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## Rifts and bridgings in legitimate discourse: Autonomy and heteronomy in the fields of cultural production

One should be able to deliver a lecture, even an inaugural lecture, without wondering by virtue of what right: the institution is there to set such questions aside, and with it the anguish associated with the arbitrariness of all new beginnings. A rite of aggregation and investiture, *inception*, the inaugural lecture symbolically accomplishes the act of delegation whereby the new master is authorized to speak with authority, and which institutes his word as legitimate discourse, delivered from the proper quarter.<sup>1</sup>

Comparing the positions taken and put forward in the inaugural speeches to the scholastic institution *par excellence* of two of the most luminous representatives of the highly autonomous French post-war intellectual stratum affords us with one valuable way into the present predicament in the human sciences and politics in that such a comparison brings to the surface enigma within contemporary discourse on science, community, discourse and ultimately on certain central features of the determination of modern man. The positions presented and the problematics exhibited are intertwined, occasionally intermittently, but more often systematically, as both inaugurists belong to the same epistemological tradition, the school of *historical epistemology*, which was instigated by philosophers such as Gaston Bachelard and historians of science such as Georges Canguilhem. Furthermore one of the speeches in many ways is formulated as a counterpart or perhaps even *appendix* to the first. Although the first is not invoked, it lingers heavily as a tacit presence, a causally and functionally dynamic absence, in that it forces the listener or the reader to consider the institutional and philosophically pertinent setting upon which the presentation of any topic always rely. Such an encounter also forces us to consider certain aspects of what one of the (in)augurists has termed the *epistemological unconscious*, founding not only these particular addresses, or merely the learned, scholastic treatises in a broader context, but also the material and symbolic acts taking place every day in the routine undertakings of modern as well as primitive societies. It makes us attentive to the different uses of rhetorical devices, of symbolic gestures and distinctive postures which these intellectuals use in order to slip into, fit in and occasionally drop out of the rigid rules which more strictly circumscribe and limit the actions of the truly dispossessed or less prosperous in terms of the specific capital current in the field. It also forces us to consider the role of intellection in a broader societal context and by addressing some recent occurrences in the cultural and scientific discussion, we may reflect on the historical conditions of possibility of human reflexivity and on the political significance of this reflective institutionalisation as well as on the social and scientific repercussions which are effected by an increasing awareness of the political importance of control over the spheres of intellection, the fields of cultural production.

The institution is *Collège de France* and the intellectual giants are Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. Foucault made his entry into the prestigious office in 1970; Bourdieu was allotted his place at the prominent arena in 1982. They were both previously known within their fields, acknowledged as important scholars, but the installations at this venerable institution placed them at the centre of the intellectual field, identifying them as creditable beyond human doubt. Taking the inaugural speeches of Bourdieu and Foucault as a point of departure, we may find a possible route into the question of rarefied and *legitimate* discourse and also into the question of reflexivity in the human sciences. But we will set off with another instigator of new ways of speaking, a veritable battering ram in discursivity, and a pioneer in the modern philosophical project, Friedrich Nietzsche.

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<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1990) 'Lecture on the Lecture', in *In Other Words. Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity: 177-198, p 177.

## Rarefaction and contempt

This book belongs to the very few. Perhaps none of them is even living yet. Possibly they are the readers who understand my *Zarathustra*: how *could* I confound myself with those for whom there are ears listening today? – Only the day after tomorrow belongs to me. Some are born posthumously.  
/.../

Very well! These are my readers, my rightful readers, my predestined readers: what do the *rest* matter? – The rest are merely mankind. – One must be superior to mankind in force, in *loftiness* of soul – in contempt...<sup>2</sup>

There is something intrinsically elevated, condescending, yet base, in the sense of being corrupt, hence perhaps also dishonourable, in the operation of our most respected intellectual institutions. Nietzsche's rarefied and quite frank exclamation at the outset of *Anti-Christ* may serve as a marker of the arrogance which accompanies intellectual rectitude. The quote is not merely yet another sample of Nietzsche's enraged and irrational diatribes against the baseness of activities all too human, mundane and inferior to the community of kindred spirits in which he places himself and his 'rightful readers', but also a self-understanding of those elected to the higher grounds of the bodies of *rarefied comprehension*, spheres of the labyrinthine windings of legitimate discourse. Nietzsche's formulation is a most vivid expression of the ethos of the autonomous principle of hierarchisation, to which Bourdieu refers as the *specific principle of legitimacy* operative in the field of restricted production or the 'sub-field of production-for-producers'<sup>3</sup>. The intention of Nietzsche may be wholly different from that of e.g. Mallarmé and the symbolists, or Baudelaire, whom Bourdieu presents as prototypes of the autonomous principle of art production, embodied in the slogan *l'art pour l'art*, but the spirit is the same – the formulation of an index of *rarefaction*, a safeguard against trespassers lacking sufficient eminence into sacred territory. It signifies a specific mark of distinction, beyond reach for the uninitiated. It proposes a boundary for the legitimate form of speech, articulation, reception, comprehension, which is both synchronic in its functions, but diachronic in the sense that it spells out the intimation of canonisation, i.e., of the transcendent, transgressive, even transhistorical nature of *real* works of art, in which the recognition of the broader public is not necessarily, even typically fails to be, congruent with that of the circle of equals as well as that of posterity. This index of rarefaction is often also an effective index of posthumous recognition, a fact which Bourdieu has formulated as one of the most important marks of this restricted form of cultural production.

Bourdieu distinguishes between four types of artefacts and plots in diagrammatic form the evolution of their exchange value in time. The four objects are 1) technical objects, whose value decreases quite steadily and undramatically in time; 2) symbolic object with short cycle (fashion article, best-selling novel), with a sharply descending slope; 3) technical or symbolic object, obsolescent but reconstituted as antique; and 4) symbolic object with long cycle, having no pecuniary or otherwise worldly success at the date of their production, but then constituted as *classical*. The last category is presented as *legitimate works*.<sup>4</sup>

The social space is objective, but it cannot function without the active participation of agents which struggle to maintain their position or even to climb in the social hierarchy – both within a social field, among its various subfields (subgroups, families etc) and in the matrix of the social space. A social field is never one-dimensional in the sense that the capital, which is the specific object of its struggles, is undisputed. On the contrary, this is the very engine of its dynamic. The very machinery and machinations intrinsic to such partly isolated spheres nevertheless betray a certain inaccessibility, constituting the structuring principle to which any aspiring entrant must submit. At the risk of subjectivising an objective structure, we could say that the *modus operandi* of the field is *misrecognised* in order effectively to fulfil its purposeless purpose of structuring the acts performed within its confines, of refracting the trajectories of entrants and supplying the mechanism of selection, ordering and hierarchisation. The possibility of contempt, loftiness etc is present only to the extent that there are people in inferior places, who recognise the standing of those commanding aloofness and arrogance towards those dispossessed. There is, therefore, just as in the case of Hegel's master-slave-relationship, a mutual dependence of the dominant and the dominated, in which the struggle for recognition assumes a more structured and multifaceted character, as the arena is of greater complexity and stratification, a battleground in which the

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<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich (1990 [1889/1895]) *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, p 114, foreword to *Anti-Christ*.

<sup>3</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1993) 'The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed', in *The Field of Cultural Production*, Cambridge: Polity: 29-73, p 46.

<sup>4</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1975) Bourdieu, Pierre/ Delsaut, Yvette: 'Le couturier et sa griffe: contribution à une théorie de la magie', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, No 1, janvier 1975: 7-36.

contracting parties are multiple. The processes of recognition are taking place within institutional frames making any individual agent, even those most aloof, more or less dispossessed and acquiescent to the rules of the game.

Those most involved, indeed *caught up*, in a certain activity tend to see the presuppositions, assumptions made as not only *necessary* but also *inevitable* and *natural*, being beyond question. They are all parts of or participators in a structural complicity, in what Bourdieu calls the *illusio*, engraved in the *doxa*, the common ground on which interlocutors in any discourse stand. There are premises, which have to be shared in order for a meaningful and purposeful discussion to be possible. The presuppositions are both *known* (the agents in a specific field of cultural production know what to be regarded as valuable, what to account as true or false, and what kind of argument is to be seen as valid), *recognised* (these values are commonly and generally accepted and approved) and *misrecognised* in that the real grounds, motives, causes for the principles involved are unknown. They are *arbitrary*, *contingent* and historically determined, but are regarded as natural, obvious, self-evident and transhistorical. In the analyses carried out by Bourdieu and his collaborators, these characterisations are in most cases applied to the *practical* logic of everyday activities in which the motives for particular courses of action and the systems of values and normative structures have this three-tiered basis, or could profitably be presented in this way. Most actions are not performed in accordance with the calculated rationality of the goal-oriented actor inhabiting the models of rational choice theories, but are inspired by a *lex insita*, a law inscribed in the body, a *habitus*, *necessity made into virtue*, embodied objective constraints, and rules made into practical habits.<sup>5</sup> Bourdieu phrases it thus: 'Real mastery of this logic is only possible for someone who is completely mastered by it, who possesses it, but so much that he is totally possessed by it, in other words depossessed.'<sup>6</sup>

Although this characterisation of the *pre-* or *non-thetic* (i.e. not discursive, theorised), practical sense, this 'feel for the game', is modelled predominantly out of studies made of the quite primitive (in an evolutionary sense) societies of the north African Berber tribes of Algeria<sup>7</sup> and from correspondingly archaic life-forms and behavioural patterns in remote corners of France (Béarn)<sup>8</sup>, there is a marked, if perhaps not *manifest* but *latent* homology in which the intrinsic logic to more rarefied spheres is patently similar in its veiling of the real mechanisms and its evasive character.<sup>9</sup>

The peculiarity of any field of cultural production is that the value of the pertinent resources (its capital) is never given and fixed. Consequently the structure of such a field is not 'unaffected' by the continual struggles which takes place within the field. As Bourdieu was eager to stress, any field is characterised by polarities and by having differential principles of structuration. For instance, the field of cultural production which he analysis in *Les règles de l'art*<sup>10</sup> have at least two different and contradictory principles of structuration which fundamentally consist of the ascription of value to cultural artefacts: The field of restricted production in which the pertinent arbiters of value are other legitimate producers tends to be hierarchised in accordance with a generalised game which defies all ordinary economics. Bourdieu calls this a game of '*loser wins*' and characterises its economy as upside-down or even as an anti-economy, in that its participants have an interest in being disinterested, that is of not being involved and interested in worldly success. Bourdieu therefore characterises this principle of the restricted field of production as *autonomous*, and one could also add

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<sup>5</sup> However, Bourdieu does not normally want to speak about rules (although he does so when he speaks about the workings of a field as having the form of a game with its turns, interests and stakes) since it carries with it an overly objectivist notion of human behaviour, in which the model formulated by the analyst is regarded as the real force which propels the agent into action. Instead, Bourdieu prefers to refer to *strategies*, which the different agents in a specific field is utilising in order to carry on with their mundane activities, often having the property of conserving, augmenting and changing the structure of the possession of different kinds of capital. In Bourdieu's formulation, the shift from talking about *rules* to referring to *strategies* is performed in order to avoid confusing the 'things of logic' with the 'logic of things': 'To avoid this, you have to include in the theory the real principle behind strategies, namely the practical sense, or, if you prefer, what sports players call a feel for the game, as the practical mastery of the logic or of the immanent necessity of a game – a mastery acquired by experience of the game, and one which works outside conscious control and discourse (in the way that, for instance, techniques of the body do).' (Bourdieu, Pierre (1990) 'From Rules to Strategies', in *In Other Words. Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity: 59-75, p 61)

<sup>6</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1990) *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge: Polity, p 14. Cf Bhaskar, Roy (1993) *Dialectic. The Pulse of Freedom*, London/New York: Verso, p 340: '...the theorem that those who make history do not understand it and those who understand it do not make it'. I hope to be able to formulate a more complex picture of how the practical and discursive orders interpenetrate in the evolution of mankind, and that although the rationalisation of human societies and of action has not been 'complete' in a Weberian sense, the increasing flood of information in which modern man is subject to has a considerable effect on action.

<sup>7</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (2000 [1972]) *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*, Paris: Seuil; Bourdieu, Pierre (1977) *Algérie 60. Structures économiques et structures temporelles*, Paris: Minuit; Bourdieu, Pierre (1980) *Le sens pratique*, Paris: Minuit.

<sup>8</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (2002) *Le bal des célibataires. Crise de la société paysanne en Béarn*, Paris: Seuil.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Bourdieu, Pierre (1966) 'Champ intellectuel et projet créateur', *Les temps modernes*, Vol 22, No 247: 865-906; Bourdieu, Pierre (1984) *Homo academicus*, Paris: Minuit; Bourdieu, Pierre (1998 [1992]) *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Paris: Seuil.

<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1998 [1992]) *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Paris: Seuil.

*introverted* and the principle of the field of large-scale production as heteronomous, implying its dependence on principles of hierarchisation taken outside the particular field, most often from the economic and political fields.

This may be trivial, but this also points to one of several sources of conflict within any real field (not only the model which some sociologists try to erect on the basis of Bourdieu's writings which they apply as a rigid grid on their empirical work...). Other sources of conflict are of course the generational movements which any field is subject to: newcomers questioning the predominant values, the orthodoxy, but also people trying to undermine the whole basis of the game by questioning the fundamental principles, the doxa of the field and thereby punctuating the *illusio* which has knit the *monde à part* together.

The intrinsic logic to more rarefied spheres is manifestly similar in its veiling of the real mechanisms and its evasive character. Now, this mixture of, but perhaps rather oscillation between, opacity and transparency, possession and dispossession, immediate grasp and discursive subversion/effacement, is really one of the themes in this paper as this problematic penetrates into the very depths of both the social sphere and its epistemic refraction, as well as into the intricate interplay between these faces or phases of the (modern) social dialectic. We will be intrigued by questions of subjective and objective meaning, rationale, purpose, intention, motivation, cause, as well as consequence, reason.

## **Inauguration**

The installation of a new master on the throne to a prestigious office, whether sacral or secular, while devoted to securing continuity to the institution, offers a point of possible reform, a stage for potential breaching of the norms and rules safeguarding the establishment. The congregation is held in suspense as to what the new master would find appropriate for changing in terms of legitimate procedures and general direction. We find both a readiness to accept certain changes, but also a need for continuity and recognition, securing identification for the members of a partly new organisation. There is a hiatus in the processual flow, which renders an alteration of direction possible, and even justifies such a break. Still, a bridge to tradition, secured by the ornamentation and procedures of the ceremony, has to be offered. In many ways, these two aspects are closely linked, perhaps most obviously in the appointment of new leaders in the fields of cultural production, where a 'return to the origins' is invoked in order to criticise the immediate predecessors and yet securing ancestry to a greater and truer, unadulterated cause. We can often hear declarations of compliance, but also of independence, but most important is perhaps the assurance of objective, purpose, intention, stability, firmness which is a promise of durability and at the same time a statement of novelty. As we will see, such a call for a return, a restoration of an alleged lost foundation, is also powerful means in the hands of entrants to get a foothold in the semiclosed world of consecration.

*Turn on, tune in, drop out.* Being turned on and having found the right attunement as well as tune, tone and tenor, a consecrated *maître* is thus also to a certain extent able to drop out from some more trivial demands which haunt the novice or the dominated in any field. The institution and the lofty status accredited to those positioned at the top of the hierarchy, makes the internalised command (of the correct phrasings, posture, in short *distinctive manners*) serve a highly functional purpose in its structured and structuring power over the whole situation, to the effect that the succeder naturally finds his way to transgress the boundaries which the institution is there to settle. Although there are limits, which are not to be exceeded, the exceptionality of the situation brings about a situational logic in which the frontier is repositioned and the economy of the field may be rearranged by force of the inaugural act. The most extreme example of such a crowning in which the institution functions as secondary to the very act of consecration is of course that of Napoleon, when he, in an absolute gesture of omnipotence puts the crown on his own head and thereby gives flesh to his own statement of being the one *who makes circumstances*. In the case of two more recent *maîtres*, Foucault and Bourdieu, such a *complete* restructuring, in which the subject and object are shifted in the act of delegation, did not materialise. Still, both events were used as platforms from which the pretender proffered formulations aimed at the very institution – or rather the kind of institution which has this kind of significance accorded to its rites – in which the ritual was staged. Of course such a rhetorical trick in which the speaker opens his speech by declaring that he is not much of speaker is rather common, but in the cases of Foucault and Bourdieu, the prelude is not a humble gesture of modesty but one of supreme confidence and lofty, if not contemptuous, panoptic vision over not only the immediate scene, but of the field as a whole.

## **The unease of beginnings and the consolation of institutionalised practices**

Bourdieu's posture, initially stated in the introduction to his lecture which we find in the preamble to this text, is detached and impersonal, his subject matter is solemn and serious; *alas* scholastic, but nevertheless reflexively critical and properly philosophically and socially pertinent. His formulation of the hope to be spared from the

anguish involved when confronted by the question of the legitimacy of beginnings may seem puzzling, but it is really an introduction to his purpose, to offer a reflexive enquiry into the conditions of possibility of (legitimate) discourse. Who has the right, possibility, capability and means to speak? To whom do we normally accord meaning and attention? In what way is the lecturer, the author, circumscribed by the institutional setting? This intent soon becomes clear as he performs this reflexive enquiry into the conditions of possibility of (legitimate) discourse in general and properly *sociological* accounts in particular. Foucault on the other hand assumes quite a personal and less formal stance. While Bourdieu addresses the question of the legitimacy of the institution in which his act is performed, Foucault opens his speech by pleading for a relief from his predicament as instigator:

I would really like to have slipped imperceptibly into this lecture, as into all the others I shall be delivering, perhaps over the years ahead. I would have preferred to be enveloped in words, borne away beyond all possible beginnings. At the moment of speaking, I would like to have perceived a nameless voice, long preceding me, leaving me merely to enmesh myself in it, taking up its cadence, and to lodge myself, when no one was looking, in its interstices as if it had paused an instant, in suspense, to beckon to me. There would have been no beginnings: instead, speech would proceed from me, while I stood in its path – slender gap – the point of possible disappearance.<sup>11</sup>

By this gesture, Foucault, performing his speech twelve years before Bourdieu, sets the stage for subsequent involvements in discourse analysis by pointing to an extraindividual element of discourse, much in the manner of Hegel describing the forward march of the Absolute spirit or of Popper formulating his idea of a third world of Objective Knowledge.

Now, we could say in response to Foucault that this is really what we all do; we are always-already enmeshed in a structure from which we cannot quietly slip away and which gives us the necessary resources of action, whether predominantly symbolic or practical, but also constrains us. We are always within it and we owe our sense of individuality from it. We are, as Marx put it, ‘in the most literal sense’ a *zoon politicon*, ‘not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society’<sup>12</sup>. The Robinsonades of the eighteenth century were merely ‘unimaginative conceits’, which effectuated a veiling of the real constitution, the intrinsically social and societal *nature*, of human beings. In so far as Mr. Crusoe retains any of his sense of self, it is only as a languishing remembrance of his previous social encounters, his former position in a social space, and as a consequence of the new recognition he gets from Friday. The mirror-self of which Cooley spoke is in this very concrete sense the expression of both the *genesis* and the *continuity* of human identity. Although we are routinely engaged in a continuous inner conversation<sup>13</sup>, this conversation only takes place by the subject utilising resources (linguistic etc) that are achieved in the social encounter with a preexisting social realm. The *conatus* of the individual is thus in some sense parasitic on the social structure in which he is enmeshed. The interesting or rather disheartening element in today’s social and political discourse is the increasing impact of such a-social and ultra-individualistic ideas in which the self is presented as an entirely autonomous accomplishment of the individual. Rather than seeing the dependence on other people, both as a means of acquiring an individuality and in the possibility of surviving and living well, as the defining feature of human beings, much of the present discourse repudiates this dependence and presents individuals as wholly the product of a self-same act of creation. Individualism becomes both egoism and egotism.

Pardon me for my digression on this issue, but this is really a crucial point also in the problematic with which both Foucault and Bourdieu were tampering, and which to a very large degree lies at the foundation of much philosophical and sociological thinking from the beginning of the modern era, concerning the constitution of the human subject and the relation between socialisation, individuation and power. As Foucault rightly stresses, the modern era is a privileged moment in the history of mankind in that it provides a confluence of so many diverse aspects of societal and individual transformations.<sup>14</sup> It provides a privileged domain for analysis just by virtue of being such a vertiginous moment in history where such a manifold of economical, political, cultural and social events simultaneously took place and which to such a large degree still constitute our societal foundation, as well as provide us with our means of representations. How is the social world told, expressed in histories and myths, in tales of how we got here and why are we here?

In this sense, Foucault’s yearning is peculiarly also his, or any other social agent’s, *necessity* or *fate*, in that we are always already caught in various networks of meaning, linguistic habits and practices, modes of production and of information, to which we make but small contributions in terms of alteration. But there is a significant qualification of this thrownness, this embeddedness in an already erected social and material structure: the social world is functioning only insofar as its members are actively reproducing its structure, its mode of

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, Michel (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, New York: Pantheon Books, p 215.

<sup>12</sup> Marx, Karl (1973 [1939]) *Grundrisse. Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, p 84.

<sup>13</sup> Cf Archer, Margaret S. (2003) *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>14</sup> Foucault, Michel (2003) *The Essential Foucault. Selections from Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, New York/London: The New Press, p 272.

being. 'Society stands to individuals, then, as something they never make [that is produce *ex nihilo*], but that exists only in virtue of their activity.'<sup>15</sup> Consequently, if we would express such a thing as a law of *social inertia*, *pace* e.g. Parsons, it is not like its counterpart in mechanical matters. The social dynamics is one of *problematics*, of things to be done, of business to be taken care of within socially instituted and symbolically saturated frames, which are both materially grounded and socially and culturally superstructured. Reproduction or transformation of the social universe, of the conditions into which any agent is thrown, demands skilled action, even planned and symbolically mindful forms of action which not even biotic forms of negentropic mechanisms can match in reflexive complexity.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, the desire to which Foucault gives expression is perhaps understandable as that which any practician of skilled performance would hold in the face of a possibly dangerous, perilous task, but in the case of Foucault, this wish for deliverance, even escape, from the anguish which we feel in the face of such difficult, problematic situations, is transformed into an ontological assumption, even premise, in which any importance or role for the subjective initiative is annulled. In Foucault's view, the subject is just one more *Träger* of the web of relations in which he or she is enmeshed, but even such a formulation would be to accord too much command or importance to the subject: The individual agent is just an epiphenomenon of impersonal structures, regimes of signification or *episteme*, which is his preferred term. His 'desire to be freed from the obligation to begin' (215) when entering into 'the risky world of discourse' is in the theoretical province of his making merely descriptions of 'false' feelings, since his stance does not allow for such things as beginnings, or even subjects. Everything is always-already determined, decided and settled by forces outside time and place and out of reach for any innovative gesture of an imaginary subject or agent:

It is not man himself who thinks but he is thought by the thought system he happens to be caught in, he does not speak but is spoken by the language he is born into, he does not act but is acted by the social, economic, political systems he belongs to. These changing structures perform as his master and destiny.<sup>17</sup>

There is no such thing as a beginning; no such thing as a subject. Yet, even Foucault is obliged to begin, to start his inaugural speech and I even think he was seeing himself as the subject who was speaking. Likewise the audience at the time and we as present-day readers acknowledge Foucault as the originator of his speech, as well as of numerous other textual artefacts. But such a glaring contradiction is not uncommon in this strange world of (post)structuralism. As one of the most famous advocates of the theme of the *death of the subject*, Foucault is often referred to as having predicated the death of Man as well, or at least his 'fading away' or effacement, erasure, as 'a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea'<sup>18</sup>. We really *could* read Foucault in this way, but the distressing feature of his formulations is that we are left in abeyance on the rather crucial point as to whether this death of Man is supposed to be interpreted as taking place within the real world to which discourse refers, or in the epistemic order, i.e. in the discursive fad of the day. Is mankind about to become extinct, or does the interest in Man as an *epistemic object* dwindle as the modern *episteme* is beginning to desintegrate? As we encounter these ideas of the death or disappearance of the subject, we should really ask: Who is announcing this disappearance?<sup>19</sup>

While Bourdieu's concern is the lecture, Foucault's is discourse more generally. A lecture is focussed – involving a sender and an addressee, an originator and a receiver, both of which could be singular or plural – and a message containing some information regarded by the involved parties as useful, truthful, trustworthy etc. *Discourse* is more amorphous, less targeted, more vague and perhaps blurred; the question of subject (encoder), object (referent, signified) and recipient (decoder) is not definite. Consequently, it is not surprising that Foucault's interest is less in the orator as such or the institution in which the lecture is taking place, but in the universal attributes of discursivity. Foucault treats the speaker or the author paradigmatically as someone who is carried away by the imperative *inner logic* of the discourse itself: 'What does it matter who is speaking?', Foucault writes elsewhere, echoing Beckett and comments on this 'indifference' – signalling an immanent ethical rule characterising its *modus operandi* rather than its *opus operatum*, the principle rather than its final, or rather transitional offspring:

...today's writing has freed itself from the dimension of expression. Referring only to itself, but without being restricted to the confines of its interiority, writing is identified with its own unfolded exteriority. This means that it is

<sup>15</sup> Bhaskar, Roy (1998 [1978]) *The Possibility of Naturalism. A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, London/New York: Routledge, p 34.

<sup>16</sup> Engholm, Pär (2004) *Types of System and Models of Explanation*, Paper presented at The Annual Conference of the International Association for Critical Realism, Cambridge 17-19 August.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Brante, Thomas (2001) 'Consequences of Realism for Sociological Theory-Building', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* Vol 31, No 2: 167-195, p 177.

<sup>18</sup> Foucault, Michel (1973 [1966]) *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, New York: Vintage Books, p 387.

<sup>19</sup> Cf Bhaskar, Roy (2002) *Meta-Reality*, New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London: Sage, p 36.

an interplay of signs arranged less according to its signified content than according to the very nature of the signifier. Writing unfolds like a game (*jeu*) that invariably goes beyond its own rules and transgresses its limits. In writing, the point is not to manifest or exalt the act of writing, nor is it to pin a subject within language; it is, rather, a question of creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears.<sup>20</sup>

As a characterisation of this internal operative principle, this *internal exigency*, as Labarrière would formulate it<sup>21</sup>, this has less to do with what Barthes terms the *death of the author*, i.e. his waning as the authoritarian delimiter of meaning as a consequence of the birth of the reader, signalling an *unlimited semiosis* (*pace* Peirce) in which the *intentio auctoris* (the intention of the author)<sup>22</sup> is made irrelevant, than with the disappearing significance of the author even in the very process of textual conception, written or oral. Foucault, playing within and against the Saussurean depiction of the sign as an interplay of the signifier and the signified, leaving the question of the referent and the or(igin)ator untouched and the relation between the two aspects or parts of the sign unsettled and in limbo so as to have a principle at hand founding his, as well as other poststructuralists', *perpetuum mobile*, does not really face the crucial problems for the semantics and sociology of symbolic forms: Of what is this text speaking? Who is speaking? What are the conditions of possibility of this text? etc. These are the truly reflexive questions which Bourdieu ventures to address, in his *Leçon* as well as in a number of other publications. E.g. in *Méditations pascaliennes*, this cluster of questions, properly philosophical, but neglected by most philosophers, is addressed, in part because of their being neglected by the discipline which otherwise is so inquisitive: 'to make explicit the presuppositions entailed by the situation of *skholè*, the free time, freed from the urgencies of the world, that allows a free and liberated relation to those urgencies and to the world'<sup>23</sup>.

## Possibility spaces and the question of the subject

According to Bourdieu, the question of the social conditions of possibility of any discursive act is not adequately addressed by Foucault or his adepts, as their focus is solely on the 'field of strategic possibilities' given by the objective problem-situation, the *épistème*. In order fully to grasp the significance of any symbolic artefact, the whole space of 'external' social as well as 'internal' symbolic possibles would have to be reconstructed. Every formation of a work of art or a scientific tractate is a political deed, an intrusion into the very order of the field of objective relations which made it possible in the first place.<sup>24</sup> Mallarmé is reported to have referred to the production of a book as an *attentat*, an act of *terrorist violence*. Every word, every statement, every text is normally simultaneously a *constative* and a *performative*, and permeated by signification reaching beyond the circumstances of its immediate formulation, thereby restructuring the field in which it is conceived. Therefore, Bourdieu carries his analysis further into the organisation of the fields of practice and of cultural production in order better to see the genesis, meaning and consequences of a certain discourse. But he is not always so clear in his exposition of these matters and we should always be attentive to the strategic choices of Bourdieu's linguistic performances too in order to appreciate the every so often polemically induced oversimplifications to which he suffers as he presents the standpoints of his 'adversaries'. These are often scholars who could equally be presented as fellow advocates of the same cause. Foucault is indeed one such associate scholar, although his turn of phrase often is overly polemic and excessive and transgressive at times.<sup>25</sup>

Important to bear in mind in this connection is the fundamental struggle with which Bourdieu as well as many of his contemporaneous philosophers and social scientists are occupied and the legacy towards which much, if not *most* or even *all* of their production was erected. The legacy to which they all were reacting, in so many ways, was the pervasive clash between two almost incompatible systems of thought, conflicting views upon the foundations of humanity, of the methods to be applied and perhaps in the end the stance which one should assume towards the object of study. This is the clash between Phenomenology and Structuralism, between Sartre on the one hand Saussure and Lévi-Strauss on the other, between the humanism of the existentialists and the anti-humanism of the Althusserians. But this is not only a clash between different points of

<sup>20</sup> Foucault, Michel (1984) 'What Is an Author', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed Paul Rabinow, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin: 101-120, p 102.

<sup>21</sup> Labarrière, Pierre-Jean (1968) *Structures et mouvement dialectique dans la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel*, Paris: Aubier-Montaigne; cf Bhaskar, Roy (1993) *Dialectic. The Pulse of Freedom*, London/New York: Verso, p 349: *internal teleology*; the text as *autotelic*.

<sup>22</sup> See Eco, Umberto (1994) *The Limits of Interpretation*, Bloomington, Indianapolis/London: Indiana University Press.

<sup>23</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (2000 [1997]) *Pascalian Meditations*, Cambridge/Oxford: Polity, p 1.

<sup>24</sup> Cf Bourdieu, Pierre (1993) 'The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed', in *The Field of Cultural Production*, Cambridge: Polity: 29-73, p 33, 44.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Norris, Christopher (1996) 'Raising the Tone: Derrida, Kierkegaard and the Rhetoric of Transcendence', in *Reclaiming Truth. Contribution to a Critique of Cultural Relativism*, London: Lawrence & Wishart: 73-126 for an argument concerning Derrida in particular in relation to this kind of transgressive, counter-intuitive, perhaps even *extra-logical* approach towards writing.



view or between different fractions in the disciplines concerned, but reflects also a rift between separate and contradictory positions within the same scholars. In some cases, we can find sharp intellectual ruptures in the personal histories, in others we may see how the two opposing sides are existing side by side, giving rise to conflicting positions within the same corpus, during the same periods and perhaps even in the course of the same book or article.

The two writers with which we are concerned here, are brilliant examples of how these conflicts are interwoven into a complicated matrix, which is both frustrating for the reader, but also provides a most instructive, edifying discourse in its own right. But these problems are not in any sense contingent in the sense of being incidental or optional. They are discursive necessities, which *any* interlocutor on these issues has to address and in some sense respond to, either explicitly or tacitly. It cannot easily be brushed aside or bracketed methodologically, as a result of its overall pervasiveness. The social scientist or the philosopher (we need not stress the distinction between them at this moment) cannot avoid being reflexive.

One example of this fundamental clash is the problematic of structure/agency, or of macro/micro. This problem field, coupled with the consideration of the question of socialisation and individualisation is endemic to the social sciences and to philosophy in general if we by philosophy have in mind a general inquiry into the conditions for socialisation, individuation and knowledge. We do not necessarily have to present *epistemology* strictly as the centre or the crown jewel of Philosophy or of human thinking more generally, as e.g. Rorty<sup>26</sup> does (and then rejects as false or rather irrelevant), but even such anti-representationalist accounts as that of contemporary pragmatism cannot evade the question of knowledge or reflection when approaching questions pertinent to their field. To again invoke Rorty, the arch-iconoclast and arch-enemy of all foundationalist and epistemological pretensions of philosophy, we could cite his citing of Sellars, in which philosophy's task is 'seeing how things, in the largest sense of the term, hang together, in the largest sense of the term'<sup>27</sup>. Even guided by such a 'bland' and 'neutral' sense or definition of philosophy we would not be able steer clear of the relations between this reflective activity and the world of which this reflection takes its cue.

When for instance Przeworski holds that '[t]he relation between social relations and individual behaviour is the Achilles heel of Marxism'<sup>28</sup> it is a remark where 'Marxism' could be replaced by 'social thought' or 'social theory', but it would still be misleading. Such a statement would be equivalent to a declaration that the relations between the celestial bodies were the 'the Achilles heel of astronomy'. Naturally, the central themes of a discipline are always, by definition, its central objects of study and as long as a paradigmatic situation has not been obtained, these are subject to disagreements. Nevertheless, attempts to formulate such a paradigm have been made, and the former animosity between structuralist and etnomethodological/fenomenological approaches has become less severe. Even the previous implacable relationship between adherents of methodological individualism and holism has been mitigated through the introduction of contextual and institutional variables in schools as Rational Choice theory and through the deviation in contemporary structuralist attempts from Durkheimian conception of social facts *sui generis* in favour of more 'dialectical' or 'emergental' approaches.

Even Bourdieu has to concede to a Saussurean distinction between internal and external linguistics, in spite of the tirades against Foucault's alleged undersocialised vision of language use, discursive formations and strategic possibilities open for participants in discourse. Consequently even Bourdieu presents language as a largely autonomous structure, with its specific rules of operation and he instructs social science to take this autonomy into account. In this sense, language is presented as a *possibility space*, which affords the individual speaker or writer with well-nigh limitless routes and options. It is 'the exemplary formal mechanism whose generative capacities are without limits. There is nothing that cannot be said and it is possible to say nothing'<sup>29</sup>. This position is quite the opposite of the one expressed in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*<sup>30</sup> in which a task at least is formulated for the philosopher to assist in the production of a perfect, unambiguous language with definite meaning for every word or for every expression. In Bourdieu's view, the formulation of such an *ideal language philosophy* not only represses the necessarily embedded and mediated meaning of every word, but it also forgets and fails to take into consideration the conditions of possibility of its very own denotative and connotative activities. Many things can be said, some things can be said fairly clearly, but most things necessarily take on a great variety of variable meanings, have different consequences or perlocutionary force, depending on the nature of the encoder, the decoder and the communicative context. In what Eco has described as 'the infinite forest of

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<sup>26</sup> See Rorty, Richard (1980) *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Oxford UK/Cambridge MA: Blackwell.

<sup>27</sup> Rorty, Richard (1982) *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p xiv, 29, 226. True to his anti-representationalist program, he does not get the quotation correct, which should be: 'The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term.' (Sellars, Wilfrid (1963) *Science, Perception and Reality*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p 1) Pardon the excruciating Palimpsest.

<sup>28</sup> Przeworski, Adam (1985) 'Proletariat into Class: The Process of Class Formation', in *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 47-97, p 92.

<sup>29</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge: Polity, p 41.

<sup>30</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1922 [1921]) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, London/New York: Routledge.

universal culture and *intertextuality*'<sup>31</sup> any reader could be lost in the fictional woods planted by the author, by the mere lack of sufficient knowledge of the complete encyclopaedia of mankind. Thus a textual passage in a given book could be given a fairly broad, perhaps *indefinite*, spectrum of significations and the duty for the literary theorist is to search for the most plausible way of construing the messages, overt or hidden, which the text communicates.

The nature of communication and the often very intricate web of cultural presuppositions, tacit presumptions, which surround any statement has been the subject of study not least of constructors of instructions for computers. In this situation, *all* instructions must be overt, clear and unambiguous in order to have the desired effect. The constructor cannot expect that the computer will fill in the gaps in the story, the lacunae in the commands. Eco refers to a story told in *The Cognitive Computer*, by Roger Schank and Peter Childers, in which we can read about a computer (or rather a robot driven by the instructions being fed into a computer commanding his actions) instructed so as to be able to search for honey, and the question which is posited is what the format of this particular Encyclopaedia would be in order for the computer to be able to provide the necessary information and basis for action in a certain configuration of possible events.

At the beginning of the computer trials, Joe Bear asked Irving Bird where he could find some honey, and Irving replied that 'there is a beehive in the oak tree.' But in one of the early stories generated by the computer, Joe Bear became miffed because he thought Irving hadn't answered him. In fact, his encyclopedic competence lacked the information that at times you can indicate the location of food by using metonymy – that is, by naming the source instead of the food itself. /.../ Schank and Childers realized that they had to be more explicit with a computer, and they supplied it with information on the relationship of food to its source. But when Irving Bird repeated that there was a beehive in the oak tree, Joe Bear walked over to the oak tree and ate the whole beehive. His Encyclopedia was still incomplete: the difference between source as a container and source as an object still had to be explained to him, because 'finding a refrigerator will do when you are hungry [only] if you know you have to look inside it, and not eat it. None of this was obvious to a machine.'<sup>32</sup>

Using such blatant examples from fables and from areas remote from the immediate concerns of social science may perhaps obfuscate the real complexities of real life, but at least they make us to a certain degree aware of the extreme complexity of human life, and of the need for social science – anthropology, ethnography, sociology – to strive to make the ordinary exotic and the exotic mundane. Furthermore, they make us aware of the extraordinary, fantastic and quite astounding nature of social life.<sup>33</sup>

Coming back to our initial question regarding the relation(s) between the spaces of *possible* and *intersubjectively legitimate* meanings/interpretations of any text, we may see how e.g. Eco speaks of how the proliferation of possible meanings of a text increases as the addressee is not one single person but a community of readers: 'the author knows that he or she will be interpreted not according to his or her intentions but according to a complex strategy of interactions which also involves the readers, along with their competence in language as a social treasury'<sup>34</sup>. Thus, the interaction between the sender and the receiver in such a situation becomes more complex, and in cases in which the addressee is not even a reasonably coherent community of listeners or readers, sharing schemes of interpretation and having a sufficient amount of shared background knowledge and similar experience to which the text could be reverberated and be given tenor and tonus; the situation is even more intricate and difficult: What is then the *intention* of the author? How is the completed text (having its own impetus) actually received by members of different communities? How do the different meanings, significations (literal, social...) and consequences (theoretical, practical) of the text relate? Who is the author? When and where does the text start? When does it end?

So when speaking about the *modus operandi* and the *opus operatum* of discourses, texts, practices and social phenomena, we may perhaps say that this very distinction is arbitrary and just presents two facets of *any* structure, as both *structured* and *structuring*. In a truly post-structuralist approach, one which manages to transgress the rigid Saussurean distinction between diachrony and synchrony, one would see how structural aspects, treated by Saussure as wholly *synchronic*, function and are reproduced in and through spatiotemporally dynamic processes. The real is relational and the synchronic aspects which are *epistemologically* frozen as a snapshot, really cannot function otherwise than as parts of a processual flow. As Piaget aptly presents it, 'a structuring activity cannot consist but of a system of transformations' and any structure has a 'constant duality', 'or more precisely a bipolarity in its properties of always being both structuring and structured'<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Eco, Umberto (1994) *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, Cambridge MA/London UK: Harvard University Press, p 110.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p 111. Quotations inside the quote is from Schank, Roger C./Childers, Peter G. (1984) *The Cognitive Computer. On Language, Learning, and Artificial Intelligence*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

<sup>33</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1996) *Sur la télévision. suivi de L'emprise du journalisme*, Paris: Liber/Raisons d'agir, p 20.

<sup>34</sup> Eco, Umberto (1992) 'Between Author and Text' in Collini, Stefan (ed) *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 67-88, p 67.

<sup>35</sup> Piaget, Jean (1968) *Le structuralisme*, Paris: P.U.F., p 10 f, my translation.

## Struggles over classification

Now, such a reflexive analysis, which Bourdieu is calling for, which is performed by social scientists is a much more difficult feat, certain to run into objections from those objectivated. Since the object of the sociologist is saturated with meaning, and among his tasks is the formulation of social taxonomies, he is liable to accusations of being a kind of 'terrorist inquisitor', engaged in 'symbolic policing'. The object of anthropological classification is itself a classifying subject. The social sphere is to a high degree a battlefield in which different schemes of classifications are debated, the very act of analysis is an intrusion into the field and the analyst himself is questioned, both because the social agents themselves believe they have a complete practical mastery as well as theoretical grasp over their situation, and that no one should have the right to impose an order from outside on these native activities and relations. In fact, the very instruments that allow the sociologist to analyse the social world are conceptual tools which to some degree are modelled upon the popular representations which lay agents have of their universe. In a world in which the symbolic power to name and to legitimise a certain mapping, a certain order of the social world is biased and hierarchised in itself, every act of representational arrangement tends to impose an order to the object of study. This theory effect is a very palpable ingredient in any formation of the struggles in which the agents of this social world are constantly engaged. As Bourdieu observes, 'the observations that the sociologist makes at a given point in time about the properties or the opinions of the various social classes, the very classificatory criteria that she must use to make these observations, are also the product of the whole history of those symbolic struggles, whose stake is the existence and definition of classes, that have contributed in a very real manner to the *making* of classes'<sup>36</sup>. Just as much as Marx once formulated his fateful characterisation of the French peasants in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century:

Insofar as millions of families live under conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests, and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. Insofar as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests forms no community, no national bond, and no political organization among them, they do not constitute a class.<sup>37</sup>

This formulation has for a long time been the subject of extensive and intensive debate among Marxist scholars as to what *really* constitutes a class. In the eyes of e.g. E.P. Thompson<sup>38</sup>, the second limb in this argument is stressed and the very subjective or rather intersubjective formation of a class consciousness is seen as the only point of entry into which we can ever speak of a social class.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand numerous writers have upheld the view that the material circumstances in which different individuals find themselves are the determining factors of class ascription: Being in a similar position in relation to the means of production and to the production process generally is what proposes for the historian or the social scientist to ascribe a shared class status to a certain stratum of the population. This was the subject of a very lively debate on the status of classes and the status of the study of classes as such. One of the most important contributions to this debate was the publication of Nicos Poulantzas who distinguishes between three forms of determination: *economical, political and social*.<sup>40</sup> We could add cultural, etc.

In many of the contributions to the debate, we are left unsure of the status of classes and of the relationship between what was to be described as classes *en soi* and classes *pour soi*, i.e. classes in themselves and classes *for* themselves. This is perhaps most blatant in the writings of Thompson, but also, and more pronounced, in the treatise put forward by Gareth Stedman Jones, in which the real basis of the subjective representations was suppressed<sup>41</sup>, and one of his interpreters, Joan Scott, comments that there is no societal reality which precedes or is situated outside of language, i.e. outside representations.<sup>42</sup> We find similar problems cropping up with the concept of (biological) sex and its relation to that of (social) *gender*. While the first is said to relate to the biological substratum of sexual differences, the second is related to the cultural and ideological superstructure

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<sup>36</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1990) 'Lecture on the Lecture', in *In Other Words. Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity: 177-198, p 181 f. Cf Bourdieu, Pierre (1991) 'The Social Space and the Genesis of Classes', in *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge: Polity: 229-251.

<sup>37</sup> Marx, Karl (1973 [1852]) 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', in Marx, Karl *Surveys from Exile*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin: 143-249, p 239.

<sup>38</sup> Thompson, E.P. (1968) *The Making of the English Working Class*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.

<sup>39</sup> In critical realist terms, he is continuously making the *epistemic fallacy* by not clearly distinguishing between the discourse of the historical investigator and the discourse of the subjects making up the socio-economic network which he is studying. If anything would be defnatory of the most significant portion of the so-called constructionist or constructivist faction of the social sciences, this confusion would be just this inability clearly to distinguish between ontology and epistemology.

<sup>40</sup> Poulantzas, Nicos (1974) *Les classes sociales dans le capitalisme aujourd'hui*, Paris: Seuil.

<sup>41</sup> Jones, Gareth Stedman (1983) *Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>42</sup> Scott, Joan Wallach (1999) 'On Language, Gender, and Working Class History', in *Gender and the Politics of History*, rev ed., New York: Columbia University Press: 53-67.

which is superimposed on the first. Do symbolic representations *create* the divisions which exists in material form in the social world, or do they contribute to their meaning? What is the role of the scientific gaze in these issues? We could perfectly well say, with Bourdieu, that '[s]o far as the social world is concerned, the neo-Kantian theory, which gives language and, more generally, representations a specifically symbolic efficacy in the construction of reality, is perfectly justified'<sup>43</sup>, but we have to make an analytical distinction between the native conceptualisations circulating in the social sphere and the construals which scientists make in order to account for these conceptualisations. As e.g. Giddens has been prone to stress, the conceptualisations made by scientists are not made in a politically and socially neutral vacuum. Social scientists make use of a host of distinctions and classificatory schemes current in the population which they analyse, and the classifications they erect are trickling down to the very object of their study, in an ever continuing process of double hermeneutics.

Coming back the representation in the *Brumaire* of the French 19<sup>th</sup> century peasants, Marx concludes that:

They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, an unlimited governmental power which protects them from the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above. The political influence of the small-holding peasants, therefore, finds its final expression in the executive power which subordinates society to itself.<sup>44</sup>

These circumstances are subject to Edward Said's consideration in the beginning of *Orientalism*, a book which explores the depiction of the Orient which has been current in the imagination of the West. We find the quote from Marx in the preamble to the book. I think Said uses it in order to formulate a quite important lesson for us, one which is also present in the inaugural speech of Bourdieu: The location of the power to represent is important and the responsibility of the social scientist or the historian is to take the unequal allocation of this power into consideration. Said does not dismiss the western depiction of the orient as false, as being without other rationale than power, subjugation, exploitation: Said points out three lessons to be made from the study of Orientalism: 'In the first place, it would be wrong to conclude that the Orient was *essentially* an idea, or a creation with no corresponding reality. .../ A second qualification is that ideas, cultures, and histories cannot be seriously understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configuration of power, also being studied. .../ One ought never to assume that the structure of Orientalism is nothing more than a structure of lies or of myths which, were the truth about them to be told, would simply blow away.'<sup>45</sup> The important thing for us to acknowledge is the intricate nature of any representation of social forms, because the representational and reflexive nature of their structure.

We come full circle upon the problematic to which sociology in its best sense always has to address: How is a science of the social sphere possible? How could anyone in the act of comprehension incorporate this very act of comprehension? Is it possible to take a step back from the symbolic struggles and the interests intrinsic to any act of ordering? Is it possible to conceptualize, in Bourdieu's words, 'the space of struggles over classification and the position of the sociologies within this space or in relation to it'<sup>46</sup>, without being caught up in these struggles? Bourdieu does indeed dismiss the idea of the sociologist as an 'impartial arbiter' or a 'divine spectator', yet he presents him as someone who has severed all bonds and fidelities to the group out of which he has emerged, and also as someone who has access to the necessary means of *transcending* the ideologies of the elite to which he now belongs.

Now, I think Bourdieu in this connection suffers from a certain romanticization of his own trajectory from the very depths of the populace into high society, making him the parable of the *marginal man*, incomparably competent to unveil the secrets of *both* worlds. Yet, he points to an important, even necessary prerequisite in the formation of a scientific sociology: the 'denunciation' of both 'populist' as well as 'elitist' representations. We have to construct our taxonomies and explanatory models independently and often against the lazy preconceptions of common sense or the representations put forward by the contending parties. In order to be realist as well as realistic, we must also break with Bourdieu's romantic view of the pure detached social scientist. Although we could and should hold this refusal to directly take part in the classificatory struggles to be a requirement for a scientific sociology, we have to acknowledge that there is a growing number of scholars whose engagement in the social sciences is primarily political. They take active part in these struggles. For them the Rortyan quest for a furthering of the process of Enlightenment by freeing us from the tyranny of 'truth' and 'objective reality' fits into the scheme provided by standpoint epistemologies and more radical progenies calling

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<sup>43</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge: Polity, p 105.

<sup>44</sup> Marx, Karl (1973 [1852]) 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', in Marx, Karl *Surveys from Exile*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin: 143-249, p 239.

<sup>45</sup> Said, Edward W. (2003 [1978]) *Orientalism*, London: Penguin, p 5 f.

<sup>46</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1990) 'Lecture on the Lecture', in *In Other Words. Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity: 177-198, p 181.

for a 'liberatory science' and for *strategic theories*, formulated not primarily to obtain truth but to further political aims.<sup>47</sup>

In the case of Rorty, this is presented as the consummation of a process of 'bringing humanity out of its adolescence into full maturity, by taking *responsibility* for ourselves, where before we had been able only to acknowledge the dictates of an alien authority'<sup>48</sup> where the first transformation was the secularisation brought about by the Enlightenment, the second now being effectuated by the suppression of the last restraining, oppressing authority: *objective reality*.<sup>49</sup>

In this quest, radical doubt about objectivity is viewed as a sign of political radicalism<sup>50</sup> and Marx' eleventh thesis on Feuerbach is taken to its extreme so as to efface the first element; change becomes the overriding if not the *only* goal. Very much as pure science in Soviet Russia was regarded as a morbid symptom of class society, as Polanyi reports<sup>51</sup>, postmodern philosophers present the quest for truth and objectivity as morbid symptoms of a malestream, oppressive logocentrism. Science is thereby reduced to means in a political agenda.

## Emancipation and the *illusio* of science

Such a liberatory science is quite contrary to Bourdieu's call for a social science which strives to conceptualise, not take part of, the struggles:

To break with the ambition, which is that of mythologies, of grounding in reason the arbitrary divisions of the social world, and especially of the division of labour, and thus of providing a logical or cosmological solution to the problem of the classification of humans, sociology must, instead of allowing itself to get caught up in it, take as its object the struggle for the monopoly over the legitimate representation of the social world, that classification struggle which is a dimension of every kind of struggle between classes, be they classes of age, gender or social classes.<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, sociology does free us from the illusion of freedom, by making us aware of the historically contingent nature of social forms, but it does not thereby automatically provide us with the means of transgressing this contingency: We are always-already in a historical, cultural, social and political setting and we have to continually take pains to staying autonomous in relation to the other spheres in society. Furthermore we must endorse and defend the specific interests of the scientific field – of obtaining a *true* account without diffidently adjusting it to the powers that be or to a rebellious movement.

The paradoxical enterprise which consists in using a position of authority to speak with authority about what speaking with authority consists of, to give a lecture – and a lesson – but a lecture on freedom from all kinds of lessons, would simply be inconsequential, even self-destructive, if the very ambition of producing a science of belief did not presuppose the belief in science.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, this scientific *illusio* has to be shared for social science to be possible and successful. The risk in today's heretical intrusions into social science in the name of radicalism clad in reflexive and historicist and relativist clothes is to dismantle the whole institutional setting for social science in general. Making the departments of social science into political bastions is to condemn them in the long run to a subordinate position within the field of power, as their accumulated prestige will crumble in the face of changes in the political makeup. In order to attain and defend autonomy, sociology must stay above or perhaps outside the struggles between dominant or dominated. It will nevertheless have political consequences since it does indeed reveal structures of power and systems of subordination and oppression, but it should not be steered by any such political interests.

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<sup>47</sup> Cf Sokal, Alan/Bricmont, Jean (1998) *Intellectual Impostures: Postmodern Philosophers' Abuse of Science*, London: Profile, p 219.

<sup>48</sup> Brandom, Robert B. (2000) 'Introduction' to *Rorty and His Critics*, Oxford: Blackwell: ix-xx, p xi.

<sup>49</sup> See further Rorty, Richard (1982) 'Method, Social Science, and Social Hope' in *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 191-210; Seidman, Steven (1992) 'Postmodern Social Theory as a Narrative with a Moral Intent' in Seidman, Steven/Wagner, David G. (eds) *Postmodernism and Social Theory. The Debate over General Theory*, Cambridge MA/Oxford UK: Blackwell: 47-81 and Baert, Patrick (2005) 'Towards a Pragmatist-inspired Philosophy of Social Science', *Acta Sociologica* Vol 48, No 3: 191-203, just to name a few texts in which it is argued that (social) science should strive for a furthering of political goals rather than at mapping (whatever that would imply in terms of explanation, description etc) an *outer* world.

<sup>50</sup> Cf Gross, Paul R./Levitt, Norman (1998 [1994]) *Higher Superstition. The Academic Left and its Quarrels With Science*, Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, p 82.

<sup>51</sup> Polanyi, Michael (1967) *The Tacit Dimension*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p 3.

<sup>52</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1990) 'Lecture on the Lecture', in *In Other Words. Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity: 177-198, p 180.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p 198.

One of the most basic principles for the social sciences would thus be to always turn the tools of objectivation to the act of objectivation itself. For Bourdieu, the study of the social history of science is a powerful, indeed perhaps the only means of ‘transcending history’ – mobilising the instruments of objectivation in the service of guarding us against the slumber of commonsensical dogma, of doxic sleep, in which our unthought categories of perception and cognition precludes preposterous thoughts and delimits the horizon of reasonable thinking.<sup>54</sup>

## Forms of classification and their political repercussions

Human sensibility and awareness of the immediate and remote incidents are in large degree predicated on the forms of classifications available, and new forms of representational economies and patterns are forming new ways of responsiveness, awareness, consciousness and ultimately action. Due to this intricate interplay between forms of classification and forms of action, the challenging dilemma for the social sciences is that it is so inextricably involved in the very struggles of classification which they try to represent in various ways by formulating descriptions, forming taxonomies and designating causal relationships and mechanisms. By this very representative procedure they help to establish, constitute and give meaningful, expressive and evocative form to those intrinsically discursive and meaningful practices. One of the most important advances in social thought are indeed the improvements in the sociology of social forms of representations and here the works of Durkheim are ground-breaking. Especially his and Mauss’ *Primitive Classification*<sup>55</sup> stands out as pioneering in its stance towards the formation of conceptual frameworks as well as of the relation of such consciousness-raising structures and procedures. Now, what Durkheim did primarily for primitive, or should we say, exotic, distant societies, Bourdieu as well as a whole range of ethnomethodologists and ethnographers have endeavoured to do for modern societies. Inasmuch as an *anthropology* of the structures of the mind was instigated by Durkheim and Mauss, one of the significant achievements of this modern analogue to *Primitive Classification* is the application of corresponding modellings for the cultures and perceptive and cognitive structures operative in developed societies, i.e. in the vicinities of the sociologists themselves. Bourdieu describes this as a destruction of the ‘traditional frontier between ethnology and sociology’<sup>56</sup>, i.e. the sharp distinction between the study of modern, differentiated societies and the study of primitive, less complex societies.

The study of the social and societal classificatory schemes in the immediate surrounding, as opposed to the exotic situation familiar to the anthropologist/ethnographer, forced the analyst to make difficult and painful choices, in which the *political implications* of social classifications came to the fore. The world to which their classificatory schemes were directed were no longer exotic, foreign, but ordinary and familiar; and, most importantly, politically proximate and momentous. This resulted in a transgression of the sharp distinction which scholars up till then had made between the two domains of the social sciences, because it also made them attentive to the fact that the schemes of classification were inherently political even in those exotic, less differentiated societies which were the object of study of anthropology. Furthermore, it became obvious that the mundane, humdrum familiarity with the organisation of the native societies of the analyst could be the subject of the same kind of objectivation. Consequently, there was a rapprochement in the manner of analysing these two kinds of societies, and of the methodologies used, due to the awareness of the correspondence of their basic systems of classification. One important difference could perhaps be localised to the level of educational institutionalisation and to the degree of literacy. In highly written cultures, the educational systems are most important objects of study, due to their significant role in the mediation of prescribed ways of organisation of the world. Thus, they play a central role in the continuation of social order.

This is indeed one of the most important questions of the human sciences and the *sine qua non* of a furthering of our knowledge of the social realm. Jameson’s only ‘absolute’ and ‘transhistorical imperative’: *Always historicize!*<sup>57</sup>, may also be our means of transcending not only the poststructuralist deadlock, but also to bridge the gap between the different stances in social science: nomothetic vs idiographic, naturalism vs hermeneutics etc, but perhaps also making us see how a science which becomes the submissive assistant to political causes eventually turns into a degenerating research programme. Always turn the tools and procedures of objectivation to the act of objectivation itself! This would effectively imply the naturalisation of knowledge<sup>58</sup>, discourse, lecture, lesson itself, taking the act of comprehension into consideration as a means of actually

<sup>54</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1992) ‘The Practice of Reflexive Sociology (The Paris Workshop)’ in Bourdieu, Pierre/Wacquant, Loïc J.D. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 216-260, p 238 ff.

<sup>55</sup> Durkheim, Émile/Mauss, Marcel (1963 [1903]) *Primitive Classification*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>56</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1990) ‘“Fieldwork in Philosophy”’, in *In Other Words. Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity: 3-33, p 24.

<sup>57</sup> Jameson, Fredric (1981) *The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London: Routledge, p 9.

<sup>58</sup> See Quine, Willard van Orman (1969) ‘Epistemology Naturalized’, in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, New York/London: Columbia University Press: 69-90 and the discussion that this paper has initiated.

furthering this increasingly reflexive body of comprehension.<sup>59</sup> It is time for a synthesis of social and natural sciences, with a little help from philosophy of science, which would provide the means also for the promotion of a kind of ecology of mind<sup>60</sup> as well as of cognition more broadly, in which the biotic as well as the social conditions of ‘mind’, knowledge, science and practice are seriously scrutinised.

### **An emancipatory science?**

Would science in any way ever be emancipatory in the way proponents of standpoint epistemologies and strategic theories are hoping their efforts to be? I would say that the prospects are scant. We could perhaps recast Marx’ thesis thus: *Sociologists have hitherto only tried to change the world in various ways*; the point is to understand it, or perhaps more accurately: **In order to be able to change the world we have to understand it.** And only an autonomous, rarefied, esoteric and perhaps also contemptuous science could profitably perform this task.

The spirit of this paradoxical contemptuousness is captured by Bourdieu, when he speaks of the specific principle of the field of restricted production (or the ‘sub-field of production-for-producers’) as ‘the recognition of a certain fraction of the other producers’, as ‘a presumed index of *posthumous recognition*’<sup>61</sup>. Only those artists (or writers, scientists, intellectuals – as the homology between the fields of cultural production writ large ensures the affinity in legitimising principle), who have obtained recognition are competent in adjudicating between works with the potential of standing the test of time and others which will fall into oblivion. Naturally, there is no guarantee that this would be the case, but so far as science has made any progress just in terms of the form in which it is conducted, it would be in the autonomy of its institutions.

Undoubtedly, this is a very contentious issue and my formulation would be criticised from virtually any Post-Kuhnian perspective. Such a narrowing of the field of potential critics of any doxological position would run the risk of being suppressive and an impediment to science and the search for truth. You could also argue that this would imply an effective consolidation of the status quo, of the paradigmatic normal science of the day. Of course, such a consequence is conceivable, if the argument would imply that the content of present theories would be immune from critique and that the methodologies now employed could not be improved. The position I hold does not entail any such claims. On the contrary I would very much agree with the kind of anti-methodological stance put forward by Popper, where the only beneficial preconceived and fixed ‘method’ in any science would be that of the rational discussion. Of course, all sciences have, by virtue of being highly sophisticated practical as well as theoretical processes, some fairly elaborate standard ways of doing things (i.e. conducting research, of the presentation of scientific results etc), but, as Kuhn, and in particular Feyerabend have painstakingly shown, the progress of science often relies to a certain degree on the utilisation of ideas and theories which are seen as obsolete, inadequate, falsified and perhaps even absurd. You could argue, like him, that such a methodological anarchism would enhance the empirical content of contending theories, although this is a very delicate problem which would take us back to the problem of how properly to delineate between the ontic and the epistemic; between the two facets in Hume’s distinction between ‘truths of reason’ and ‘matters of fact’ and between the conceptual scheme and the experiential content in language in general and in science in particular.<sup>62</sup>

My call for a naturalisation of epistemology and for the synthesis of the human and the natural sciences does not imply the radical empiricism exposed by Quine or the rather discouraging and defeatist conventionalist idea of reference and truth of Davidson. All of our conceptual apparatus, as well as our practical schemes are the result of our engagement with the outside world, but this encounter is not our individual meetings as *tabula rasa* with a world making its imprints in our plastic bodies and minds. On the contrary, it is complicated interaction between species and environment, which has taken place historically which in the distinctive human case involves not only endosomatic adjustments but also exosomatic developments of material as well as symbolic tools in our increasingly complex interaction with this environment.<sup>63</sup> As Newton put it: ‘If I have seen further it

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<sup>59</sup> I am currently working on a paper, with the working title *Pragmatising Pragmatism: On the Reconstruction(s) of the Philosophy of (Social) Science* dealing with this intricate body of relations, which will be presented at The Annual Conference of the International Association for Critical Realism at King’s College, London University, July 11-13 2008.

<sup>60</sup> Bateson, Gregory (2000 [1982]) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, sec ed., Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>61</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1993) ‘The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed’, in *The Field of Cultural Production*, Cambridge: Polity: 29-73, p 46, italics added.

<sup>62</sup> See Quine, Willard van Orman (1980 [1953]) ‘Two Dogmas of Empiricism’ in *From a Logical Point of View*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, Cambridge MA/London: Harvard University Press: 20-46 and Davidson, Donald (2001 [1974]) ‘On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme’ in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, Oxford: Clarendon Press: 183-198.

<sup>63</sup> See Radnitzky, Gerard/Bartley W.W. III (eds) (1987) *Evolutionary Epistemology, Rationality, and the Sociology of Knowledge*, La Salle, Ill: Open Court.

is by standing on the shoulders of giants.’<sup>64</sup> Someone proposing a complete break with tradition would find himself or herself in the position as an intellectual dwarf, but he or she would still rely on the endosomatic evolution over the ages which has provided him or her with the innate cognitive faculties which are one of the two limbs of our distinguishing humanness, the other one being the distinctively social and intersubjective character of knowledge.

The advancement of science is thus based both on traditional as well as new fresh (or as Feyerabend puts it, antiquated, but repolished) ideas; normal as well as revolutionary science. Still, the ideal of rational discussion as well as the belief, even *faith*, in the fruitfulness of science as the search for truth is absolutely imperative.

### **Honesty, integrity and decency**

By finally getting back to Nietzsche we should again stress the necessity of being honest, harsh, serious, passionate, indifferent, daring. Nietzsche’s exhortation of having ‘Reverence for oneself; love for oneself; unconditional freedom with respect to oneself...’<sup>65</sup> really should be thought of as a plea for purity, honour, integrity and perhaps also decency, which need to be paid not only or primarily to our fellow scientists or interlocutors in general or to other human beings, but to ourselves. Science is vocation, a mission in and of itself and it demands gentility of its humble servants.

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<sup>64</sup> In a letter to the fellow scientist Robert Hooke on 5th. February 1676.

<sup>65</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich (1990b) *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, p 114, Foreword to *Anti-Christ*.