

Pierre Bourdieu and Jacques Rancière on art/aesthetics and politics : the origins of disagreement, 1963-1985.

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Abstract. (up to 300 words)

Rancière published two substantial criticisms of the work of Bourdieu in the early 1980s. It is possible that these were provoked by his sense that he needed to oppose what he considered to be the sociological reduction of aesthetic taste offered by Bourdieu in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1986, [1979]) at precisely the moment when he (Rancière) was beginning to articulate his commitment to the potential of aesthetic expression as a mode of political resistance. Except in so far as it draws upon some of the retrospective reflections offered by Rancière in his introductions to the re-issues of his early texts, this paper examines the parallel development of the thinking of the two men up to the mid-1980s – but not beyond. The discussion is situated socio-historically and, by definition, does not seek to offer comparatively any transhistorical assessment of the values of the positions adopted by the two men. I argue that Rancière misrepresented the character of Bourdieu's sociological work by failing to recognize the underlying phenomenological orientation of his thinking. Bourdieu suppressed this orientation in the 1960s but, after the May events of 1968, it enabled him to expose the extent to which the practices of both science and art operate within constructed 'fields' in strategic distinction from popular primary experience. The challenge is to introduce an ongoing dialogue between primary and constructed cultures rather than to suppose that either social science or art possesses intrinsic autonomy.

Methodological Rationale.

I recently edited and introduced a translation of Jean-Claude Passeron's *Le raisonnement sociologique* (1991, 1st edn' 2006, 2nd edn) as *Sociological Reasoning* (Passeron, 2013, [2006]). In my introduction, I discussed an article entitled 'La comparabilité des systèmes d'éducation' [the comparability of systems of education] (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1967a) which they published together in 1967 in which they rejected what they called 'decisional comparatism', that is to say, comparison by reference to criteria which are not themselves subjected to sociological scrutiny. In relation to the comparison of educational systems, they were agreed in attacking the domination of evaluations made in terms of unquestioned criteria of cost effectiveness and economic accountability. In introducing Passeron's book, which is a sub-textual critique of Bourdieu, I tried to resist 'decisional' comparison between the work of Bourdieu and Passeron in favour of the comparative approach favoured by Passeron – one which insisted on situating social scientific research historically and on developing comparisons by reference to synchronic and diachronic analyses rather than to spuriously absolute criteria. I am wanting to set in motion a similarly historical analysis of the work of Bourdieu and Rancière. I am hoping that this historical analysis will enable us to articulate the relevance of both to our current situation.

This approach is all the more justified because the conflict between Bourdieu and Rancière in respect of art/aesthetics and politics conceals a more fundamental conflict in respect of the relations between and functions of philosophy and sociology. To attempt to comment on this disagreement within the assumptions of sociological discourse would be invalidly to prejudge consideration. In his Preface to *Les Règles de l'art* [The rules of art] of 1992 Bourdieu famously cited the view of Gadamer as representing the position to which he was opposed. In Bourdieu's opinion, Gadamer placed at the outset of his 'art of understanding' 'a postulate of incomprehensibility or, at the very least, of inexplicability' (Bourdieu, 1996, xiv).

Gadamer had argued that ‘The fact that the work of art represents a challenge to our understanding because it *indefinitely escapes all explanation* ... has been precisely for me the point of departure for my hermeneutic theory’ (Gadamer, 1991, 17, cited in Bourdieu, 1996, xiv). Bourdieu was intent on reasserting the capacity of sociology to analyse artistic production and judgement. In his Foreword of 2000 to *Le partage du sensible: esthétique et politique* [the distribution of the sensible: aesthetics and politics] Rancière drew attention to the part played ‘in the last twenty years’ by Lyotard in reinterpreting Kant and in consolidating this radical separation of art from thought (*discours* [discursive] from *figure* [figurative]) (Lyotard, 1971):

‘The reinterpretation of the Kantian analysis of the sublime introduced into the field of art a concept that Kant had located beyond it. It did this in order to more effectively make art a witness to an encounter with the unrepresentable that cripples all thought, and thereby a witness for the prosecution against the arrogance of the grand aestheticopolitical endeavour to have ‘thought’ become world’. In this way, reflection on art became the site where a *mise-en-scène* of the original abyss of thought and the disaster of its misrecognition continued after the proclamation of the end of political utopias’ (Rancière, 2004 [2000] 9-10).

By emphasizing ‘the distribution of the sensible’, Rancière has wanted to salvage the political efficacy of artistic production from the consequences of Lyotard’s disillusion. Significantly, late Rancière is deliberately *historical* in his account of the current challenge for art and politics. Lyotard’s *Discours, figure* was published during the aftermath of the ‘events’ of May, 1968, and his turning towards critical analysis of Kant in the late 1970s and early 1980s coincided with the attempt of the newly established Collège international de philosophie to establish a ‘thinking space’ (*lieu de pensée*) for philosophy independent of ‘state-

philosophical foundations' (Châtelet et al., 1998, 21). Rancière's work of the 1980s took place under the aegis of the Collège international de philosophie as well as of Paris VIII.

These are justifications for examining the sociological and philosophical differences between the attitudes of Bourdieu and Rancière towards art/aesthetics and politics *historically*. The concentration here on the period from 1963 until 1983 is intended to be a preparation for subsequent assessment of the continuing claims of their different perspectives through to the present.

Early encounter: 1963.

My starting point is the seminar which Bourdieu and Passeron gave at the invitation of Louis Althusser in the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) in December, 1963. Althusser had been appointed to a position in the ENS in 1948 which gave him responsibility for overseeing the preparation of students for their *agrégation*, their certification to teach in secondary education. Bourdieu and Passeron had both commenced study at ENS in 1950, but neither gained the *agrégation* whilst at ENS, both leaving, Bourdieu in 1954 and Passeron in 1956, with a *diplôme d'études supérieures* and neither commencing doctoral study. It was only at the beginning of the 1960s that Althusser began to run year-long seminar series for these students, on subjects chosen after consultation with them. The series of 1961/2 was on 'The young Marx' and that of 1962/3 was on 'The origins of structuralism'. The Bourdieu/Passeron seminar was to be one in a series on the philosophy of the social sciences but it was not pursued and, instead, the 1963/4 series was on 'Lacan and psycho-analysis'. Althusser recognised Bourdieu and Passeron as his ex-students, but not particularly as his 'successes' and certainly not as his disciples.

Bourdieu and Passeron had both been conscripted to serve in the French army in Algeria in 1956. Bourdieu had got a job in the University of Algiers in 1958 and Passeron had returned to France at about the same time to teach in a lycée in Marseille. In 1960, Raymond Aron (who had been appointed to a Chair in Sociology at the Sorbonne in 1955) had invited them both to Paris, Passeron to be his assistant at the Sorbonne, and Bourdieu to be secretary to a research group which he established that year, which subsequently came to be known as the Centre de Sociologie Européenne (CSE). It would have been known that Bourdieu and Passeron had been directing a research enquiry from the beginning of 1960 on students of Philosophy and Sociology at the University of Lille and at other French universities. Their findings however were not yet published. They were to be published differently during 1964, firstly as an internal CSE Working-Paper entitled *Les étudiants et leurs études* [students and their studies] (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964a) and secondly as a book entitled *Les héritiers* [the inheritors] (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964b) I suspect that it may not have been so well known that Bourdieu was already directing a series of projects within CSE on photography. Some of the reports on these projects were assembled, with introductory chapters by Bourdieu, in *Un art moyen, essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie* [a middle-brow art. Essay on the social uses of photography] which was published in 1965 (Bourdieu, Boltanski, Castel & Chamboredon, 1965). Work within CSE on French museums and art galleries began early in 1964, to be published as *L'amour de l'art, les musées d'art et leur public* [The Love of Art: art galleries and their publics] in 1966 (Bourdieu, Darbel & Schnapper, 1966).

I think that the expectation of those attending the seminar would have been that there would be an opportunity to discuss the potential of sociological analysis to contribute to an improvement in the condition of students. As recently as November 19, the central committee of the French Communist Party (PCF) had issued a statement which defined the political tasks to be undertaken by students. This statement was published at the head of a

number of *La nouvelle critique: revue du marxisme militant* (152, January, 1964) which included an article by Althusser entitled 'Problèmes étudiants' (Althusser, 1964) in which he argued that the liberalism of the university is a real political value to be deployed in opposition to monopolistic bourgeois control. Before that, Althusser had contributed, in June/July, 1963, an article entitled 'Philosophie et Sciences Humaines' to the *Revue de l'Enseignement Philosophique* (13, 5) (Althusser, 1963). These background publications, the one already published and the other about to be within a month, indicate that the general topic of debate related to the autonomy or not of academic thought in relation to political action, and, connected to this, related to the epistemological claims of philosophy and the social sciences. Althusser gave a long introduction to the Bourdieu/Passeron seminar. He didn't introduce his speakers in relation to their analyses of student experience. Rather he raised questions about the nature and validity of sociological explanation. His presentation of his speakers was ambivalent and verged towards sarcasm vis-à-vis Bourdieu. Of course, Aron was already well known as a fierce opponent of Marxism which would have given Althusser pause about his former students. Additionally, he was sceptical about ethnographic fieldwork such as that already undertaken by Bourdieu in Algeria, and he was inclined to suggest that Bourdieu's work was tarred with the same brush as Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* (Lévi-Strauss, 1955).

Bourdieu and Passeron did not present their work as 'sociology of education'. We have to see behind the way in which their work was appropriated in the UK in the 1970s in support of the 'New directions for the sociology of education' (Young, ed., 1971). The methodological problem which they saw themselves as encountering was how to analyse the inter-generational transmission of values in a society in which mass media dissemination was beginning to usurp the function which had, since the decline in authority of the Church, been undertaken by a secular, state-controlled, educational system. Their orientation was to

question the validity of the privileged power of the educational system to reproduce itself and reproduce the power possessed by those considered to be successful within the system. In particular, they expressed themselves as being concerned to analyse the implications of the *manner* of cultural consumption, which implied analysis of the privileged position enjoyed by the educational system and, within that, enjoyed by professors. The sociology of education has tended to appropriate the work of Bourdieu and Passeron by situating the lack of cultural capital of disadvantaged students *within* an educational system which remains undelegitimated. Bourdieu and Passeron's emphasis was rather more that the educational system denied the validity of what Bourdieu was later to call 'unconsecrated' culture and was, therefore, a conservative force institutionally in relation to other forms of culture and value transmission. The questionnaires issued by Bourdieu and Passeron which led to the publication of "Les étudiants et leurs études" and then *Les héritiers* were not restricted to establishing a correlation between the lack of prior cultural capital on the part of, mainly, provincial students, and their educational 'failure' following inevitably from the domination of the curriculum and assessment by 'high' culture. Rather, Bourdieu and Passeron were equally intent on showing that their respondents were practically involved in creative activities which were unrecognized by the schooling system. The questionnaires asked students about their capacities to perform as much as about their 'tastes'. They were failed by the system not because they were culturally impoverished but because the system's institutions excluded from the curriculum those things which would have enabled them to succeed within that system.

The development of Rancière's work, 1963-74.

Jacques Rancière was among those in attendance at the Bourdieu/Passeron seminar of December, 1963. He was in his fourth year at ENS, aged 23. In response to the requests of his students, Althusser organised a seminar series in 1964/5 on Marx's *Das Kapital*. About a

dozen sessions took place between January and April, 1965. Althusser organised the publication – *Lire le Capital* (Althusser et al., 1996) – which was published in November, 1965. Rancière contributed two chapters which represented the two sessions he had given. The first was called: ‘The critique of political economy in the “1844 Manuscripts”’, and the second ‘Critique and science in *Das Kapital*’. Rancière’s contention was that Marx was preoccupied with the theme of ‘critique’ throughout his career but that there was a significant change from the idea of ‘critique’ which he developed between 1842 and 1845 and the notion of critique which caused him, in 1867, to give *Das Kapital* the sub-title: ‘critique of political economy’. As Rancière put it in his introduction to the two pieces, his intention was to analyse ‘the passage from the ideological discourse of the young Marx to the scientific discourse of *Das Kapital*’ (Althusser et al., 1996, 84). This involved demonstrating the extent to which the critique contained in Marx’s *1844 Manuscripts* was based on ‘Feuerbachian anthropology’. According to Rancière, Feuerbach had been right in accusing Hegel of founding his idealism on a separation of abstract thought from thinking selves, but wrong in himself completely rejecting abstraction in favour of subjectivity. Feuerbach’s identification of ‘abstraction’ with ‘alienation’ confused the two processes between which Marx distinguished in his ‘general introduction’ of 1857 – between ‘processes of thought’ and ‘processes of reality’. Rancière argues that in the *Manuscripts* Marx had not yet specified the fundamental character either of economic reality or of economic discourse. He still defined political economy, law, morals, and politics ‘as different *spheres* of human experience’ (Althusser et al., 1996, 90). According to Rancière’s account, Marx’s early analyses of economic ‘realities’ were predetermined by anthropological discourse such that economic law was allowed to become anthropological law. Rancière called this process by which economic reality was conceptually deprived of its autonomy: ‘amphibology’. In his intellectual development, Marx struggled to oppose the abstractions of classical political

economy by founding economic practice as science without reverting to the subjectivity of economic agents. He could only achieve this by overthrowing the amphibolous tendencies of his early work by defining 'capital as a *relation of production*', thus 'desubjectivising economic categories' (Althusser et al., 1996, 100, 101). The critical theory underlying the *Manuscripts* had reached its end because the new object of critique – political economy – was suffused with prejudiced assumptions. The crucial question, for Rancière, was what it was about the 'science' which Marx advanced in *Das Kapital* that distinguished it from the earlier 'critique'. More particularly, Rancière asked whether Marx's new position enabled him 'to understand the economic discourses which he refuted, that of classical and vulgar economics' (Althusser et al., 1996, 112). To put this differently, Rancière was posing the question whether Marx's rejection of the subjectivist presuppositions of the discourse of classical economists in favour of scientific objectivity also entailed a rejection of the self-understandings of their situations both of economic theorists and agents. Rancière suggested that, in the *German Ideology*, Marx 'remained prisoner to an ideological concept of *Wirklichkeit* [reality]' (Althusser et al., 1996, 144). Rancière quoted a passage from *Das Kapital* to illustrate Marx's understanding that, in relation to the mode of production, there were three terms in play: 'the immanent tendencies of capital, apparent trends and the consciousness of the capitalist' (Althusser et al., 1996, 143). He devoted the second section of his second paper to consideration of 'the structure of the process and the perception of the process', discussing the relationship between the 'internal determination' of economic processes and the forms in which these processes are manifested. This relationship is characterised as one of 'dissimulation' or 'inversion'. He represents Marx as saying that 'the place of the agents of production in the process thus determines the necessary representations of their practice as simple expressions of the apparent movement of capital and therefore as totally inverted in relation to its real movement'. (Althusser et al., 1996, 144). Rancière

argues that the ‘apparent’ movement was regarded by Marx as the expression of the subjective perceptions of the petite-bourgeoisie. For Rancière, this meant that Marx left the perceptions of the agents of production - ‘vulgar economics’ - adrift as neither ‘scientific’ articulations of ‘reality’ nor subjective, petite-bourgeois’ ‘inversions’. Through this analysis, Rancière contributed significantly to the overall orientation of *Lire le Capital* which was to argue that late Marx had established historical materialism as a science rather than as an ideology. Nevertheless, there were signs that Rancière and Althusser might not be in complete agreement about the nature of the science which Marx had established. Rancière ended his second paper by raising the problem of the possibility of the discourse of classical economics. He concluded that Marx had clearly defined the conditions of possibility of ‘vulgar economics’ (Althusser et al., 1996, 194) but had not dealt with the question of the nature of access to scientific discourse. We can ‘come to the place where vulgar economics obtains, because we are already there’ (Althusser et al., 1996, 199), but Marx’s critique of classical economics could only point to the need to historicise its a-historical assumptions. In terms of the Bourdieu/Passeron seminar, it seems likely that Rancière might already have had reservations about Althusser’s inclination to retain a distinction between the scientific knowledge of the professors and the vulgar knowledge of the militant students.

At the beginning of 1968, the publisher Maspero suggested the production of a new edition of *Lire le Capital*. The new edition was limited only to the contributions of Althusser and Balibar. (This is the edition which was translated into English in 1970). When, in 1973, it was suggested that a third edition should be produced which would restore the original text, Rancière tried to insist that he would only accept the republication of his contributions if they were prefaced by a self-critical analysis. This request was denied. The original texts were published and Rancière’s self-critical preface was published separately in *Les Temps Modernes* of November, 1973, entitled “Mode d’emploi”. Rancière’s *La leçon d’Althusser*,

published in 1974, indicates the way in which the disciple had diverged from his master. In his Foreword to the 2011 re-issue of *La leçon d'Althusser*, Rancière situates his 1974 text within the context of the counter-revolution which followed the end of the May events of 1968. His main targets at that time were all 'those who operate in effect on the basis of the same presupposition – that domination functions thanks to a mechanism of dissimulation which makes those whom it subjugates unaware of its laws by presenting them with a reverse reality'. (Rancière, 2011, 12). Remember that this is a 2011 retrospection. Rancière continues by implying that Bourdieu and Baudrillard were as guilty as Althusser in this respect. He says: "The sociology of misrecognition, the theory of the 'spectacle' and the multiple forms of criticism of consumer or communication society share with Althusserianism the idea that the dominated are dominated because they are unaware of the laws of their domination" (Rancière, 2011, 12). By contrast, Rancière claimed that his book 'declared war on this theory of the inequality of intelligences which is at the heart of the supposed criticisms of domination. It declared that all revolutionary thought must be founded on the opposite presupposition, namely that of the capacity of the dominated.' (Rancière, 2011, 12). In other words, Rancière's summary clarifies the logic of the development of his thinking from his contribution of 1965 to *Lire le Capital* through to *Le philosophe et ses pauvres* of 1983. Althusser had been right to emphasize that late Marx attempted to found a new science in distinction from the ideological orientation of classical economics, but Althusser's willingness to defend the role of professors in exposing economic reality scientifically demonstrated the consequences of following Marx in his excessively realist understanding of 'science' and in his inadequate recognition of the vulgar perceptions of agents of production.

The development of Rancière's work, 1975-85.

During the 1970s, Rancière embarked on a series of analyses of the linguistic expressions of self-taught writers and thinkers of the French working-class of the 19th Century, particularly those associated with the political activism of the Saint-Simonians. In other words, he followed where his work on Marx had led – into an exploration of vulgar politics. Rancière’s position at what was known as the ‘experimental university centre’ of Vincennes – founded by the French government in response to the events of May, 1968 – was significant. The 1974 text offered an appendix which was the published version of a course which Rancière had given in the first semester of 1969 at Vincennes. In his brief introductory notes of 2011 to this appendix, Rancière comments that the Marxist staff who had gathered at Vincennes divided into two camps. Althusserianism became the theoretical support for the first camp which followed the party line of the PCF in arguing that the university centre consolidated the achievements of May 1968, whereas the second camp rejected the idea that the new institution recovered the aims of May and sought instead to use it to continue the struggle against the social divisiveness of university institutions as such. Clearly, Rancière was in the second camp and there was an attempted homology between his pedagogical practice at Vincennes and his research into 19th century autodidacticism. Rancière became closely associated with a new social history journal, *Les Révoltes logiques*, from 1975 onwards. He pitched his social historical research in the period in France between 1830 and 1851 when, as he came to see, Marx’s attitude towards the aims and discourse of workers was as ambivalent as had been Althusser’s in 1968. In association with Alain Faure, Rancière produced, in 1975, an edition of texts entitled *La parole ouvrière, 1830/185* [the word of the workers, 1830-51]. In his introduction, Rancière summarised that the book was a collection of ‘texts published between the revolution of 1830 and the coup d’état of December 2nd, 1851, by militant workers to express the protests and the aspirations of their class: brochures, articles, letters, poems, posters’ (Faure & Rancière, eds., 2007, 7). In the ‘Afterword’ written for the 2007 re-

issue of this text, Rancière situated its production both in relation to several influential books of the time on the working-class, including that of E.P. Thompson, and in relation to the actions of the Lip watchmakers in 1973. His orientation had been to give voice to those workers who were articulating their own thoughts at the historical moment when socialist and Marxist thinking was already mediating their indigenous experiences in a theoretical mode. Retrospectively, Rancière admitted that the work had operated with two presuppositions, only the second of which had survived the research process. The second presupposition - which survived – was that the intelligence manifested in the texts was of equal validity as that manifested in theoretical mediations. The first presupposition, however – that the texts in their different forms all expressed ‘a same class thinking, a same attitude of self-affirmation, seeking to contradict aspects of the image of the worker formed by the bourgeoisie’ (Faure & Rancière, eds., 2007, 340) – came into question and was challenged by Rancière’s subsequent work. In *La Nuit des Proletaires* (1981), Rancière was to suggest, on the contrary, that ‘working-class’ expression entailed a conscious ‘disidentification’ from imposed class identities and a conscious entry into the discourse of the bourgeois mediators. His approach was ‘deconstructionist’. As Donald Reid has commented in his introduction to the English translation of *La Nuit des Proletaires* as *The Nights of Labor* (1989):

‘The seeming conformity of workers’ lives to sociological constructs gives way under deconstructionist reading of “interruptions” in these lives. Rancière endows neither literary nor sociological evidence with primacy. Both are unstable texts to be deconstructed; each serves as a context for rather than a reflection of the other.’

(Rancière, int. Reid, 1989, xxxii [1981]).

Whereas Rancière’s initial reaction to his disenchantment with Althusserian Marxism was to celebrate working-class culture, his work on that culture led him to realise, firstly, that the historians of that culture were as guilty as Marx and Althusser of mediating it, and, secondly,

that the detailed study of immanent working class culture showed that it defined itself in class encounter rather than essentially. The recognition that the class identities of agents are constructed in social and discursive encounter was not immediately developed. Interpretive mediation as a concealed form of perpetuating cultural hierarchisation became the theme of *Le philosophe et ses pauvres* of 1983. Before turning to the critique of Bourdieu contained in that text and in his 'Léthique de la sociologie' [the ethics of sociology], published in *L'empire du sociologue* [the empire of the sociologist] of 1984 and re-published in *Les scènes du peuple* [scenes of the people] in 2003, I want to explore the development of Bourdieu's thought during the same period between 1965 and 1983. My suggestion is that Bourdieu was working towards a view of sociology as an instrument in socio-analytic encounter compatible with Rancière's view of auto-classification but that Rancière chose to oppose Bourdieu as if he were the main contemporary exponent of the interpretative domination of a traditional perspective.

The development of Bourdieu's work, 1963-1972.

I have consistently argued for several years that Bourdieu practised, in his own phrase, 'fieldwork in philosophy'. He was not trained as an anthropologist nor as a sociologist. Through the influence of Merleau-Ponty, he absorbed the view expressed in the late work of Husserl, such as the posthumously published *The Crisis of European Sciences*, that Western European sciences had become detached from the experiential life-world in which they were grounded. He expressed his research findings within constructed discourses, first of all presenting his Algerian research as social anthropology and then presenting his educational and cultural research of the 1960s as sociology. In the early 1960s he published three books based on his research in Algeria which appeared to be contributions to an emerging 'Mediterranean anthropology' – *Sociologie de l'Algérie* [sociology of Algeria] (Bourdieu, 1958); *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* [work and workers in Algeria] (Bourdieu, Darbel,

Rivet & Seibel, 1963); and *Le déracinement, la crise de l'agriculture traditionnelle en algérie* [the uprooting: the crisis of traditional agriculture in Algeria] (Bourdieu & Sayad, 1964). During the 1960s he directed a series of research projects within the Centre de sociologie européenne and these generated publications in collaboration with others which were perceived to be contributions to the sociology of education and culture – *Les héritiers* [The inheritors] (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964); *Un art moyen* [a middle-brow art] (Bourdieu, Boltanski, Castel & Chamboredon, 1965); *L'amour de l'art* [the love of art] (Bourdieu, Darbel & Schnapper, 1966). Although these empirical analyses were rendered 'objective' through their communication within the rules and assumptions of established disciplines, they all suggested a self-referential dimension. This was either achieved by the meticulous specification of the ways in which statistical findings correlated with the prior definitions of the research problems or by the barely concealed personal relevance of the choice of problems. Bourdieu introduced the first Part of *Travail et travailleurs en algérie* with an essay on 'statistics and sociology' which attempted to discuss the necessary dialectic involved in operating with both statistical evidence and ethnographic case-studies. This was not just an assessment of the scientific validity of methodological procedures. As was clear from his ethnographic study of his native Béarn – 'Célibat et condition paysanne' (Bourdieu, 1962) – Bourdieu's intention was to scrutinise the value of 'scientific' analyses of social phenomena which were those of his primary experience. Similarly, the 'objective' analyses of the cultural adaptations of students in *Les héritiers* were based on questionnaires issued to students of Philosophy and Sociology so as to reflect on their choice of subject, the choice which Bourdieu and Passeron were still actualising in their own careers. As we have seen, the May events of 1968 generated a crisis in respect of the status of social science, whether it was 'science' or bourgeois 'ideology'. In 1966, Bourdieu had published his "Champ intellectuel et projet créateur" [intellectual field and creative project] (Bourdieu, 1966) in a

special number of *Les Temps Modernes* devoted to the problems of structuralism. There he argued that artists and intellectuals in the past constituted their products by adjusting to their awareness of the structures of the societies within which they lived. The ‘fields’ of art, literature, philosophy, and science are contingent structures. They do not have absolute validity and artists/intellectuals position their work within constructed fields which are partly pre-constructed sedimentations of earlier constructions and partly modifications effected by artists/intellectuals as an integral part of their acts of creativity. We all know this, but the important point to remember is that, in writing this article, Bourdieu was aware that this critique of structuralism was itself an act of his own position-taking in relation to his own perception of his contemporary social situation. He knew that he had published texts which were thought to be sociological and worked in a centre for sociological research. He knew that he was presenting a critique of structuralism within a journal managed by Sartre even though he rejected Sartre’s existentialism. In 1967, Bourdieu and Passeron together published ‘Sociology and Philosophy in France since 1945: Death and Resurrection of a Philosophy without Subject’ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1967b). This was an article in which they tried to position their work socio-historically in relation to the development of the discourses of Sociology and Philosophy in France since World War II. In other words, at the moment when Rancière was falling out with Althusser because the latter was trying to insist on the detached status of Marxist science, Bourdieu and Passeron were trying to emphasize that sociological concepts might be objectivised, but also deprivileged, by developing the notion that the practice of sociologists operates immanently within social structures in the same way as does the creativity of artists/intellectuals. Like Rancière, they rejected both Feuerbachian subjectivity and Althusserian science. That is why, in 1968, Bourdieu and Passeron (and Chamboredon) published the text for research students which they called *Le métier de sociologue* (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron, 1968). It was an introduction to

the craft of sociologists – the labour of sociologists to be equated with other forms of labour – rather than, as the title of the translation wrongly implies, an introduction to *The Craft of Sociology*, as if this possesses some timeless identity. Passeron retained a Weberian distinction between the vocations of science and politics and was, therefore, prepared to allow *Le métier de sociologue* to recommend a Bachelardian epistemological process of winning, constructing and confirming social scientific facts within a socially constructed epistemic community of sociologists. By contrast, in my view, Bourdieu wanted, additionally, to ensure that the epistemological process was not simply deployed to sustain a self-regarding community of scientists but was also a device for challenging the utility of the self-referential discourse. I believe that he revived his early interest in the work of the late Husserl to set up an encounter between the objectivist apparatus of scientists and the primary experience of those observed.

The development of Bourdieu's work, 1972-1985.

Significantly, Bourdieu turned down an invitation to take a post at Vincennes, choosing to remain within a context at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales where he could pursue research interests unconstrained by discipline frameworks, whereas Passeron accepted the post as Head of the Department of Sociology at Vincennes. During the 1970s Bourdieu developed a 'post-structuralist' position out of the self-criticism of his earlier structuralism which he offered in *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (Bourdieu, 1972). Not only did this involve him, as a sociologist or social anthropologist, in explicating people's behaviour as 'strategic' rather than 'rule-dominated', it crucially involved him in acknowledging that his explanatory behaviour was equally strategic or contingent. His analyses were absorbed into his own social trajectory. Two key texts in this process of transition were an extract from *Esquisse* which was published separately in English as 'The Three Forms of Theoretical Knowledge' (Bourdieu, 1973), and 'On symbolic power' which was a paper given at a

conference at Harvard in 1973 and subsequently collected in *Language and Symbolic Power* (Bourdieu, 1991). In the former, Bourdieu argued that post-structuralist analysis methodologically entails two 'epistemological breaks'. To become 'scientific', analyses have to be communicated within constituted discourses in distinction from the primary or commonsense experiences which they explain, but, equally, the social conditions for the existence of these discourses have to be subjected to analysis in order to ensure that the 'scientific' conception remains only one component of the total understanding of situations and does not dominate as if it offered a definitive account of reality superior to experiential perception. In 'On symbolic power', Bourdieu represented this as a distinction between the analyses of 'structuring structures' and 'structured structures', where the former involves the analysis of the social conditions of production of discourses which then operate autonomously in accord with their own conceptual rules. The former involves the analysis of the historical contingency or arbitrariness of the self-referential or tautological communication of the latter. Importantly, Bourdieu was setting up a dialectic between 'reasons of fact' and 'reasons of logic', accepting that 'objective' explanation impinges on experience just as much as experience impinges on objectivity. His orientation derived from 'constitutive' phenomenology which was conducive to social constructionism rather than deconstructionism. He insisted that his 'post-structuralism' absorbed structuralist conceptions and did not negate them. As far as his personal trajectory was concerned, this also meant that he accepted that there was no escaping the conceptual dispositions which had developed as a result both of his primary experience and of his intellectual formation. For Bourdieu, all 'presentations of self', including his own, are modifications of pre-constituted legacies. Although he accepted Sartre's contention that 'existence precedes essence', Bourdieu rejected Sartre's view that we construct our essential identities in absolute, unpreconditioned liberty.

Art, philosophy and social science.

This almost brings me to Rancière's critique of Bourdieu in *Le philosophe et ses pauvres*. I just need to add one further comment. Bourdieu made no intrinsic differentiation in « Champ intellectuel et projet créateur » between forms of cultural activity. His mode of analysis was assumed to apply interchangeably to the production of art, literature, philosophy, and science. It was the process of exchange in the relevant society which determined whether or not works should be judged to be art or science. Hence he was subsequently able to adopt the same conceptual framework to analyse science and art perception (see Bourdieu, 1968, (1968) and Bourdieu, 1975c, (1975c). One of the other contributors to *Lire le Capital* in 1965 was Pierre Macherey who subsequently published, in 1966, an essay entitled 'L'analyse littéraire: tombeau de structures' [literary analysis: the tomb of structures] (Macherey, 1966) in the same number of *Les Temps Modernes* which included Bourdieu's "Champ intellectuel et projet créateur" and also a book entitled *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire* [A theory of Literary Production] (Macherey, 1978, [1974]). In spite of the title of his book, Macherey did not try to analyse the socio-economic conditions of literary production. On the contrary, he contended that texts announce themselves as science or literature. As Bourdieu was to put it a decade later in response to the 3rd edition of *Lire le Capital*:

“By constituting the theoretical reading of theoretical texts within scientific practice, philosophy is relieved, by appropriation or by negation, of the competition from the ‘so-called social sciences’ and the philosophers, guardians or guarantors of the store-room, are restored to the function ... of judges ‘of the last resort’ of scientific practice ...” (Bourdieu, 1975a, 69).

To put it another way, Bourdieu was arguing that the Althusserians preserved the autonomy and status of philosophy. When Rancière turned to the analysis of working-class texts in the

1970s he was as anti-sociological as Macherey in his attitude towards 'writing' but, also, as opposed as Bourdieu to philosophical jurisdiction over categories of creativity. This was the same time as, by comparison, Bourdieu was producing a paper which he at first entitled, in September, 1973, *Gustave, Flaubert et Frédéric. Essai sur la genèse sociale de l'intellectuel* [Gustave, Flaubert, and Frédéric. Essay on the social genesis of the intellectual], and then published, in 1975, as 'L'invention de la vie d'artiste' [the invention of artistic life] (Bourdieu, 1975b). Bourdieu's socio-historical analysis of the relationship between Flaubert's novel writing and his social observation was already self-regarding in relation to the problem for creative people of locating a field within which to communicate their perceptions.

Rancière's critiques of Bourdieu of the early 1980s.

'Le sociologue roi' in *Le philosophe et ses pauvres* (1983)

It is significant that Rancière's *Le philosophe et ses pauvres* was published in the year (1983) when Châtelet, Lyotard, and Derrida were responsible for securing the establishment of the Collège International de Philosophie. They sought to institutionalise philosophising as separate from the teaching of Philosophy, but this did not alter the fact that this attempted avant-garde philosophy remained hostile to sociology. Bourdieu's *La Distinction* and Lyotard's *La condition postmoderne* (Lyotard, 1984, [1979]) were both published in 1979. Lyotard was working intensively on Kant in the period between the publication of *Au juste* (Lyotard, 1979) and *Le Différend* (Lyotard, 1983), seeking to isolate Kant's *Critique of Judgement* from the constraints of his two earlier critiques. This is necessary background to Rancière's critique of Bourdieu's *La distinction* which, of course, as well as throwing down the gauntlet with the sub-title of 'critique sociale du jugement', translated as 'A social critique of the judgement of taste', also included an appendix which Bourdieu entitled

“Éléments pour une critique ‘vulgaire’ des critiques ‘pures’” [Towards a ‘Vulgar’ Critique of ‘Pure’ Critiques] which was, in part, his response to Derrida’s account of Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* contained in his *La vérité en peinture* [Truth in Painting] (Derrida, 1978) of 1978.

There is no possibility of embarking in detail on discussion of this debate. It crucially is a meeting-place of dispute between deconstructionism, post-structuralism, postmodernism in relation to the conventional discourses of sociology and philosophy. My assumption is that Rancière had not yet articulated the views on aesthetics which he was to present towards the end of the century and up to the present. Instead, he tried to establish that Bourdieu sought to act as a ‘Sociologist-King’ with the same consequences as had been those which followed from Plato’s advocacy of a ‘Philosopher-King’ in *The Republic*. The logic of Plato’s position, of course, had been that artists should be banned from *The Republic*. Rancière’s second Part continued the argument developed in respect of Plato and applied the same thinking to an assessment of the work of Marx. The discussion confirms the position that Rancière had hinted at in his contribution to *Lire le Capital* – that even a ‘scientific’ Marx had not avoided the philosophical disposition to preserve the working class in subordination by the very act of conceptualising it as such. The third Part of the book is entitled “Le philosophe et le sociologue” [the philosopher and the sociologist] and this contains a long chapter which is devoted to a critique of Bourdieu. Rancière cites *Les héritiers*; *La Reproduction*; *La Distinction*; *Questions de sociologie*; *Leçon sur la leçon* ; *Le sens pratique* ; *Ce que parler veut dire* ; *Un art moyen* ; « La production de la croyance » ; and « L’invention de la vie d’artiste ». This is a fairly thorough reference to Bourdieu’s main texts of the period from 1960 to 1980. Rancière omits reference to Bourdieu’s Algerian work and, most importantly in my view, pays no attention to *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique*. Rancière’s main contention is best illustrated in relation to his discussion of the notion of ‘méconnaissance’ developed by Bourdieu and Passeron in *La Reproduction*. He argues that

Bourdieu and Passeron here succumbed to the same temptation as did Plato and Marx. They sought to claim that their analysis of what was happening in French higher education was an analysis of what was really happening of which the participants were themselves unaware. Rancière argues that so far from liberating the disadvantaged and dispossessed, the dominant understanding of the situation offered by Bourdieu and Passeron had the effect of perpetuating the situation of the dominated, consigning them to ignorance of the system within which they were acting. In effect, Rancière takes the work of Bourdieu and Passeron together and then, singly, of Bourdieu, as indicative of a fatal flaw of sociological discourse and explanation. As Rancière puts it: “In a sense, *Les Héritiers* and *La Reproduction*, they are Plato’s *The Republic* explained first of all in images and secondly in axioms.” (Rancière, 2007, 256). In respect of art, culture, or aesthetics, Rancière makes a similar point in relation to *La Distinction*. According to Rancière, Bourdieu’s research into the cultural competence in the population does exactly what he reproached the political scientists for doing in his “L’opinion publique n’existe pas”, namely that he ‘pretended to address himself to subjects possessing mastery of the question posed in order to arrive at the conclusion that they lack the disposition which gives meaning to the question. He pretended competence in order to demonstrate its absence. The enquiry simply made apparent what the sociologist already ‘knew’ in elaborating the question, that is to say that the ‘popular aesthetic’ is a simple absence of aesthetics. Or, inversely, that aesthetic judgement is pure distance in relation to the popular *ethos*.” (Rancière, 2007, 271).

Much of Rancière’s discussion of Bourdieu revolves around Bourdieu’s criticism of Kant’s aesthetic theory, as presented in his *Critique of Judgement*. Rancière states that Bourdieu lays claim to a ‘vulgar’ critique of Kant’s denigratory aesthetic, one which, in Bourdieu’s words, was ‘totally a-historical like every philosophy worthy of its name’ (Rancière, 2007, 282, quoting Bourdieu, 1979, 576). Rancière then proceeds to defend Kant’s aesthetic theory

on the grounds that Bourdieu's criticism of Kant was itself a-historical in not recognising what Kant was trying to do in his text published one year after the commencement of the French Revolution. My defence of Bourdieu against Rancière is similarly historical. My contention is that Rancière was unaware of, or wilfully ignored, the consequences of the post-structuralist shift that Bourdieu made in his thinking and activity after the events of May, 1968. Rancière continues to treat Bourdieu as if he were a 'Sociologist-King' even though the trend of Bourdieu's thinking was to represent his use of sociological language as his mode of self-presentation within egalitarian socio-analytic encounters.

'L'éthique de la sociologie' in *L'empire du sociologue*, 1984 and re-issued in *Les Scènes du peuple*, 2003.

Rancière did observe a shift in Bourdieu's work. Whereas 'Le sociologue roi' had concentrated on a critique of *La reproduction* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970) and *La distinction* (Bourdieu, 1979), treating them as objectivist analyses of the mechanisms of educational and cultural reproduction, 'L'éthique de la sociologie' begins with a critique of Bourdieu's inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, delivered in April, 1982 and published the same year as *Leçon sur la leçon* (Bourdieu, 1982a). Bourdieu had begun his lecture by recognising precisely the nature of the situation in which he found himself. The inaugural lecture is a performance which socially secures the legitimacy of the statements of the new professor – guaranteeing his credentials within the internal, restricted epistemic context of the institutional field of academics, and it is also one which enables, in turn, the new professor to absorb or incorporate the social reputation of the institution such that his statements acquire a force beyond that which is associated with his personal views. To use Bourdieu's terminology, giving an inaugural lecture is a process which augments the incorporated *habitus* of the individual by association with the instituted *habitus* of the college. This means, as he had continued, that

‘the sociologist, raised from what we call the people to what we call the elite, can only aspire to the special lucidity associated with every kind of social displacement on condition that he denounces the populist representation of the people, which only deceives its authors, and the elitist representation of the elites which is well placed to deceive at the same time both those who belong and those who do not’. (Bourdieu, 1982a, 9)

The way to avoid partisan special pleading in the interests of either the people or elites, Bourdieu argued, is to deploy the historically accumulated autonomy of sociological discourse to challenge the findings of class-based sociologies. As he put it:

‘The sociology of sociology, which allows the acquisitions of past science to be mobilised against science in the making, is an indispensable instrument of sociological method ...’ (Bourdieu, 1982a, 9).

Rancière argued that Bourdieu’s theoretical attempt to mobilise sociological tradition in opposition to special interests was a device to maintain the superiority of scientific over everyday perceptions. Rancière claimed that

‘Discourse on science has one clear advantage: it allows a lesson to be delivered without delivering it. By the same token, it is essentially a discourse on virtue: the virtue of someone who knows and reveals knowledge.’ (Rancière, 2003, 353)

Observing Bourdieu’s new strategy in distancing himself from structuralist objectivity, Rancière argued, nevertheless, that the change did not represent a real change from the assumption shared historically by all sociologists that their perceptions of reality are more real than those of the people they observe. Once again, Rancière does an injustice to Bourdieu by refusing to pay attention to the context of Bourdieu’s utterance – by

extrapolating a general position from statements which were inevitably strategic. Bourdieu was the representative of the people to whom he referred and he was deeply aware that he was addressing the elite. It was still his intention to deploy scientific discourse as a device to disclose non-scientific experience. Rancière had recognized in respect of factory workers of the 1830s that their discourse had not been essentially working-class but had been constituted by an assimilation of language used in a field of middle class intellectual exchange, but he failed to recognize that Bourdieu was adopting a similar strategy in recommending the validity of instituted tradition in its presence so as to secure his *rite de passage* which would enable him to mobilise the authority of the Collège de France in support of his particular form of reflexivity. It is significant that Bourdieu had in 1979 revised his earlier concept of ‘cultural capital’ to accommodate distinctions between ‘incorporated’, ‘objectivated’ and ‘instituted’ capitals (Bourdieu, 1979), thereby anticipating the encounter between these capitals played out in his inaugural lecture. It is also significant that he chose to publish a collection of his articles on the sociology of linguistic exchange from the late 1970s in 1982 as *Ce que parler veut dire* [what speaking means] (Bourdieu, 1982b), emphasizing that the transmission of meaning is not ‘pure’ but is modified by social context.

Defending Bourdieu against Rancière’s critique.

Rancière’s *Le philosophe et ses pauvres* was reissued in 2007. He wrote a new preface in which he discusses the way in which he came across Bourdieu’s *La distinction* towards the end of his studies of 19th century French working class intellectuals. He states that:

“This ‘social’ critique of the aesthetic illusion appeared to represent the exact opposite of the ‘aesthetic’ experience by which the emancipated workers had appropriated a perspective, a language, on tastes which were not ‘theirs’ ... (Rancière, 2007, vii).

Rancière found in *La Distinction* a top-down disrespect for working class culture which denied its own intrinsic merits, but his account of the ‘exact opposite’ precisely describes Bourdieu’s procedure. Rancère proceeds to bring his response to Bourdieu up-to-date, expressing surprise at Bourdieu’s involvement on the side of the strikers in the 1995 demonstrations against Juppé’s proposed tax reforms. Rancière refers to the research project directed by Bourdieu and published in 1993 as *La misère du monde* [The Weight of the World] (Bourdieu, dir., 1993) and he refers to the posthumously published collection of Bourdieu’s political interventions entitled *Interventions, 1961-2001. Science sociale et action politique* [Interventions, 1961-2001. Social science and political action], (Bourdieu, 2002). These cause him, as he puts it, to modify his judgement of Bourdieu’s motivations but not his judgement of Bourdieu’s analyses (Rancière, 2007, xii). He does not accept that, supremely in the case of Bourdieu, this is a false antithesis. Rancière’s contradictory judgement of Bourdieu’s analyses and his political actions arises from his own intellectual unwillingness to accept the extent to which Bourdieu attempted to practise science in action, to make explicit that the presuppositions of his theorising constituted the bases of his practical performance rather than contributions to sociological theory in general. Rancière criticises Bourdieu on the common assumption that his ‘reflexivity’ was a sophisticated ruse to preserve and protect the dominant social perspective of sociologists. What was translated into English as *An invitation to reflexive sociology* (Bourdieu, 1992b) was first published in French as an invitation to ‘reflexive anthropology’ (Bourdieu, 1992a), which might have been expressed specifically as an invitation to ontological rather than epistemological reflexivity. Rancière sets himself epistemologically apart from the game of culture and refuses to accept that literature, art, science, philosophy, sociology are constructed discourses defined in social exchange. In seeking to assign significance now to the socio-political potency of ‘aesthetics’, we have to decide in what ways we are attempting to reconcile the social practice of art with

aesthetic philosophy. It remains the case that the vision of Bourdieu was to insist on an egalitarian recognition of all artistic practices even though he recognised that we all attempt to distinguish ourselves socially by developing discourses of value judgement within institutional and intellectual fields that have become divorced from that practice.

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