
Introduction

Background

My project had two main purposes. The first arose from my sense that the texts of those French thinkers who contribute to what we know as 'French social thought' have been decontextualised, de-historicised and neutralised as their work has been appropriated in Anglophone contexts. Put crudely, I wanted to explore the extent to which texts which had emerged out of a socialist, republican tradition in France had become absorbed within a liberal field of reception in such a way as to eliminate their ideological subversiveness. The second purpose related to the practical consequences of the first. My experience of working with English researchers and research students has been that there has developed a tendency to formulate research problems in language borrowed from French 'theory'. 'Governmentality', 'habitus' or 'cultural capital', for instance, have come to acquire some kind of a priori conceptual status. I wanted to try to relocate these concepts as the provisional, heuristic terminologies adopted by the French thinkers themselves to try to explain or understand their situations. My hope was that English researchers would be helped to regard the *process* of concept formation of the theorists as paradigmatic and, hence, to deploy their concepts pragmatically.

The idea for the project emerged as a natural progression from the work I had been doing on Pierre Bourdieu from before the beginning of the 1990s. I had first been attracted to his work in the mid-1970s because the conceptual framework which he developed in France in the 1960s seemed to help me to analyse the pedagogical and cultural situations which I was experiencing as a young Cambridge graduate teaching in a new polytechnic. I had believed that there was an ideological affinity between educational developments in the polytechnics in Britain and in other new, post-1968, higher education institutions in Europe, such as Paris VIII, Bielefeld or Aarhus, and that the key components of Bourdieu's conceptual framework – 'habitus', 'cultural capital' and 'field' – were all readily to be deployed in understanding

many of the consequences of the 'binary' division of British higher education which, in a sense, I personally embodied. It never occurred to me to question the Franco-British transferability of Bourdieu's concepts. It was only when I wrote my first book on Bourdieu that I began to place the development of his thinking in the context of the particularly French emphasis of the continental philosophical tradition (the legacy of debate between the competing rationalist epistemologies of Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza) and in the context of specifically French elements of the social conditions of Bourdieu's intellectual production (the legacy of the Napoleonic centralisation of the schooling system and then of the attempted appropriation of that system by the secular social reformers of the Third Republic). Through the 1990s I became overridingly interested in wanting to understand the social, political, economic, cultural or religious factors conditioning, in any society, the emergence of a 'social science' seeking to explain either just those very conditions or societal conditions generally, and, consequently, in wanting to understand the implications of deploying concepts developed in one distinctive set of circumstances to explain another set. Is the transnational adoption of concepts a process which enables indigenous researchers to understand their own societies better, or is it a covert way of importing aspects of the different social and political conditions and, therefore, of transplanting an alternative, self-referential system of social condition and science?

Three factors were influential throughout the 1990s in sustaining my developing interest in international knowledge transfer and social theory. Not intending to become a Bourdieu 'scholar', I was early interested, first, in analysing the international reputations of a range of European social theorists. At my first meeting with Bourdieu in 1986, we discussed the feasibility of comparing analytically the international dissemination of the work of Foucault, Habermas and others, including himself. Methodologically, I was still viewing this possibility as a form of 'history of ideas' or comparative history of ideas. In retrospect, it was clear – and this was the second influence – that Bourdieu was himself beginning to be interested in the relationship between his social and political commitments within France and the significance of the 'Bourdieu' label which was developing in the international intellectual sphere as a consequence of the steady stream of translations of his work into English, published from 1984 by Polity Press. The Preface to the English edition of *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu, 1984; 1988) was the occasion for an analytic exploration of the process by which a study of French higher education should be received by English-speaking readers. This was followed by the lecture which Bourdieu gave at the opening of the

Frankreich Zentrum at the University of Freiburg in 1989, entitled 'Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées' (The social conditions of the international circulation of ideas) (Bourdieu, 1990; 1999). This showed Bourdieu's interest in the circulation of texts as still a sociological interest in the migration of ideas, suggesting that he had not yet fully applied his own thinking to this new problem. The striking article in which Bourdieu tried to focus on the social mechanisms controlling the flow of ideas – on the immanent behaviour of agents rather than on his own detached observation of ideas – was 'Sur les ruses de la raison impérialiste' (On the cunning of imperialist reason) (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1998; 1999). I was especially impressed by this article – to the extent that I volunteered to translate it as soon as I first read it – because it provided me with a framework for considering my own position as an agent in the transnational transmission of the ideas of French social theory. The 1998 article related, therefore, to the third influence on my thinking, which was the effect of my experiences in publishing three collections of articles (two of four volumes on Bourdieu and one of three volumes on Lyotard) and a second book on Bourdieu with SAGE Publications. I was conscious that I was implicated as a cultural 'gatekeeper' in the processes analysed by Bourdieu and Wacquant.

The project, which developed after Bourdieu's death in 2002, was to undertake a study of the social and political conditions of production of French social theory or social philosophy of the second half of the twentieth century and of the social and political conditions of its reception in England during the same period. My intention was to write a book in two parts, the first of which would analyse comparatively the social and political conditions of production and reception in general in the two countries, and the second of which would document precisely the process of transcultural transmission in respect of five authors. I began writing these two parts in tandem, but it gradually became clear that the second part – the detailed representation of the transfer of the texts of five prolific writers – could only be offered with difficulty within the limits of one book. What follows, therefore, is the free-standing documentation which, I hope, will be contextualised subsequently in a future book.

This volume represents the work of five French 'social thinkers' – Raymond Aron (1905–83), Louis Althusser (1918–90), Michel Foucault (1926–84), Jean-François Lyotard (1924–98) and Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002). Methodologically, the study reflects the tensions between the intellectual positions which it describes, particularly between those of Lyotard and Bourdieu. In two important respects, the study is 'post-modern'. It does not offer a 'critique' of the work of the five authors.

In other words, it is not exercising judgement by reference to any preformed evaluative criteria. It is attempting a phenomenological re-presentation of texts, that is to say exegeses which do not assume grand narratives of controlling authorial intentions. It acknowledges that texts are assigned to authors, but the study seeks to emphasise public rather than private meanings. Crucially, in this respect, it also represents the 'lives' of texts as they were reproduced in English translation and considers their continuing mediation in French and in English beyond the lives of their authors. At the same time, the study is not at all 'postmodern' inasmuch as it refuses the rejection of an historical grand narrative. It deliberately scrutinises the chronological progression of the work of the five authors, even those who explicitly sought to de-historicise their production. The mixture of 'postmodern' philosophy and modernist sociology in this approach could be thought to be fundamentally Bourdieusian. It could be said that Bourdieu's achievement was that he effected just such an amalgamation. Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1979; 1986) recognises that constructed markets of cultural goods and intellectual 'fields' associated with these markets are both, as constructs, functions of the socio-historical conditions of their production and, at the same time, autonomous situations within which value judgements are generated self-referentially – language games which acquire relative independence from the social conditions which brought them into existence. As Bourdieu put it, he recommended analysis of both the 'structuring structures' and the 'structured structures' of intellectual discourses (see 'On Symbolic Power' in Bourdieu, 1991a: 163–70). The separation of the discussion of texts as 'structured structures' in this book does not imply an endorsement of the autonomous existence of decontexted texts. On the contrary, practical considerations have imposed a separation which will be remedied in a future, parallel, publication. If this volume seems to suggest a form of textual idealism, that impression will be counteracted by consideration of the material conditions of production and reception.

The sub-text of the project involves a consideration of the relative status of political and social explanation. I have selected my five authors partly because of my interest in and familiarity with their work and partly because each of them, within the French social, political and intellectual context of the second half of the twentieth century, conceptualised the relations between political and social theory differently. An analysis of their work and of its reception in Britain gives rise, therefore, not only to reflection on the differences between the two countries but also to reflection on their different views which logically make the comparative project itself differently defensible.

The structure of this volume follows logically from my underlying assumption about the nature of intellectual productivity. This assumption owes much to the position which Bourdieu first elaborated in 'Champ intellectuel et projet créateur' (Intellectual field and creative project) in 1966 (Bourdieu, 1966; 1971b) and which he gradually articulated to be a theory of the relationship between subjective 'habitus' and intellectual 'field'. I assume that all intellectual production (and reception) occurs within what we can perceive to be a matrix. Individual projects arise out of habituses which are themselves, in the first instance, internalisations of inter-generationally transmitted reflections of objective conditions. Intellectuals at first articulate inherited dispositions to think and act which are the products of earlier objectifications by earlier generations of their responses to their conditions. The subsequent trajectories of intellectuals are both social and intellectual and there develops an ongoing dialectic between their production and changes in objective conditions which may, in part, be effected by that production. The reception of texts is a form of production which operates within the same matrix of the vertical progression through time of the thought of individuals and the constantly changing horizontal or synchronic dialectic between individual thought and objective conditions. Reception is a form of production which is outside the control of the originator, either spatially or temporally. It is a form of reproduction which is other than replication. A conclusion tries to bring the details of these analyses together to make comments about the struggle for discourse supremacy as it has manifested itself in the differing receptions of the works of the authors considered. Finally, a companion bibliography/timeline is offered online to help the reader read synchronically the relations between events and intellectual production and reception which are discussed diachronically in blocks in each of the chapters of the text (www.derekrobbins.com/international-knowledge-transfer/).

Methodological limitations

As Bourdieu argued, in any enquiry we need to 'think about limits' (Bourdieu, 1991b; 1992), to recognise that the scope of findings is constrained by the methodology deployed in generating them. This recognition derived philosophically from a phenomenological revision of Rickert's neo-Kantian *The Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science*. Whereas Rickert had been intent on establishing that historical explanation has its own system of value-associated interpretation which demonstrates the limits of the use of 'scientific' methods, Bourdieu suggested that scientific method should be

exploited to the full so as to clear the way for an acknowledgement that all objective, rational enquiry is fundamentally rooted in personal dispositions which are exchanged inter-subjectively in life-world experiences which precede the construction of scientific discourses. Enquiries have to be pursued with utmost rigour and their parameters meticulously specified precisely so as to expose those elements in all science which are not scientific. On these grounds, there are limitations which I must articulate in advance.

The book, first of all, does not try to offer a comprehensive representation of an objectively true social history of the international transfer of social theory. Methodologically, it takes its cue from Bourdieu's Preface to the English edition of *Homo Academicus* where he invites the foreign reader not to relate to his text simply as an account of 'the species *homo academicus gallicus*' but, instead, to 'use it to lay the foundations of a self-analysis' (Bourdieu, 1988: xv).

The book is, therefore, unashamedly selective in its choice of objects of analysis and it deliberately tries to offer a paradigmatic analysis to be replicated in respect of different social theories involved in different contexts of international exchange. The object of the book – by which I do not mean its *intention* or *purpose* but, rather, what it is that I am writing *about* or what phenomena I am attempting to observe – is the process by which the social thought produced in France by five Frenchmen in the period between 1945 and 2010 was received in the same period in English in England. Clearly, the book could equally have studied the process of transfer in relation to the work of, for instance, Kristeva, Irigaray, Derrida or Deleuze, or others. The studies offered are precisely concerned with the particularities of their cases, but the intention is to raise in general terms the question which can be put more abstractly and posed in respect of the work of others as well as that of these men: what is the nature of the process occurring when social theory generated in one political context transfers to another, or, even more abstractly, does social theory have the capacity to transcend the particular conditions of its production so as to become universally applicable or is it, as a product of those conditions, doomed to conceal its function as an instrument of conceptual and political imperialism beneath the mask of pseudo-claims to universality? The subtitle contains the word 'international' which, perhaps, might better be offered as 'inter-national', and this signifies that my interest is in the transfer of theories between nation-states and between the intellectual traditions associated with those independent political entities. Those concerned with globalisation might consider that the concentration on international encounter is passé, but my contention is that the discourse of

globalisation euphemises the dominance of particular, national discourses, and that egalitarian international dialogue now demands that we should articulate the differences which encounter each other.

More practically, the second methodological limitation of the book is that the analysis assumes that the English field of reception of French authors is defined by the publication of French texts *in English translation*. For the purposes of the study, in other words, I assume that French texts have exclusively been mediated by those responsible for their English translation and publication, ignoring the extent to which the English field of reception may have been partially constituted by those who independently studied French texts. This limitation relates to the interesting institutional question concerning the way in which university departments of French have been involved in the mediation of texts which belong to those sectors of the field of disciplines to which they are not themselves attached, acting, in effect, as 'literary' mediators of social scientific texts.

Third, I only analyse the transnational transmission of *books*. Only rarely do I pursue the implications of the publication in English journals of articles previously published in French journals. I normally make the assumption that it is only when articles are collected in books that they have an effect on a reading public. I provide the evidence concerning which articles are assembled in French collections and, perhaps differently, which ones are issued in English collections, but, certainly in terms of comprehensiveness, my findings have a limitation similar to that exposed by Bourdieu when he accused opinion polls of neglecting to analyse 'no responses' to questionnaires (Bourdieu, 1971a).

Fourth, I concentrate almost exclusively on an analysis of reception which depends on scrutiny of the ways in which texts are 'framed' in translation, by the original authors, the translators or editors. Only rarely do I deviate to consider the impact of criticism in the secondary literature, and this is normally only to clarify the process of 'framing' rather than to engage in critical debate. Methodologically, therefore, I acknowledge that I only offer a limited entrée to an analysis of the fields of production and reception of texts.

Fifth, I normally concentrate on registering or criticising only the first editions of texts. On occasions I refer to the implications of the publication of new or revised editions of earlier texts, but to record the total publication histories of all the texts considered seemed to be a step too far beyond the limit of an already ambitious project.

Sixth, there is the difficulty, which became increasingly problematic during the historical period under consideration, associated with attempting

to limit my analysis to that of the English reception of French texts as opposed to their English-language reception. I try to concentrate on the publications produced by English translators, editors and publishers. It is, of course, a relevant phenomenon in itself that some translations were published exclusively in the United States, some jointly published in the United States and Britain, some translated and edited by intellectuals who remained in England throughout, and some by intellectuals who moved to the United States. My original intention would have involved a consideration of the internationalisation of French social theory, an internationalisation achieved instrumentally by the increasing extent of the global currency of the English language. This would, however, as analysis, have colluded with one of the 'ruses of imperialist reason', that which supposes that Anglo-Saxon language is becoming the global medium of communication, operating autonomously in a discursive sphere which transcends vernacular languages and the differentiated cultures of distinctive nation-states.¹ Working with the analysis of English reception of French texts as an endangered species of vernacular reception within Britain is, therefore, to accept a limitation which is consistent with the orientation which underpins the whole book, a limitation which insists that transcultural communication entails the recognition of cultural differences between the contexts of senders and recipients. This limitation, therefore, implies a commitment to the position adopted by Bourdieu in *Ce que parler veut dire* (What speaking means) (Bourdieu, 1982) in tacit opposition to Habermas's theory of communicative action.

Beyond these specific limitations, there is, finally, the general limitation that I want to state so as to invite a generous and potentially collaborative response in the reader. Within the parameters defined above, I have aspired to be comprehensive in describing the production of texts and the reception of their translated versions in English. I have been thwarted by the sheer bulk of the task with the result that some of my commentary has become indicative rather than comprehensive. This is particularly the case when I attempt to sketch the nature of the continuing transmission of the work of the authors between 2000 and 2010 when, in most cases, simple representation of texts has given way to an exponential growth in secondary criticism and comment. Even simply considering texts without yet analysing properly their contexts led me to write chapters which, in most cases, became far too long to be accommodated within the prescribed book length. I have found the entrances to many avenues for further enquiry such as, for instance, the relationship of the one Dreyfus and Rabinow article on Bourdieu collected in both *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives* (Calhoun et al., 1993) and *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader* (Shusterman, 1999) to their divergent interpretations of Foucault, and of the effect of these American responses to French

social theorists on the English field of reception, and I hope that my discussions here will encourage others to follow up questions which I have not been able to pursue in this book. I am conscious also that there is some imbalance in the treatment of the five authors in that I have not always equally adhered to the general principles outlined above. I refer, for instance, to more articles written by Bourdieu as well as books in a way that I have not done in considering the other authors. What I have chosen to select and to highlight necessarily reflects my interpretive disposition and, of course, my intervention itself becomes a particular kind of contribution to the post mortem secondary literature about all five authors. I am hoping that my study will suggest the validity and importance of the exercise in such a way as to stimulate complementary studies. As my conclusion argues, it is hermeneutic exchange, offered as reflexive socio-analytic encounter, which provides the potential for egalitarian accommodation of dissensus.

Practical guidelines

Each of the chapters devoted to the work of the authors is divided into seven sections. These sections attempt to be confined to consideration of the French production and English reception of works in discrete chronological compartments: 'background' (prior to 1945); 1945–60; 1960–70; 1970–80; 1980–90; 1990–2000; and 2000–10. Within the chapters, these sections are clearly headed. My intention is that this should make it possible for readers to appreciate my text as a diachronic/synchronic matrix. Readers are invited to dip into the text vertically and horizontally in order to reflect on the conclusions from my synchronic scrutiny of these periods as presented in my concluding chapter.

As for the technical apparatus of the text, I have tried to keep the details simple in the expectation that readers will be able to consult a complementary website. A full bibliography of just the books of the five authors in French and in English amounts to about 15,000 words and would, therefore, have constituted nearly 20 per cent of the words available to me for the book. As a result, in Chapters 1 to 5, I only provide bibliographic details of the books from which I quote. These references are provided at the end of each chapter and not at the end of the book. My project has involved me in reading the texts of the authors both in French and in English. It has been no part of my study to attempt an analysis of the translations as such, letting pass the specifically linguistic question of, for instance, whether 'culture' and 'science', although spelt in the same way, have the 'same' meanings in the two languages. This is a study of the 'translation' of texts but it is not a study of translation.

To understand my practice in relation to quotations, the reader should know that, when discussing a French text, I normally endeavour to quote from the subsequent translation into English. When the French texts have not been translated into English, the quotations in English are my own. It is important that this citation practice should not obscure the fact that I always try to discuss the French texts in the context of their French production and subsequently in the context of their English reception. When, in other words, I discuss a French text of, say, 1960 and quote from it, I normally cite the date and page reference of its subsequent English translation, say 1975, which may then be cited with that date when it is discussed in the following chronological section. I hope that this is not a confusing practice. It arises from a desire to make a book about Franco-English transnational intellectual transfer accessible to English readers who may not read French. For the same reason, I normally offer a translation in brackets of French titles or headings where the English meaning may not be obvious.

Complementary reading

This is a book which was stimulated by reflection on the consequences of Bourdieu's death for the transmission of his work. It is a delayed post mortem homage to his work and seeks to contribute to the prolongation of his influence. Some of my first thoughts on Bourdieu and the internationalisation of social science were collected in Part II, Section 2 ('Trans-national Transfer') of my book *On Bourdieu, Education and Society* (2006). Readers might like to look at other articles which I have written in the last five years in parallel with preparing this book, most of which relate to the same general line of enquiry. These are as follows.

2006

Introduction: 'A Social Critique of Judgement', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23 (6), 1–24.

2007

'Framing Bourdieu', Chapter 8 in Tim Edwards (ed.), *Cultural Theory: Classical and Contemporary Positions*. Los Angeles: SAGE. pp. 141–57.

'Sociology as Reflexive Science: On Bourdieu's Project', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24 (5): 57–78.

'The Significance of Socio-genetic Understanding. Response to Fowler', *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 7 (3): 375–84.

2008

- 'Indigene Kultur und Symbolische Gewalt' (Indigenous Culture and Symbolic Violence), in R. Schmidt and V. Woltersdorff (eds), *Symbolische Gewalt. Herrschaftsanalyse nach Pierre Bourdieu*. Konstanz: UVK. pp. 59–74.
- 'Theory of Practice', Chapter 2 in M. Grenfell (ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Stocksfield: Acumen. pp. 27–40.

2009

- 'Kant et les lumières anglaises', in L. Bianchi et al. (eds), *Kant et les Lumières européennes/Kant e l'Illuminismo europeo*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique Vrin/Naples: Editions Liguori. pp. 157–64.
- 'After the Ball Is Over: Bourdieu and the Crisis of Peasant Society', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26 (5): 141–50.
- 'Gazing at the Colonial Gaze: Photographic Observation and Observations on Photography Based on a Comparison between Aspects of the Work of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron', *Sociological Review*, 57 (3): 428–47 (Special Issue on 'Postcolonial Bourdieu', co-edited by Les Back, Azzedine Haddour and Nirmal Puwar).

2010

- 'The Foundations of Social Theoretical Discourse'. Review of Simon Susen, *The Foundations of the Social: Between Critical Theory and Reflexive Sociology*, *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 10 (1): 1–8.
- 'Cambridge in the 1960s: Intellectual Debate as a Form of Institutional Méconnaissance', *Cambridge Anthropology*, 29 (2): 73–90.
- 'Pierre Bourdieu and the Practice of Philosophy', Chapter 7 in Alan Schrift (ed.), *Poststructuralism and Critical Theory: The Return of Master Thinkers*, Volume 6 of *History of Continental Philosophy* (8 vols, General Editor: Alan Schrift). Durham: Acumen. pp. 153–75.

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- 'Review of F. Keck: *Lévy-Bruhl: Entre philosophie et anthropologie*', *Durkheim Studies*, 16 (1): 150–2.
- 'Sociological Analysis and Socio-political Change: Reflections on Aspects of the Work of Bourdieu, Passeron and Lyotard', in M. Benson and R. Munro (eds), *Sociological Routes and Political Roots, The Sociological Review*. Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 117–34.

Note

- 1 See Bourdieu's 'The Corporatism of the Universal' (Bourdieu, 1989).

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