



Appropriat(e)ing Wavelength: On Bourdieu's *On Television**

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abstract

Much of Pierre Bourdieu's work has revolved around thoughts on limitations, and the possibility of their overcoming. Through an elaboration on the manner in which Bourdieu's *On Television* was received negatively by journalists, and more positively by academics, this paper begins to explicate the objective limitations that all agents concerned with consciously initiating and directing social change are subject to. I then make note of the manner in which this differing reception is consistent with Bourdieu's own writings on the homeostatic tendencies of the habitus. I conclude the paper with a brief comparison of Bourdieu's efforts at initiating change in *On Television*, with his more successful efforts at initiating change in the field of sociology. Whilst I concentrate on the work of Bourdieu as a matter of prudence, the paper also aims to begin and develop what I believe to be the more general need for the academic community to devote more energies to the two step process – the analysis of reproduction and the creation of becoming – that is consciously initiated and directed social change.

To the memory of Pierre Bourdieu

(Y)ou can think with a thinker against that thinker. For example, I constructed the notion of field both *against* Weber and *with* Weber. (Bourdieu, 1990b: 49)

Someone, at any rate, should do a sociological analysis of what's happening in the field of journalism, and its political implications. Maybe someone like Bourdieu could do it. (Deleuze, 1990: 27)

Introduction – Objective Constraints

The above quotation is taken from an answer Deleuze gave on a question regarding the constraints that philosophy specifically, and European cultural fields in general, were being subjected to by the 'opinion-makers', i.e. journalists and the media (Deleuze, 1990: 26-27). Given the question asked, and the general tenor of Deleuze's response, it is not surprising to find Deleuze suggesting that Bourdieu conduct a sociological

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analysis of the situation given the brilliant manner in which Bourdieu has concerned himself with limitations throughout his career. The importance of thinking and writing about limitations is central to Bourdieu's work because, for him, as well as Deleuze (albeit in a markedly different style), the corollary of thinking about limitations is the possibility of freeing ourselves from them. According to Bourdieu, the sociologist is able to provide us with a certain amount of freedom, however particular, by making explicit "the social determinants of different forms of practice" (1990b: 15). By making explicit social determinants we are, paradoxically, freed from the "illusion of freedom... from the misplaced belief in illusory freedoms" (1990b: 15-16). Essentially, once we are freed from the idea of being the absolute masters of our own domain, freedom becomes possible. In many ways, Bourdieu's work could be thought of as the negative to Deleuze and Guattari's positive. Reproduction as the negative of becoming.

One similarity that is clearly evident in the work of Bourdieu and Deleuze is the way in which they both hesitate at writing in terms of the subject. For Bourdieu (1988: 149-150), whilst people may be biologically distinct, they are "endowed with transindividual dispositions". For Deleuze, using remarkably similar language, "the notion of the subject has lost much of its interest on behalf of *pre-individual singularities and non-personal individuations*" (1991: 95, italics in original). Bourdieu, the sociologist, has spent much of his career documenting the extent to which these transindividual dispositions organize the social/human. Deleuze, on the other hand, and especially in his work with Guattari, has spent much of his time in a speculative engagement with the pre-individual and the non-personal. Bourdieu, the sociologist, and Deleuze, the philosopher, both operate on either side of the same coin. And herein lies the joy of reading both. For together, their collective works help us to find the iron cage, heat it, and begin to refashion it. The iron that once formed a cage, becomes a material to be used for *our own* design.

The need to make use of the existing becomes clear whenever we want an organization, an institution, another person, ourselves, or any delimitation we can think of involving the human, to change. In such a situation we must, necessarily, make use of the momentum inherent to the posited unit to bring this about. To exemplify quickly and crudely: How do you convince a racist that racism is wrong when a racist, by definition, thinks that racism is right? It is my opinion that the only way to make such an alteration is with elements of the racist's thinking. One must endeavour, no matter how difficult the task, to find a line of thinking that inhabits the racist, and which might subsequently be used by the racist, to convince the racist, to make the change. Michel Foucault (through translator Richard Howard) tells of this sort of need in *Madness and Civilization* when t(he)y tell the story:

(O)f a sufferer who thought that he was dead, and was really dying from not eating; a group of people who had made themselves pale and were dressed like the dead, entered his room, set up a table, brought food, and began to eat and drink before the bed. The starving 'dead man' looked at them; they were astonished that he stayed in bed; they persuaded him that dead people eat at least as much as living ones. He readily accommodated himself to the idea. (1965: 188-189)

Such is the lot for those who want to initiate any sort of *human* change, but possess neither a magic wand nor absolute sovereignty. Once the reproduction to be altered is correctly identified and documented, the consequential task of creating the desired

becoming needs to be actualised. It is this point that forms the backbone of this article, and I make it early in the piece – “at the risk of ruining the suspense”, just as Bourdieu (1998c: 21) has done elsewhere. What follows is a brief outline of the reasons for Bourdieu giving the two public lectures on television that were subsequently published as *Sur la television* in French, and as *On Television* in English. I then move on to a discussion of the manner in which *On Television* was received in a differing manner by English speaking academics and journalists, and how this seems to mirror the reception of the lectures/book in France. Following this, I outline how this differing reception is consistent with Bourdieu's writings' on the homeostatic tendencies of the habitus. I conclude with a brief discussion of what I think would have been a better plan of attack, through a brief comparison of *On Television* with Bourdieu's own praxeological project.

The Reason for *On Television*

In his more recent works, Pierre Bourdieu has been increasingly concerned with the conditions in which reason is possible. Rather than relying on “moral exhortation to abolish ‘systematically distorted’ communication from sociology”, Bourdieu prefers to direct his attention to a “realistic politics of scientific reason” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 188). For Bourdieu, reason only becomes possible when we give up on the notion that “history is guided by reason” (Bourdieu, 2000: 126), once we give up on the notion of trans-historical, universal forms of communication (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 188; Bourdieu, 2000: 109-110). Reason becomes possible in very particular social conditions for Bourdieu, autonomous conditions in which reason is determined by the strength of arguments; by the capacity of an argument to convince. The mathematical field is an example of an autonomous field for Bourdieu in that the producer's sole consumers are also the producer's competitors (Bourdieu, 1998a: 61). Scientific reason only arises through those “apparently anarchical social mechanisms” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 189) which only allow one to “win with arguments, demonstrations, or refutations” (Bourdieu, 2000: 109).

It is clear, then, why Bourdieu thinks the progress of reason is only possible “from a political struggle rationally oriented toward defending and promoting the social conditions for the exercise of reason” (1998b: 139). It is just this struggle for the conditions of reason that Bourdieu takes up in *On Television* (1998a). The book *On Television* (1998a), is the English version of a transcription of two lectures Bourdieu recorded in France on 18 March 1996, and which were subsequently “broadcast by Paris Premiere in May of the same year” (Forbes, 2000: 24-25). As Forbes (2000) has noted, the broadcast of the two lectures, and their publication in book form, are just one of a number of overtly political activities Bourdieu has undertaken in the last seven or eight years. As Forbes has written:

In the year (1995) in which he reached conventional retirement age, Pierre Bourdieu appeared to embark on a new career. In the past he had frequently refused to “prendre position,” but now he appeared to plunge into politics and to adopt the persona of a public intellectual. (2000: 22)

These more political activities undertaken by Bourdieu are clearly related to his increasing theoretical concern with the conditions of reason, a concern which, whilst

being more explicit recently (see Bourdieu, 2000), underlies his entire scholarly output. As Bourdieu has noted in a televised interview:

Gradually, because of my work, and for other reasons, I was led to take a stand on problems which to some extent fall within my competence or that of my discipline (...) I thought it important that sociology should have its say when it had something really important to say, and television was an immediately obvious example. (1998d, in Forbes 2000: 34)

This brief outline of Bourdieu's recent trajectory helps us better situate the reasoning behind *On Television*, for which he had two clearly stated concerns. Firstly, he was concerned to highlight the movement of market pressures into previously autonomous fields. For Bourdieu "television poses a serious danger for all the various areas of cultural production – for art, for literature, for science, for philosophy, and for the law" (1998a: 10). His concern is that the "writers for nonwriters or philosophers for nonphilosophers", that one finds on television, act like a 'Trojan Horse' by introducing "heteronomous agents into autonomous worlds" (1998a: 59). These agents are heteronomous in the sense that the field in which their capital is most recognised, the field of journalism, is "very strongly subordinated to market pressures" (ibid: 54). In passing themselves off as 'real' writers, and 'real' philosophers, fields in which their capital is less valued than in the field of journalism, Bourdieu thinks that the autonomy of those very fields is put in danger. With the autonomy of these fields at risk, the progression of reason and the universal, being dependent upon this autonomy, are also put at risk.

Bourdieu's second concern, consequentially following the first, was that his analysis might provide "some tools or weapons to all those in the image professions who are struggling to keep what could have become an extraordinary instrument of direct democracy from turning into an instrument of symbolic oppression" (1998a: 12). In giving the lectures, Bourdieu made it very clear that he was wanting to "reach beyond the usual audience at the College de France" (ibid: 10). Given that he was moving into fields where people would be less familiar with his work, Bourdieu decided to "construct his arguments so that they would be clear to everyone" (ibid: 10). His concern with targeting those 'in the image professions', is well founded in that they are the most powerful agents in terms of the dissemination of information, in that "they control the means of public expression" (ibid: 46). He was right to think that, if we are to move beyond the type of television that "rewards a certain number of *fast-thinkers* who offer cultural 'fast food' – predigested and prethought culture" (ibid: 28), it would be necessary for journalists to be actively supportive of such a need; that they be on-side.

In wanting to achieve these aims, Bourdieu is doing just what his theoretical project would require. But where there is a slight inconsistency between *On Television* and his overall project is in how he tried to achieve these aims. It is this inconsistency that, in my opinion, underlies the difficulty Bourdieu came up against. The specific difficulty becomes clear when one notices how *On Television* was received differently by academics and journalists. Whilst the reviews of *On Television* were, to an extent, mixed upon its publication, it is clear that the more scathing reviews of the book are attributable to journalists, and the more positive attributable to academics, with John Pilger (1998) being the clear exception amongst journalists. The differing reception is of

interest in that it helps to highlight what I think is the fundamental difficulty faced by anyone concerned with initiating and directing social change – that of making use of that which is in a way that is otherwise. The difficulty is particularly evident when the change sought can only be initiated with the help of the members of the field in which the change is sought, as was the case with *On Television*. Bourdieu was clearly aware of this difficulty and of the need for a collaborative effort, for as he wrote in the prologue to *On Television*, the lectures and the subsequent books were:

(A)n attempt to offer to all sides a possibility of liberation,... from the hold of these mechanisms, and to propose, perhaps, a program for concerted action by artists, writers, scholars, and journalists ... Only through such a collaboration will it be possible to work effectively to share the most universal achievements of research and to begin, in practical terms, to universalize the conditions of access to the universal. (Bourdieu, 1998a: 1)

Fuzzy Reception

The ‘success’ of *Sur La Television* is undoubted if one measures such success in terms of sales, given that the text was a bestseller in France (Forbes, 2000: 25). But its success in encouraging the various fields of cultural production to work together in support of the ‘progress of reason’, the primary aim of the lectures, appears to have been limited. As Bourdieu (1998a: 89,n.2) has noted, the two lectures sparked a controversy in France that “lasted several months and engaged the most important journalists and columnists from the daily papers”. With regard to this uproar, Louis Pinto has written that the “journalists who were in a position to express themselves” either denied the entirety of Bourdieu’s argument or “wrote ironically of the banality” of his claims (2000: 96-97). Rather than try and contribute positively to Bourdieu’s concerns, the journalists were more concerned to highlight what they thought to be Bourdieu’s “boundless ambition” (ibid.).

Whilst the English translation that appeared in 1998 has been received with more moderation, there appears to be a number of similarities between the responses of the Anglo-American and French journalists. Two reviews by Anglo-American journalists stand out as being particularly scathing, reviews which in a number of ways make the same charges against Bourdieu as made by their French counterparts (see Pinto, 2000). The first, written by Ian Hargreaves (1998) was published in *New Statesman*, and the second, written by Hal Hinson (1998), was published in the American webzine *Salon*. I make most reference to Hargreaves’ review, the longer of the two. The title of Ian Hargreaves’ review, ‘Slim and Shallow’, neatly sums up his thoughts of *On Television*. Towards the beginning of the review, Hargreaves, commenting upon the merits of receiving the book as a parting gift from his successor as editor of the *New Statesman*, wrote:

What better than an introductory tract on journalism by France’s most famous sociologist as I head off to become professor of journalism at Cardiff University, in a department which seeks to combine, under one neo-classical roof, the coarse business of training hacks with the intellectual exploration of “media studies”? (1998: 52)

Hinson, with tongue firmly in cheek, commences his review with:

Life being famously short, it's been a while since I last hunkered down with a piece of deep-dish theoretical sociology, but it took only a meager helping of "On Television," the latest opus from esteemed French scholar Pierre Bourdieu, to remind me why. After grappling with a prose style so eye-stinging and impenetrable that you're obliged to reread each sentence a minimum of three times, you begin to realize that Bourdieu is the literary equivalent of Anthrax – a little goes a very long way. (1998¹)

The similarities between the two reviews on the excursion beyond the academy by Bourdieu, don't end with their indignant beginnings. Indeed, Hargreaves's and Hinson's primary criticisms are the same. Hargreaves writes that Bourdieu's main thesis about the field of journalism being influenced by market pressures is "as obvious as it is incontrovertible ... Who can doubt that journalism is shaped in very large measure, by the marketplace?" (1998: 52). Whilst Hinson asks, "what could be more obvious than to point out the medium's slavish devotion to the almighty franc?" (1998).

Hargreaves complains that in opposition to the current situation "Bourdieu offers no considered clue as to an alternative" (1998: 52), and even goes so far as to say that "Bourdieu has nothing at all to say about subjects which might yield answers to his questions" (1998: 53). Hargreaves criticism doesn't end there. He is also critical of the "unmistakable tang of self-interest" that he finds evident throughout *On Television* (1998: 52). He thinks this self-interest manifest in Bourdieu's concern to show that there exists "a world of robust original thought... among true academics" (ibid.). He thinks it to be a failure by Bourdieu to not recognise the positives of the marketplace; to not recognise that "all market places have their own correcting mechanism" (ibid.) – I hope in ignorance of Bourdieu's well-rounded critique of anything resembling Rational Actor Theory (see Bourdieu 1990a: 46-50; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 123). In their respective reviews, both Hargreaves and Hinson tend to concentrate on what they think Bourdieu doesn't do. They avoid discussing the need, or lack thereof, for Bourdieu's clearly stated objectives, preferring to criticise Bourdieu for what they see as his lack of answers to the problem, or for the obviousness of that which he highlights.

The reception of *On Television* by a number of reviewers from within the academy are, in stark contrast to the reviews cited above, very positive. Richard Shusterman (1999a), who simultaneously reviewed *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*, commences his review by making a favourable comparison between Bourdieu, Sartre and Foucault. Shusterman (1999a) thinks the three comparable given their capacity to "wield influence in arenas of social struggle far grander than those of campus politics". Shusterman goes on to write that from even "the most reluctant quarters, there is a growing recognition that Paris has a new 'master thinker'" (1999a: 25). Shusterman, who also edited *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader* (1999b) in the same year, writes that by "earning the counterattacks of political leaders and media stars, Bourdieu became a surprise celebrity" (1999a: 26). He thinks that both texts give American readers the chance to be "properly introduced to the political Bourdieu; they can even get an inkling of some of his major theoretical ideas (like 'field', 'habitus' and 'reflexivity') without toiling through weighty tomes of academic writing" (1999a: 25-26). The rest of Shusterman's review essentially summarises, in an accurate manner, the main thesis of the two texts.

1 As Hinson's article appeared in *Salon*, a webzine, no page reference can be provided.

In a similar vein to Shusterman, Hernan Vera (1999), writing in the journal *Contemporary Sociology*, mainly concerns himself with outlining how he thinks of *On Television* as being a prime example of the empirical utility of Bourdieu's 'method', what is perhaps better referred to as Bourdieu's praxeological framework. In a nutshell, Bourdieu's praxeological framework is concerned with the "dialectical relationships between... objective structures and the structured dispositions which they produce and tend to reproduce them" (Bourdieu, 1973: 53-54, italics in original). Perhaps the best example I can think of to quickly illustrate this dialectical relationship is the driving of a car. In Australia, we all (nearly all of the time) drive on the left hand side of the road. If you were to drive on the right hand side of the road, you would only ever be able to see the back of the traffic lights or the back of the road signs. You would also, more fundamentally, continually risk driving head on into a vehicle driving on the *correct*, which is to say the left, side of the road. In this way, the 'structured structures' that are the road signs, traffic lights, and general flow of traffic, produce the 'structuring structures': what amounts to the (un)thinking abidance of *individual drivers*. These 'structuring structures' then have a tendency to reproduce the 'structured structures' from which they derived in the first place. With what I assume to be this understanding of Bourdieu's praxeological framework, Vera goes on to write of how Bourdieu constructs the journalistic environment in a manner consistent with his conception of 'field', a term that is part of Bourdieu's 'technical vocabulary'. The conclusion of Vera's review of *On Television*, neatly embodies its overall feel:

This work is packed solid with insightful observations... This is not the attack on television and journalists that the passionate and still unabated reaction to the 1996 French version of these lectures might suggest... Social scientists and journalists will find much of value, and much to take issue with, in this book. This is, in fact, a good example of what a theoretically guided sociological vision can contribute to contemporary affairs. (1999: 197)

The reviews of *On Television* by Shusterman and Vera tend to concentrate on the success Bourdieu had in applying his complex concepts to a topic that is of interest to most people. Both Shusterman and Vera are correct in pointing out what they do. As academics who have engaged with Bourdieu's work, they are able to recognise this success because they are already aware of his overall direction. Yet they both fail to acknowledge the fact that one of the fundamental aims of *On Television* seems not to have been met. Rather, they support Bourdieu in saying that the text is not an attack on the field of journalism that it was perceived to be. Given that Bourdieu was not solely (if at all) interested in writing a bestseller, this talk, particularly by Shusterman (1999a), of *On Television* as being suitable as an introductory text on Bourdieu seems somewhat misplaced. Whilst Bourdieu was concerned to make the text readily understandable to most people, he was still primarily concerned to communicate with the fields of cultural production, and most specifically, the field of journalism.

In the light of this, one could be excused for thinking that two different books had been reviewed. Hargreaves and Hinson, as my *archetypal* journalists, tend to concentrate on what Bourdieu doesn't do. Rather than writing of the validity of Bourdieu's objectives, Hargreaves prefers to write about what he perceives as Bourdieu's self interested ambition. Rather than commenting on how the market constraints that he thinks so obvious as to be incontrovertible, constrain an editor of the *New Statesman*, he prefers to comment on how he thinks the market can give people what they want. Hinson takes

issue with the fact that Bourdieu “rarely mentions specific programs or broadcasts” (1998). In writing this, he fails to mention that Bourdieu (1998a: 10) more or less apologises for the brevity of his analysis, for the lack of empirical data, reasoning that it would have hindered the clarity of his message. Hinson (1998) even goes so far as to write that Bourdieu “comes across as something of a dilettante”, an interpretation that Phillipe Marliere has recognised as being easily, but wrongly made, given “Bourdieu’s evident eclecticism” (1997: 16).

In a contrasting manner to Hargreaves comments, Shusterman thinks that “Bourdieu offers both direction and example” (1999a: 26). Shusterman and Vera, as my archetypal academics, make positive mention of Bourdieu’s efforts to step outside the academy. With their knowledge of Bourdieu’s work, they are able to see the manner in which Bourdieu successfully utilises his theoretical concepts to analyse the media. In direct contrast to Hinson who wrote that “perhaps something really was lost in the translation” (1998), Vera thinks the text to be “a good translation of the two lectures” (1999: 197). What the differing reviews reveal is that, effectively, the members of the two fields tend to highlight and discuss what they know about, what they deal with on a daily basis, and avoid or exclude the remainder.

Homeostasis as Exclusive Organization

The fuzzy reception of *On Television* outlined above is entirely reconcilable with Bourdieu’s theoretical project, as he himself has recognized. I will suppose that the two reviews by journalists that I cite are the type of response Bourdieu had in mind when he asked, following the telecast of the lectures: “What can possibly explain the remarkably violent reactions by so many of France’s best-known journalists to this analysis?” (1998a: 1). In what proves to be an answer to his own question, Bourdieu (*ibid.*) begins by noting that given the extent of his disavowals throughout the lectures, the journalists’ ‘virtuous indignation’ could not possibly be the result of them having felt personally targeted by the lectures. With this ruled out, and given that his concern throughout the whole process was purely emancipatory, a concern Bourdieu thinks so obvious that it should “go without saying”, he concludes that the ‘unwarranted outrage’ is “best explained by certain attributes of the journalistic vision” (*ibid.*). Thus, in familiar style, Bourdieu writes of the tendency of journalists to: “equate what is new with what are usually called ‘revelations’...(to) emphasis(e) that which is most obvious in the social world... a readiness to denounce or indict” and the tendency of journalists “to focus on an analyst’s (supposed) ‘conclusions’ rather than the method by which those conclusions were reached” (1998a: 2).

From the preface to the lectures, it is clear that Bourdieu realised that the journalistic disposition was to prove to be one of the greatest obstacles to achieving a ‘united front’ of cultural producers. This concern is evident when he wrote that he had “every reason to fear that this discussion will mostly feed into the narcissistic complacency of a journalistic world all too inclined to pseudo-criticism” (Bourdieu, 1998a: 12). In this light, Bourdieu appears to have pre-empted the negative reception the lectures were to subsequently receive. The reason for Bourdieu’s consternation over the possible success

of *On Television* is brought into sharper relief when one relates it to the line of thinking he has pursued throughout his career. For example, on the homeostatic tendencies of the *habitus*, Bourdieu has written, in a manner consistent with his overall project, that

the *habitus* tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information ... , and especially by avoiding exposure to such information... the *habitus* tends to protect itself from crises and challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible, that is, a relatively constant universe of situations tending to reinforce its dispositions by offering the market most favourable to its products. (1990a: 60-1)

A number of other academics have also highlighted the manner in which the negative reception of the lectures only served to reinforce the point Bourdieu was making. Pinto (2000: 96-97) has noted how the manner in which the French journalists criticised Bourdieu only served to confirm Bourdieu's hypothesis. Similarly, Szeman has written that

the reaction of the print and electronic media to his pointed criticisms served as a confirmation of his conclusions regarding the severe limits of contemporary journalism. The transformation of Bourdieu's book into one of the seemingly endless string of "current events" and "social issues" that grips the media for a moment... exemplified all of the media's gravest problems in their very attempt to dispute Bourdieu's assessment of their failings. (1998: 1)

My concern with writing of the problem in this way is that it results in the very difficulty that Bourdieu needed to overcome remaining obscured. The difficulty faced is essentially that of communicating/constructing the need for change within a language and understanding that actively reproduces that which we wish to change: of overcoming the homeostatic tendencies of the *habitus* which reject and avoid change. In the instance of *On Television*, Bourdieu's concern to encourage media professionals to look past the pressure to get a scoop, to begin thinking of the multiple ways in which their day-to-day practices invisibly censor the news, and so on, had to be situated and constructed in a way that was compatible with the thinking it sought to overcome.

The Limitations of Writing of Limitations

The specific problem Bourdieu faced in *On Television*, then, was that the change he was seeking to bring about required members from the journalistic field to come to the party. It is my opinion that Bourdieu misguided the direction of his representation in *On Television*. I think that this misguidance can account for, to a large extent, the hostile rebuttal of Bourdieu's position by many from within the journalistic field, a rebuttal that proved fatal to the achievement of his clearly stated objectives in giving the lectures.

From reading the negative reviews written by journalists on *On Television*, one is struck by the tone in which they refer to Bourdieu's person. As I mentioned above, both Hargreaves (1998) and Hinson (1998) make specific reference to the heights Bourdieu has climbed to within the academy. Hinson writes of Bourdieu's writing style as being "eye-stinging" and "impenetrable", and makes specific mention of his own aversion to "deep-dish theoretical sociology". Given that Hargreaves was off to join the academic world himself at the time of writing, such naked jibes may well have been seen as

disingenuous, accordingly, he writes of Bourdieu as not exactly being a “media studies person” (1998: 52). Both Hargreaves and Hinson are quick to categorise Bourdieu to an outside. For Hinson, Bourdieu is an academic who writes a lot on a little and does so with a distinct lack of clarity. For Hargreaves, Bourdieu is an academic who has hubristically strayed from his area of expertise.

By associating Bourdieu with an elsewhere, both Hargreaves and Hinson are all the more able to question the validity of the claims being made. Bourdieu makes this process of exclusion somewhat easier when one recognises how Bourdieu’s “general tone” could be easily interpreted as being “openly polemical” (Marliere, 1997: 16). It is not hard to understand the charge of polemics, when one notes Bourdieu talking of the “narcissistic complacency of a journalistic world all too inclined to pseudo-criticism” (1998a: 12). If any comment is going to be excluded by the journalistic habitus, then this would be it. Even without such obviously incendiary remarks, the lectures read a little pedagogically. As Hargreaves (1998), Hinson (1998) and Marliere (2000) have all recognised, Bourdieu’s claims do come across as kind of obvious. The commonly acknowledged nature of Bourdieu’s concerns combined with a discernible polemical undercurrent, goes a long way to explain the negative reception of the lectures.

Given that the constraints on journalists are somewhat obvious, why would Bourdieu be concerned to explicate them so thoroughly? Perhaps this concern is partly attributable to what might be termed a ‘hangover’ that Bourdieu endures from his more theoretical projects. One of Bourdieu’s primary concerns throughout his body of work has been to expose the manner in which agents within fields that place a large degree of value on originality, independence, free-thinking, etc., fields such as the artistic field and the philosophical field, are less free and independent than is often thought. The reason for this concern of Bourdieu’s is to free such thinking from the notion of freedom. Whilst this concern is clearly valid within the field of academia, the need to concentrate on highlighting such constraints within the field of journalism seems less important, in that it seems unlikely that many journalists would be under the *illusion* that they are free – from the *market* in which they are embedded – in the *same* sense that many artists, writers or academics think themselves as being.

The fundamentally *financial* market constraints that journalists face are, I think, much more explicit than the more subtle, and difficult to quantify, constraints which artists or philosophers encounter in their day-to-day activities. To digress slightly, I also think that the anti-capital of being unfashionable, or out of favour, with the masses or majority, is much more likely to act as a capital in the artistic and philosophical fields. In the journalistic fields however, one is likely to be out of a job rather quickly if the circulation figures of a newspaper, or the rating figures of a current affairs show, drop off. The simple reason being that when these figures plummet, so too does advertising revenue, the lifeblood of any commercial media enterprise. As I have already noted, both Hargreaves and Hinson bristle at what almost amounts to the redundancy of Bourdieu’s extensive elaboration on market constraints. In this sense, I can’t help but agree with Hinson – to repeat a citation I have already made – when he unforgivingly asks, “what could be more obvious than to point out the medium’s slavish devotion to the almighty franc?”. One could, I suggest, almost go so far as to say that the doxic relationship that exists between the media habitus and the media field is one which

necessitates the explicitness of market constraints in this way. The doxic relationship between a specific habitus and a specific field is neatly summed up by Bourdieu when he writes that:

The doxic relation to the native world, a quasi-ontological commitment flowing from practical experience, is a relationship of belonging and owning in which a body, appropriated by history, absolutely and immediately appropriates things inhabited by the same history. (1981: 306)

With the above in mind, we can write of the journalistic habitus – that which is appropriated by history, the journalistic field – as appropriating a desire to increase circulation or rating figures from this field itself, i.e. the structured structures produce the structuring structures which in turn tend to reproduce the structured structures from which they *originally* derived. I doubt there are many journalists or television reporters who enjoy seeing capital's value – rating and circulation figures which positively correlate with advertising revenue – decrease. In this way, the doxic nature of the journalistic habitus results in the journalists, far from being unaware of the financial constraint, embracing this constraint as the capital by which they measure their success. In writing this, I do not mean to suggest that journalists are more capable of being reflexive than academics. I am merely trying to highlight that Bourdieu seems to assume from word go that journalists are unaware of the financial constraints that I think they are, by professional necessity, explicitly aware of.

Whatever the 'real' reason for Bourdieu stumbling in sight of his goal of a 'united front of cultural producers', I think it difficult to deny that the negative manner or concentration of Bourdieu's efforts had something to do with it. Every mention Bourdieu makes of television journalism in the lectures comes across as being entirely negative, and it is clear, the entire way through, that it is Bourdieu, the *eminent sociologist*, who is making them. At the risk of making an over-generalisation, this is perhaps an understanding attributable to the academic habitus (with the exception of those who would refer to themselves as cultural studies people) – a fear of identifying good, thought-provoking work in fields somehow thought to be lesser. Bourdieu was concerned to note that his situation in delivering the lectures is "absolutely unique because... I have a *control of the instruments of production* which is not at all usual" (Bourdieu, 1998a: 13, italics in original). In continually making the point that it was difficult for anything of value to be said on television, Bourdieu is continually highlighting the limitations of the field he is so concerned to overcome. Whilst this is important, highlighting limitations only gets us so far. I think a more positive task is required, that of highlighting exceptions. Yet, for Bourdieu to do so, would have resulted in him having to employ tactics similar to those he so thoroughly denounces in *On Television*. As he notes:

Journalists, on the whole, are interested in the exception (...) They show things and make people believe what they show. This power to show is also a power to mobilize. It can give a life to ideas or images. (Bourdieu, 1998a: 20-21)

This reveals a certain perversity to Bourdieu's position. For it is not only journalists, who want to make people believe in a certain point of view, but also sociologists. In writing this, I don't mean to suggest that journalists and sociologists, do, or should, aim to convince for the same reasons, or in the same ways. I am only saying that both

journalists and sociologists – and me in this very paper – have the aim to convince. I struggle to imagine that Bourdieu would ever have sat down to write a paper with the express aim of being proven wrong: with the express aim of making people (dis)believe what he wanted to show. And as I have already noted in the above, Bourdieu was explicitly concerned to *convince* all parties concerned. Bourdieu wanted to make them *believe* in the need for a collaborative effort to bring about change and, perhaps most importantly of all, he wanted to provide the parties with the tools to bring the change about (Bourdieu, 1998a: 12). With this reasoning in mind we can easily understand that both sociologists and journalists aim to convince, and hence, the superfluity of Bourdieu's concern to point this out in the particular.

At the risk of repeating myself, it was Bourdieu's clearly designated aim in *On Television* to convince the field of television journalism of the need for a concerted effort to bring about change. In wanting to do so through the documentation of the significant constraints the field was subject to, Bourdieu's critique/commentary was exclusively directed at highlighting the limitations of the field. Transgressions of these limitations or possibilities for transgression, however minor, were excluded from his commentary. In this regard, one could possibly accuse Bourdieu of a reductive reading of the field. But to move in the other direction, it could be thought that Bourdieu was not reductive enough. As Michel Foucault might have put it, life is death. For example, the strength of Bourdieu's praxeological project can be thought as being, at least in part, attributable to the elements of subjectivist and objectivist thinking that he leaves behind. In excluding exceptions – rather than concentrating on them *once* the reproductive tendency of the field had been duly noted – I think Bourdieu made a tactical error that undermined his strategic intent. It is a tactical error that resulted in Bourdieu having no room in which to propose a genuinely positive “program for concerted action” (1998a: 12), given the amount of time it took him to document the causes of reproduction. It is perhaps an error attributable to the habitus of the sociologist, being, as they are (or at least as Bourdieu is), so concerned to document *objective limitations*. In wanting to bring about a transformation of the field of television journalism, Bourdieu was, by definition, concerned with bringing about an exceptional event on some level. One way of putting my position would be to say that, rather than concentrating solely on documenting the homogeneity of a field, Bourdieu might better have begun by heterogenising the homogenous. He had to begin and highlight *certain* exceptions, and further such possibilities.

Fraying Edges – Lines of Flight

Once the reproducing homogeneity of a field has been recognised and documented, the consequential task, whenever change is sought, is to begin and alter this homogeneity. Lines of flight need to be identified and acted upon. As Deleuze and Guattari (1986: 16) have written, a “minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language”. In *On Television* Bourdieu seems more concerned with documenting the major language, then making it become minor. It is in this sense that I wrote at the start of this paper of Bourdieu being the negative to Deleuze and Guattari's positive. Reproduction as the negative of becoming. It is

important to note that neither task is privileged over the other. For any becoming to be successful will require the successful identification of the trans/pre-individual dispositions that result in a given reproduction. In reading Bourdieu, I constantly find a recognition of this double need. As he (Bourdieu, 2000: 236) has written, “all effective symbolic” action is dependent “on pre-existing dispositions”, and that such a dependence “is also visible in the discourses or actions of subversion”. He continues:

The symbolic transgression of a social frontier ... is itself possible, and symbolically effective, instead of being simply rejected as a scandal which rebounds on its author, only if certain objective conditions are fulfilled. (Bourdieu, 2000: 236)

Not only does Bourdieu recognise this as being necessary for any becoming to be possible, I think he has successfully initiated such a becoming with his praxeological project. Whilst this project (see Bourdieu, 1973) is opposed to both subjectivism and objectivism, the real brilliance of the project, and in my opinion, the reason for its success, lies in the manner in which he puts elements of both projects to use. For Bourdieu to have made no use of any tools produced within the objectivist and subjectivist projects respectively would have been for Bourdieu to make his work unintelligible to what would have effectively been the entirety of the sociological field of the 1970s. But to do this, Bourdieu had to, at least to some extent, heterogenise each of the homogenous fields. Bourdieu made the major languages of objectivism and subjectivism become minor. He brought about change with the help of that which he wanted to overcome. Bourdieu's praxeological project is amazingly positive in the manner in which it overcomes the criticisms it posits with the help of that which is criticized. The documentation of the limits of both objectivism and subjectivism was but only one part – the *negative* reasoning of the need for change – of the successful change he has initiated in sociology. Bourdieu's praxeological construction provided the *positive* reasoning for moving beyond this base dichotomy. This positive reasoning made it significantly harder for those who would have willingly done so, to return to either hard-headed subjectivism or objectivism given its immense explanatory power.

I think that Bourdieu has, throughout his career, operated much like Michel de Certeau's historian in *The Writing of History* – he has acted creatively. de Certeau notes that “(h)istoriography uses death in order to articulate a law (of the present)” (1988: 101-102). The talking of the dead becomes, in a sense, a talking through the dead, a talking from the dead. The “dead of which it speaks becomes the vocabulary of a task to be undertaken” (ibid.). Bourdieu has treated both objectivism and subjectivism as the historian treats the dead. Whilst de Certeau recognises that “no thought or reading is capable of effacing the *specificity* of the place, the origin” (1988: 56) from which it originates, he also recognises that, by quoting from the documents of the past, the historical discourse turns what it quotes into “a source of reliability and a lexicon of knowledge” (1988: 95-96). Through quotations taken from, and reference made to, the two sociological schools of objectivism and subjectivism, Bourdieu removed the ‘I’ of the author, he dissimulated the place from where he was speaking (ibid.). Bourdieu has, throughout his career, spoken the language of his audience, of sociologists, “better than they do” (ibid.).

It is this type of thinking that Bourdieu failed to actualise in *On Television*, despite there being what I think to be a significant amount of death through which he could have

spoken. Rather than speaking through the field of television journalism, we might say that Bourdieu spoke at the field of television journalism. Rather than making the major discourse of television journalism become minor, Bourdieu spoke about this major discourse in the minor language of sociology. When one applies Bourdieu's own theoretical framework to the change that he himself brought about in sociology, one cannot help but notice that he spends much of his time building that which he wants to bring about, rather than merely talking about the reasons why that which he wishes to change reproduces. Bourdieu made the two major discourses of objectivism and subjectivism become minor in his praxeological project – in this way he changed sociology rather than merely talking about the need for such a change. It is this positive task that I think Bourdieu failed to accomplish in *On Television*. I think Bourdieu effectively created, or made it very easy for, the two major gripes of the journalists that I have outlined above. Namely, that Bourdieu's criticism's were so obvious that they go without saying – which is half-true – and secondly, that he offered no real direction as to what action should be taken – which is three-quarters true. When one fails to accomplish the second task – the positing of a future direction or becoming – I think it more likely that those prone to criticise (those whom Bourdieu would call 'fast readers' [1998b: 93]) will concentrate on the perceived obviousness of the criticisms made.

I think that actualising a different project need not have taken a lot longer, nor been more difficult, to complete. To exemplify how this other project might have been undertaken, let me start by highlighting the type of program Bourdieu was no doubt rebelling against – *Philosophy: A Guide to Happiness*, hosted by Alain de Botton, possibly the perfect example of a 'Trojan Horse'. This show, which Bourdieu may have been pleased to see described by television journalist Gordon Farrer as reality "TV meets Philosophy 101" (2002: 18), is not exactly breaking new ground. Even so, we can still find at least one item worth commenting on in the first episode of the series on Socrates. In this episode we find de Botton mimicking the actions of Socrates by going up to people in Athens and asking them questions like: 'What is justice?'; 'What is it to be happy?', and 'What does it mean to be self controlled?'. In doing so de Botton highlights, through the responses of the people he questions, that everyday people can be reflexive, and that reflexivity can result in intelligent nonconformity – the general theme of this specific episode. For an even better example of what we might loosely call the Socratic method, there is the Australian television show *Front Up*. This show, which ran for quite a number of years, featured the host travelling around Australia going up to people in the street and asking people to speak about their lives. The wealth of the stories, and the depth of emotion that people would reveal was quite startling. The host does, to the letter, exactly what Bourdieu accuses television moderators of not doing, and what he perversely does himself, in *On Television*. As he writes:

When you want someone who is not a professional talker of some sort to say something ... you have to help people talk. To put it in nobler terms, I'll say this is the Socratic mission in all its glory. You put yourself at the service of someone with something important to say, someone whose words you want to hear and whose thoughts interest you, and you work to help get the words out. But this isn't at all what television moderators do. (Bourdieu, 1998a: 33)

In *Front Up* then, we have what effectively amounts to a perfect enactment of the Socratic method on television. This is not the only issue of import to the cultural fields that we can find very well enacted on television. The British reality TV series *Faking It*,

wonderfully explicates the predominance of the transindividual. In one episode of the series, the producers took a classically trained musician to London and trained her in the ways of a DJ. For a month, the girl lived with two London based DJs, learning the ins and outs of what and what not to do. She was versed in the various sub-genres of dance music, taught the art of beat mixing, and had the appropriate language of the club set drummed into her. At the end of the month, she was required to play a set for, and answer the questions of, a number of the scene's luminaries. She passed with flying colours, with none of the four judges picking her as the girl who had only recently become immersed in the scene.

Both *Front Up* and *Faking It* exemplify two of the fundamental themes Bourdieu has been concerned with throughout his career. Whilst neither of the shows states the theoretical import of what they are doing, to someone who reads Bourdieu, the similarities between these shows and his work are striking. Both of these shows use their time economically, neither try and fit too much in. Bourdieu could have applied the principles one finds in both these shows to his project in *On Television*. Like the host of *Front Up*, Bourdieu could have gone out into the field and let the pressured 'hack' speak, the pressured 'hack' who, it seems fair to assume, would have been only too well aware of the 'real-world' problems of deadlines, information verification, decreasing circulation figures, decreasing ratings, etc. Like the producers of *Faking It*, Bourdieu could have co-opted the services of a number of journalists, and let them speak of the self-referencing activities of journalists, of the ways in which the field feeds off of itself, of the manner in which protocols limit serious dialogue.

The above examples make two points clear in relation to my present concerns. Firstly, it highlights that it is possible to find exceptions to the rule, to find the heterogeneous amongst the homogenous. Secondly, the above analysis suggests that Bourdieu may have been able to learn something from the field he was criticizing in going about his task. By letting and helping the 'real' speak, Bourdieu could have significantly avoided the two criticisms journalists laboured him with in their analysis of *On Television*. The first criticism made by journalists was that Bourdieu was not saying anything the journalists themselves did not already know. By letting the journalists themselves speak this gripe is circumvented. The second criticism, that Bourdieu provides no course of action, is avoided by Bourdieu highlighting the manner in which television can do that which he thinks necessary for the progress of reason. Whilst the examples may be few, they are examples none the less which can be, significantly, found within the broader field as it is. By finding positive examples from within the field, and by helping the members of the field elucidate that which they are surely aware of – the fact that they are heavily constrained by the profit motive – Bourdieu would have avoided being excluded to an irrelevant outside, he would have begun to make the major discourse become minor.

Conclusions

In the specific

We might say that rather than concerning himself with communicating the need for change, Bourdieu would better have served his aims by attempting to begin and construct the change. In being concerned to communicate the need for change, Bourdieu concentrated on the homogeneity of the field of television journalism. If he had concerned himself with constructing the change, Bourdieu would have been concerned with highlighting examples of the otherwise he was concerned to bring about. Bourdieu has constructed just this sort of change through his overall theoretical project. He has done so through engaging with the subjectivist and objectivist discourses he wished to move beyond. Rather than concerning himself solely with the constraints inherent to these two ways of thinking the social, he has shown us how these two differing modes of thought, when read carefully, suggest the need for and provide the building blocks for his own praxeological project. Similarly, I think Bourdieu would have been better off in engaging positively with the field of television journalism. By letting the field speak for and of itself, Bourdieu could have begun constructing the possibility of the changes he sought. By highlighting positive examples of television journalism, such as *Front Up*, and of television productions such as *Faking It*, Bourdieu could have begun to highlight that it is possible for the medium to give time and space to issues of import. By not engaging positively with the major discourse, I can't help but feel that Bourdieu enabled that which he was concerned to change to continue and reproduce.

More generally

I have noted that Bourdieu, in his later works, became increasingly concerned with the need for a "political struggle rationally oriented toward defending and promoting the social conditions for the exercise of reason" (1998b: 139). I couldn't agree more with Bourdieu in his thinking this to be a worthy struggle in which to partake. But in agreeing with him I feel, somewhat contradictorily, that I have to disagree in that I think defence or promotion are far from enough – far too negative. The task required is the much more positive one of continually constructing the new conditions for 'the exercise of reason'. In writing of defending or promoting I fear that Bourdieu comes perilously close to the Habermasian/Kantian position he was so disdainful of. If it was a simple matter of a logical defence or promotion, reason would never be in danger. But as Bourdieu continually highlights throughout his work, reason dictates that we are not very reasonable creatures, logic dictates that in most instances our thinking is illogical. To again note what I think to be Bourdieu's immensely productive mantra, we need to 'free ourselves from the notion of freedom'. In specific regard to consciously initiated and directed social change, this means that we recognise the need for social change to be constructed. To ask for the media to become more progressive is a little like asking first world countries to be more sustainable, to be more equitable, or to move beyond the mindless rhetoric that continues to dominate much of our politics. In short, I think progress only ever arises from a positive construction, a positive becoming. It is a positive task which I think to be exemplified so well by Bourdieu's own praxeological project, a project that was only made possible by the rarest of combinations – diligence and skill.

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