Citing Durkheim in support, they argued for the establishment of a professional community which would co-exist with the establishment of an epistemic community:

“In short, the scientific community has to provide itself with specific forms of social interchange, and, like Durkheim, one is entitled to see a symptom of its heteronomy in the fact that, in France at least, and even today, it is too often responsive to the non-scientific enticements of intellectual ‘worldliness’: ‘We believe,’ wrote Durkheim at the

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<sup>8</sup> The National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies.

<sup>9</sup> see Robbins, 2003a.

<sup>10</sup> see Robbins, 2003b

<sup>11</sup> see Bourdieu’s discussion of his Algerian photography in conversation with Franz Schultheis in Bourdieu, 2003, and his philosophical discussion (contemporary with the research on photography undertaken for *Un Art Moyen* [Bourdieu, Boltanski, Castel, Chamboredon, 1965]) of the possibility or impossibility of such ‘pure’ photographic observation in “Les paradoxes de l’automate” (Bourdieu, 1967).

end of *The Rules of Sociological Method*, ‘that the time has come for sociology to renounce worldly successes, so to speak, and to take on the character which befits all science. Thus it will gain in dignity and authority what it will perhaps lose in popularity.’<sup>12</sup> (Bourdieu, Passeron & Chamboredon, 1991, 77)

During the 1960s, in the terms outlined by Habermas in *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Bourdieu and Passeron espoused a deliberate attachment to the practice of empirical-analytical sociological research. An underlying assumption of *Le métier de sociologue* (Bourdieu, Passeron & Chamboredon, 1968) was that this social science community would be unified methodologically without reference to ideological differences. Reiterating the position taken in their “Structuralism and Theory of Sociological Knowledge” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1968), they argued clearly in the Introduction to *Le métier de sociologue* that

“The question of the affiliation of a piece of sociological research to a particular theory of the social system, that of Marx, or Weber, or Durkheim, for example, is always secondary to the question of whether that research belongs to sociological science. The only criterion of this is whether it implements the fundamental principles of the theory of sociological knowledge which, as such, in no way separates authors who differ in every respect as regards their theory of the social system. Even if most authors have been led to identify their particular theory of the social system with the theory of sociological knowledge that they involve, implicitly at least, in their sociological practice, the epistemological project can nonetheless use this preliminary distinction as a basis for juxtaposing authors whose doctrinal oppositions mask an epistemological agreement.” (Bourdieu, Passeron & Chamboredon, 1991, 4-5)

The intention was to represent sociological explanatory discourse as a pure field of science practised by craftsmen sharing a common methodology. The autonomy of this practice held irrespective of differences of culture or ideology. However, it is important to realise that Bourdieu retained philosophical scepticism about the explanatory validity of this constructed, autonomous tradition of social science research. Honneth and his fellow questioners teased out this tension when they cross-examined Bourdieu next about his relationship to structuralism. In “The Fragmented World of Symbolic Forms”, Honneth had already identified the way in which Bourdieu had become dissatisfied with Lévi-Straussian structuralism, referring in support to the account which Bourdieu had himself given in the Preface to *Le Sens Pratique* (Bourdieu, 1980; Bourdieu, 1987 in German; Bourdieu 1990 in English). Honneth had summarised the implications of the influence of Lévi-Strauss in the following way:

“Bourdieu’s preliminary studies as an anthropologist in French Colonial Algeria, were informed by the basic tenets of structural anthropology; the marriage rites as well as myth-telling of the Kabyle he studied were interpreted on the linguistic model as closed semiotic systems whose structural order was supposedly related to the constitutive laws of the human mind.” (Honneth, in Robbins, 2000, vol. 3., 4)

He had rightly identified Bourdieu’s objection to the universalist tendency of Lévi-Straussian thinking, but the essence of his article had been that Bourdieu’s conception of human agency was based upon an unacknowledged value-orientation towards understanding human agency as motivated towards making a ‘position-dependent calculus of utilities’. Having shown that Bourdieu’s anthropological researches had caused him to question structuralism, Honneth contended that these had

“... provided the impetus for him to work out his own conception, which to some extent took him back to just that type of social-scientific functionalism which Lévi-Strauss’ approach had been aimed against” (Honneth, in Robbins, 2000, vol. 3, 4).

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<sup>12</sup> E. Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (Durkheim, 1982, 163)



Bourdieu's response, in Honneth's view, was to interpret human agency according to a restricted model. It was a model which was inadequate in terms of moral philosophy. Following a detailed discussion of *La distinction*, Honneth concluded that:

"The central economic concepts upon which his cultural analysis is based, compel him to subsume all forms of social conflicts under the type of struggles which occur over social distribution – although the struggle for the social recognition of moral models clearly obeys a different logic. For the recognition which an existing social order lends to the values and norms embodied in the lifestyles of a particular group does not depend on the volume of knowledge or wealth, or on the quantity of measurable goods the group has managed to accumulate, rather it is determined according to the traditions and value conceptions which could be socially generalized and institutionalised in the society." (Honneth, in Robbins 2000, 16-7)

In other words, for Honneth, Bourdieu was in danger of substituting an unsatisfactory social theoretical model for structuralist universalism. What Honneth did not appear to have realized was that Bourdieu's move away from structuralism was a move towards seeking to understand agents as themselves theory-generating agents rather than the objects of interpretation of academic social philosophers<sup>13</sup>. As Bourdieu put this in response to Honneth's question in the 1985 interview:

"... I was beginning to suspect that the privilege granted to scientific and objectivist analysis (genealogical research, for example), in dealing with the natives' vision of things, was perhaps an ideology inherent in the profession. In short, I wanted to abandon the cavalier point of view of the anthropologist who draws up plans, maps, diagrams and genealogies. That is all very well, and inevitable, as one moment, that of objectivism, in the anthropologist's procedures. But you shouldn't forget the other possible relation to the social world, that of agents really engaged in the market, for example – the level that I am interested in mapping out. One must thus draw up a theory of this non-theoretical, partial, somewhat down-to-earth relationship with the social world that is the relation of ordinary experience. And one must also establish a theory of the theoretical relationship, a theory of all the implications, starting with the breaking off of practical belonging and immediate investment, and its transformation into the distant, detached relationship that defines the scientist's position." (Bourdieu, 1990, 20-1)

In response to further questioning, Bourdieu was equally emphatic that he was not wanting to produce a theory of 'praxis':

"I really must point out that I have never used the concept of praxis which, at least in French, tends to create the impression of something pompously theoretical – which is pretty paradoxical – and makes one think of trendy Marxism, the young Marx, the Frankfurt School, Yugoslav Marxism ... I've always talked, quite simply, of practice." (Bourdieu, 1990, 22)

Towards the end of the interview, the questioners make explicit the tension that was underlying the whole intellectual exchange. Bourdieu's emphasis of the practice of agents seemed to be in direct opposition to the extent to which Habermas's continuation of the unfinished project of modernity was predicated on the existence of universal norms. In response to a late question, Bourdieu replied:

"I have a tendency to ask the problem of reason or of norms in a resolutely historicist way. Instead of wondering about the existence of 'universal interests', I will ask: who

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<sup>13</sup> My argument is that Bourdieu was not substituting an alternative 'theory' for structuralism at all. His disposition to interpret behaviour in terms of the position-taking of agents has to be understood rather as a function of his own lived experience of social mobility achieved as a result of the acquisition of educational qualifications. For a contemporary recognition that an adequate response to Bourdieu's work involves re-thinking the status of 'social theory', see the transition from Brubaker (1985, in Robbins, ed., 2000, Vol. 3, 87-116) to Brubaker (1993).

has an interest in the universal? Or rather: what are the social conditions that have to be fulfilled for certain agents to have an interest in the universal? (Bourdieu, 1990, 31) or again, when asked whether there is ‘a stable point, a foundation, which justifies all my thoughts’ as, it is contended, is thought to be the case ‘in the German tradition’ (Bourdieu, 1990, 32), Bourdieu resolutely replied:

“I discover that one becomes a sociologist, a theoretician, so as to have an absolute point of view, a *theoria*; and that, for as long as it is unrecognised, this kingly, divine ambition is a tremendous cause of error. So much so that, to escape even a little from the relative, one absolutely has to abdicate from the claim to absolute knowledge, uncrown the philosopher-king. And I discover too that in a field at a certain moment, the logic of the game is such that certain agents have an *interest* in the universal. And, I have to say, I think this is true in my case. But the fact of knowing it, of knowing that I am investing personal impulses, linked with my whole life story, in my research, gives me some small chance of knowing the limits of my vision.” (Bourdieu, 1990, 33.)

In other words, the interview between Bourdieu and Honneth and his colleagues exposed the extent to which Bourdieu was practising social theory without wishing to contribute to the kind of social theorising that was emanating from Frankfurt. Nevertheless, the interview manifested an as yet incomplete transition in Bourdieu’s own position.

### **After 1985: the international dimension of Bourdieu’s practical logic.**

After working within the assumptions of the ‘empirical-analytical’ discourse of sociology during the 1960s, Bourdieu had, in the early 1970s, struggled to find a way to do justice to his original phenomenological interests. This involved locating the discourses of sociology and the discourses of structuralism as examples of objectivist knowledge in the three-stage process described in “Three Forms of Theoretical Knowledge” (Bourdieu, 1973). Bourdieu was interested in the work of Cassirer at the time because it enabled him both to think about the characteristics of ‘science’ as a symbolic form in relation to the practices of objectivist scientists and also to think about myth and language as expressions of symbolic agency rather than as inert texts which had become the analysis fodder of structuralist anthropologists. In “On Symbolic Power” (a lecture given in 1973 and published as Bourdieu, 1977), Bourdieu made it clear that his use of Cassirer was to enable his own thinking to go beyond the remnants of neo-Kantian transcendentalism and to go beyond Panofsky’s historicisation of the philosophy of symbolic forms towards an understanding of the social conditions of symbolic conflict. He did not seek to establish this understanding as a revised form of Cassirer’s ‘theory’ but as an instrument for understanding that conflicts in scientific understanding are of the same kind, manifesting the influence of social conditions, as the conflicts in symbolic expression which the social sciences seek to explain.

It is significant that the interview of 1985 took place between the French publication of *Homo Academicus* in 1984 and the English and German translations of 1988, both of which were published with an original preface. In my first book on Bourdieu (Robbins, 1991), I discussed (pp.162-5) the manifest process of construction of the text of *Homo Academicus*. I submit that it is clear that much of the information for that book was gathered at about 1968 when Bourdieu undertook a ‘sociology of knowledge’ analysis of Parisian higher education. This was the period of *Le métier de sociologue* (Bourdieu, Passeron, & Chamboredon, 1968), ‘Champ intellectuel et projet créateur’ (Bourdieu, 1966), ‘Sociology and Philosophy in France since 1945’ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1967) and the work on Panofsky, in which Bourdieu was advocating a ‘sociology of sociology’ as a form of Bachelardian ‘rupture épistémologique’ and

also beginning to articulate the post-structuralist emphasis on agency which was presented in *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (Bourdieu, 1972). *Homo Academicus* re-visited the early data in the light of the work of the 1970s, particularly the project on Le Patronat which was subsequently published in *La Noblesse d'Etat* (Bourdieu, 1989) and, of course, the work on taste which led from the article on 'L'anatomie du goût' (Bourdieu & de Saint Martin, 1976) to *La Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1979). In other words, the text of *Homo Academicus* was able to superimpose the sociological analysis articulated in his 'Les stratégies de reconversion' (Bourdieu, Boltanski & de Saint Martin, 1973) on the primary sociology of knowledge. This meant that the text was no longer a sociology of ideas but instead a sociology of the deployment of ideas in the position-taking of social agents – situating agents and ideas in the competing fields of power and economics.

By the time of the publication of *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu, 1984), however, the text was not simply an analysis which now recognized the relationship between agency and structure within Parisian higher education (including Bourdieu's reflexive recognition of his own position and agency). It was much more. The text was an instrument of Bourdieu's agency. Around the time of his appointment to the Chair of Sociology at the Collège de France in 1981, Bourdieu had been aware that he was about to be associated with an institution which already possessed recognized 'institutional capital' and that this association could affect him ambivalently. On the one hand the institution strengthened his formal authority and his capacity to hold influential power but, on the other hand, the institution might symbolize an educational tradition which would seem to be at odds with the view of education that Bourdieu had developed in his empirical research of the 1960s. The issue which Bourdieu explored in an article of 1975 on fashion – 'Le couturier et sa griffe' (Bourdieu & Y. Delsaut, 1975) – was relevant to his own intellectual situation. He wanted to be able to harness the power of the institution without forfeiting the convictions which arose from his personal *habitus*. From the mid-1980s, Bourdieu was acutely conscious of the same tension in the relationship between his international label (*griffe*) and the specific social conditions which generated his research, his conceptual framework, and his published findings. 'The genesis of the concepts of habitus and field' (Bourdieu, 1985) was an attempt to apply reflexively to his own concepts the approach which he had accepted in earlier articles such as 'Genèse et structure du champ religieux' (Bourdieu, 1971). If, as Bourdieu argued in *Le métier de sociologue* (Bourdieu, Passeron & Chamboredon, 1968), concepts are tools, elements of an *ars inveniendi*, what happens to them when they become severed from the conditions in which they were instrumentally effective? What is the appropriate reaction to their being used pragmatically for different purposes in different contexts?

Bourdieu worried about this fundamental issue and his anxiety lay behind much of his work between 1985 and 1995 by which time, it seemed, he almost decided that his *griffe* was beyond his personal control and that he could only still exercise the kind of influence he wanted by direct social action and by adopting communicative devices which would by-pass the global market of theoretical texts – the management of the publishing venture, *Liber: Raisons d'agir*; participation in the production of the film, *La sociologie est un sport de combat*; and active encouragement of European social movements. Bourdieu's concern manifested itself forcibly in the Preface to the English Edition of *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu, 1988) and in articles which discussed the misrepresentation of his work: 'Concluding Remarks: for a sociogenetic understanding of intellectual works' (1993); which outlined a framework for analyzing international intellectual transmission: 'Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées' (Bourdieu, 1989) and 'Les ruses de la raison impérialiste' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2000); which directly considered conceptual transfer such as most of the essays collected in *Practical Reason* (Bourdieu, 1998); and which reflected more generally on the international

function or potential function of intellectuals: ‘On the Possibility of a Field of World Sociology’ (Bourdieu, 1991) and ‘The Corporatism of the Universal: the role of intellectuals in the modern world’ (Bourdieu, 1989).

If you take these texts in sequence, my interpretation is roughly as follows: The English Preface to *Homo Academicus* constituted an attempt by Bourdieu to protect his own *griffe* by pre-emptively offering the text as the context of its own production. The lecture given at the inauguration of the Freiburg Frankreich Zentrum was a move towards recommending an objective sociological analysis of the circulation of ideas, but it was precisely this – taking examples from the circulation of interpretations of Heidegger and Nietzsche without, for instance, accommodating the kind of analysis of the conditions of production of Heidegger’s work that he had already written in “L’ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger” (Bourdieu, 1975). Methodologically, I am simply saying that “Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées” is at the same stage in relation to trans-cultural analysis as was the original empirical research which lay behind *Homo Academicus*. Several of the texts of the late 1980s and early 1990s were distorted by Bourdieu’s political attempt during these years to construct a trans-national field of intellectuals, and this was associated with a quest for universal invariants which was in conflict with his earlier post-structuralist particularism. However, “Les ruses de la raison impérialiste” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2000) seems to point the way within the field of international relations to a sociological analysis of intellectual agents. It was an article which used objectivist analysis for direct, polemical engagement rather than, as in *Homo Academicus*, as a way of offering a controlled and controlling self-presentation. It was an article which began with a passionate recognition that universalist claims are the products of particular circumstances.

### **Bourdieu’s legacy for international social understanding: the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, objectivity and subjectivity.**

There co-existed in Bourdieu’s thought a desire to institutionalise a discourse of world sociology, providing a forum for intellectual exchange between researchers adhering to the same methodological practices, and, simultaneously, a desire to recognize that this would be a discourse of objectivism and a community of like-minded objectivists exercising ‘symbolic violence’ while the essence of the necessary analysis ought to be concerned with the particular circumstances in which local objectivisms might be generated within national ‘sub-fields’. This competing urge explains the contrast between the argument advanced in “On the Possibility of a Field of World Sociology” (Bourdieu, 1991) and the contemporary position presented in “For a socio-genetic understanding of intellectual works” (Bourdieu, 1993). The contrast here replicates the contrast between the objectivist sociology of sociology of *Le métier de sociologue* and the incipiently reflexive analysis outlined first in *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique*. There was, however, no contradiction. Bourdieu insisted that his reflexivity entailed an understanding of the objectivist structure of social possibilities within which his individual intellectual identity developed. In his final years, he came, perhaps, to emphasize his sense that he needed to articulate the grounds of his science in his lived experience and to recognize that there needed to be an encounter between experiential difference rather than a superimposition of intellectual uniformity, but it was no accident that his final course of lectures at the Collège de France treated the question of ‘the science of science and reflexivity’ (published as *Science de la science et réflexivité*, Bourdieu, 2001) and that he should choose that the opening page of his posthumously published *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse* (Bourdieu, 2003) should state

categorically and humorously (recalling Magritte) that “Ceci n’est pas une autobiographie” (This is not an autobiography).

There was a constant tension in Bourdieu’s work between the urge to be a practising, quantitative social scientist, sharing problems and findings within a self-validating intellectual community, and the desire to uncover the pre-scientific foundations of science-making activity. This tension enabled him to represent the claims for universality of Western European philosophy of social science in relation to their specifically arbitrary or contingent temporal and geographical conditions of production. As an explanatory system, social science might be functionally dependent on an a-cultural consensus of methodologies and techniques, but this system should be seen as one amongst a series of competing, culturally different explanatory alternatives. In his self-presentation, Bourdieu consciously contributed to an understanding of the ‘socio-genetic’ origins of social practices. In his memory, this collection of articles is an invitation to reflect on the local nature of his thinking and to follow his lead in celebrating the potential for international human relations to be realised by recognizing alternative forms of thought generated in alternative localities.

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