Sociological discourse of the relational: the cases of Bourdieu & Latour[1]

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Abstract

Pierre Bourdieu's approach to sociology has been so widely recognized as being innovative that his innovations can be said to have been academically incorporated to the degree of having-been-innovative. On the other hand, the more recent work of Bruno Latour seems to offer a fresh innovative impetus to sociology. Over against Bourdieu's relational sociology, Latour's relationist sociology overcomes the subject-object dichotomy, and abandons the notions of 'society' and 'the social'. In this contribution, a comparison is made between the ideas of Bourdieu and Latour on the question of what sociology should look like, specifically focusing on their respective ideas on what can be called the relational. A Latourian critique of Bourdieu is provided, as well as a Bourdieusian analysis of Latourian sociology. Rather than ending up with two different 'paradigms', an attempt is made on the basis of Foucault's archaeology of discourse to view Bourdieusian and Latourian sociology as distinct positions within a discourse on the relational.

1. Introduction

In his *Ways of Worldmaking*, Nelson Goodman writes: 'countless worlds made from nothing by use of symbols – so might a satirist summarize some major themes . . . integral to my . . . thinking.' (Goodman, 1978: 1). Pierre Bourdieu could, without sharing Goodman's 'radical relativist' stance, go a long way with this statement. '[symbolic power, WS] is a power of "worldmaking" ' (Bourdieu, 1990a: 137). Though for Bourdieu there exists only one world, that world, and all the sub-worlds it contains, is to a large degree structured symbolically. In placing such high emphasis on the role of symbols in social life, Bourdieu stands in a long sociological tradition. Parsons, for instance, spoke of 'culture' as 'patterned, ordered systems of symbols that are objects of the orientation to action, internalized components of the personalities of individual actors and institutionalized patterns of social systems' (Parsons, 1964: 327). Similarly, Giddens emphasizes the role of symbols in 'codes' and 'systems of signification' (Giddens, 1979: 98). And Bourdieu's 'praxeology' is in fact a widening of the conventional and narrow economic perspective towards an

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understanding of all social practices. The *qui bonum* principle is, for Bourdieu, a primary question in all his studies of social fields. He says:

> Based on the knowledge acquired through the analysis of these phenomenally very different social universes, which have never been brought together as such, I would like to try to extract the general principles of an economy of symbolic goods. (Bourdieu, 1994a: 92–3)

And precisely because of statements such as the above, despite the fact that many praise the renewal of social science Bourdieu is said to have brought forth, some would call him a 'classical sociologist' in a pejorative sense. 'Classical'? Yes, since 'Classical sociology knows more than the 'actors'; it sees right through them to the social structure or the destiny of which they are patients' (Latour, 1996a: 199). In Bruno Latour's view, Bourdieu is a 'classical sociologist' and 'classical sociology' clearly is the kind Latour dislikes. Moreover, as will become clear, Latour rejects those notions at the heart of basically all of modern social science, such as 'norm', 'society', 'social structure'; even the 'social' is a term too ambiguous to him. And yet, Latour does have a conception of what 'sociology' should be.

In this article, an analysis is made of the clash between the theoretical positions of two of the most innovative French sociologists of recent decades: Pierre Bourdieu and Bruno Latour. If Bourdieu pushed the borders of regular philosophy of social science and social philosophy, respectively in epistemological and in ontological respect, then Latour's efforts can be seen as a complete redefinition of those 'borders'. The social sciences are, in Latour's view, clearly up for a rigorous redefinition. In order to critically examine the theoretical positions of both sociologies in question, this paper starts with a brief discussion of the main tenets of Bourdieu's ideas, especially of those with which Latour is in dispute (§ 2 & 4). Latour's position is developed taking its critique of Bourdieusian sociology as a starting point (§ 3 & 5). I will show how, in the end, Latour would appear to be more effective in explaining Bourdieu's views than *vice versa* (§ 7). This, however, is due in part to the fact that Bourdieu never really put his theory to work in analyzing the emergence of Latour-style Actor Network Theory. In § 8, I therefore sketch the outlines of such an analysis. Paragraph 9 concludes by investigating the possibility of Bourdieu and Latour occupying two positions in a discourse converging on the concept of the relational. Hence, I will argue that the archaeological analysis of discursive formations put forward by Michel Foucault may provide a way of transcending the conflict between two sociologies unable to 'take the role of the other'.

2. Bourdieusian sociology

Despite their major aims in social science, both authors under examination here started off as philosopher. Bourdieu, after finishing his philosophical

studies at the École Normale Supérieure, started doing ethnological fieldwork amidst the Kabyles, a berber tribe in the northern mountains of Algeria. After an initial structuralist period, Bourdieu started to feel ill at ease with Lévi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology. He began to develop an alternative framework in which to order his findings – on the Kabyles (Bourdieu, 1963), but also on the arts (Bourdieu, 1969), on students and education (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964; 1970), thus gradually broadening his empirical work – without falling back into Lévi-Strauss's 'objectivism'. Bourdieu opposes his own theory of action to 'the more extreme theses of a certain structuralism by refusing to reduce *agents*, which it considers to be eminently active and acting (without necessarily doing so as subjects), to simple epiphenomena of structure' (Bourdieu, 1994a: viii). To escape 'objectivism' without relapsing into 'subjectivism, taken to its outer limits by Sartre' (Bourdieu, 1997) means nothing else than to overcome the structure & agency dichotomy. Bourdieu wants to gain a view of 'the *dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality'* (Bourdieu, 1977: 72).

Precisely in order to do this, Bourdieu coins his own meaning of the concept of *habitus*, the most immediate source of which was, for Bourdieu, Panofsky's study on gothic architecture (Panofsky, 1967). For Bourdieu, the habitus is an embodied part of the social structure. It consists of 'durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures' (Bourdieu, 1977: 72). The habitus is a system of dispositions that is acquired through socialization (though Bourdieu usually uses the term 'internalization'). He thus stands in a line of social science emanating from Durkheim.[2] Bourdieu's *homo duplex* is not a passive recipient, a *Träger* of the social structure. Rather, it incorporates the dispositions of the habitus through action, whilst at the same time *action* is what is structured by the habitus. The habitus is thus 'an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constructed' (cited in Jenkins, 1992: 74). The habitus *generates* action, just like it interprets the conditions of the social space in which an agent is situated. These interpretations correspond to *doxa*, the naïve mode of experience characteristic of an agent immersed in the social space. The way the habitus is constructed is dependent on the 'objective conditions' of the field of positions. Bourdieu's *La distinction* (1996 [1979]) is an effort to show that the different objective conditions of the classes in society make for a different class-habitus in each class, *and vice versa*, since the habitus is, through the actions it generates, constitutive of the objective conditions, the social space of positions. That space of positions is an arena of power-struggles over legitimate classifications and over what Bourdieu calls symbolic capital. In each field of positions, a belief exists in the legitimacy of the symbolic capital specific to that field. This belief exists in the form of a field logic Bourdieu calls *illusio*. Alongside cultural, social and economic capital as main forms, Bourdieu sees symbolic capital as especially indicative of power and position. Symbolic capital often exists as a form of capital that is not recognised as such (Bourdieu, 1993b), and each field has its preferred form of capital,

which, in that field, stands for 'a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability' (Bourdieu, 1996: 291). In the struggle in a field, symbolic capital is the key to upward positional mobility. The agent with a proper *sens pratique*, in possession of a habitus that is rightly attuned to the field in which the agent occupies a position, will be able to gain enough symbolic capital to assure a preferable position in the hierarchy of the space of positions.

3. Latour on Bourdieu

At this point, Latour's position can be developed in a preliminary way. Taking sociology à la Bourdieu as a point of reference, Latour critiques what he calls 'classical sociology'. In *Aramis, or the love of technology*, Latour distinguishes between two kinds of sociology, the one being 'classical sociology', and the other 'relativist (or rather, relationist) sociology' (Latour, 1996a: 199) (in *Reassembling the Social*, Latour maintains the notion of a 'relativist sociology': Latour, 2005). He then defines 'classical sociology' as follows: 'Classical sociology knows more than the 'actors'; it sees right through them to the social structure or the destiny of which they are the patients'. (Latour, 1996a: 199). Classical sociology has, according to Latour, a 'metalanguage': it penetrates reality to see what *really* goes on. And what *really* is going on, may be very different from what the 'agents' think is going on. It is obvious that Bourdieu's field analyses with their *doxa* and *illusio* as core-concepts would qualify for the label of 'classical sociology' in Latour's terminology. This kind of sociology seems, to Latour, to have an arrogant stance. Latour says: 'Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do' (Latour, 1996a: 199). Reason for this is the fact that social science is always 'harder' than its object. Religion, art and culture can easily be exposed as 'social construction' and can thereby be 'debunked'. Who would listen to complaints of the religious about their being explained away (Latour, 2005: 98)?

Indeed, Bourdieu's sociology does seem to have an air of *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*. His remarks in *Sur la télévision* in which he explains how the sociologist knows not to blame individuals are but one witness of this. Bourdieu now tells his audience that journalists, like electrons, are but 'exponents of a field'. They are not to be blamed for their actions, since their actions do, in the end, not emanate from them. Forgetting all his criticisms of structuralism and the likes, he even speaks of journalists as 'epiphenomena of structures' (see Bourdieu, 1998a: 64–5). As I will explain more fully in the following paragraph, it is Bourdieu's starting conviction of the essential arbitrariness of social actions, meanings and positions that fosters such 'classical sociology', as Latour would have it. For the latter, this has political consequences as well. As is well known, towards the end of his life, Bourdieu became more and more explicitly critical and politically involved (Schinkel, 2003), speaking to workers on strike at the Gare de Lyon, supporting the French anti-globalist farmer José Bové, supporting illegal aliens, *les sans papiers*, and writing furiously about the demise of culture

(Bourdieu, 2001a) or about academic imperialism (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1999). These 'acts of resistance' (Bourdieu, 1998b) were spawned by Bourdieu's conviction that the social sciences cannot remain bystanders of the social suffering the analysis of which they have made a living of (Bourdieu, 2001a: 7). But this sense of social justice is, to Latour, a rather paternal and arrogant attitude of the social scientist who sees things as they really are, and who sees it as his duty to speak on behalf of all the ignorant souls, suffering under the strain of social mechanisms they are themselves unaware of, but which the sociologist can capture in his metalanguage.

4. Bourdieu & the reality of the relational

Bourdieu was a self-confessed epistemological realist (see Vandenberghe, 1999: 62). Several ingredients of Bourdieu's theory that are essential to a proper understanding of both that theory and of Latour's objections to it, have not yet been discussed. The key ingredient in Bourdieu's theory of practice is, perhaps ironically, structuralist in origin. That is to say that he incorporates, as Lévi-Strauss had done before him, several ideas from Saussurean semiology into his social theory.

Bourdieu cherished Cassirer's distinction between *Funtionsbegriff* and *Substanzbegriff*. To incorporate this distinction into his sociology, he used a Saussurean methodology (Schinkel and Tacq, 2004). The core of Saussure's ideas, taken in by Bourdieu, is that signs stand 'in opposition' to each other (Saussure, 1983: 119). *Langue* is, to Saussure, a system of signs that are defined, first of all, by means of the fact that they are differences relative to one another, and secondly, by means of some convention (Saussure, 1983: 157) giving positive meanings to these initial negativities. These ideas are at the basis of everything Bourdieu has done. For he has taken the diverse fields he has studied to be arena's of signification by means of difference, or distinctions, as he often prefers to say. This mode of analysis is called a relational logic. In it, material goods, but also the positions people occupy in a field, are regarded as arbitrary significations that are not meaningful due to any essential, intrinsic features, but rather as a result of a play of difference. Moreover, Saussure's conventions are, for Bourdieu, social logics like *doxa* and *illusio*. In *Raisons pratiques*, he explains the title of one of his main works, *La distinction* (1996 [1979]), in light of his relational logic. He says *La Distinction* reminds us of the fact that the certain qualities that are regarded as 'distinctive' (in the normative sense) are not distinctive in any natural sense, but only because they are differences, relational properties that do not exist outside the relations with other, equally arbitrary, properties. So, what counts as cultural capital is, in the end, socially constructed upon basically arbitrary properties given their meaning only as a consequence of being immersed in a social space of differences. As he says in *The Logic of Practice*: '. . . every element receives its complete definition only through its relation with the whole of elements, as a

difference within a system of differences' (Bourdieu, 1990a: 7). For Bourdieu, 'le réel est relationnel' ('the real is relational') (Bourdieu, 1994a: 17). Therefore, Bourdieu's is a realism that doesn't simply take things as they appear to the 'naked eye', but one that takes the real to be relational. The notion of the relational is so central to Bourdieu that he preferred to speak not of his 'theory' but rather of a 'system of relational concepts' (Bourdieu, 1997: 451).

To Bourdieu, reality is thus not what it seems to be. Essential to Bourdieu's sociology is the break with the immediate object of consciousness. *Pace* Husserl, Bourdieu can be said to be arguing for a sociological 'uncoupling of the life-world', in search for a knowledge past doxic experience to what is, to Bourdieu, more real. But this does not lead to a kind of idealist constructivism in Bourdieu. It means, rather, that he demystifies prevalent ideas concerning the order of things. Zygmunt Bauman has said that sociology defamiliarizes what is familiar (Bauman, 1990: 15), and that goes for Bourdieu in an extreme sense. The ordinary views people within a field have with respect to what is going on in that field are the outcome of relations that are characterized by differences in relative autonomy, power. Bourdieu would have wholeheartedly agreed with Foucault's saying that there is no field of knowledge without a correlative field of power, and vice versa. And so he says, again in *Raisons pratiques*: 'the sociology of art or literature unveils (or unmasks)' (author's translation) (Bourdieu, 1994a: 164).

So let's take his sociology of art as a brief example of Bourdieu's demystifying, his penetrating through to *wie es wirklich gewesen ist*. According to Bourdieu, the field of (restricted) cultural production is characterized by what he calls a 'charismatic illusion', which entails the idea that the 'true art' is produced out of economic disinterestedness by the artist as a singular producer, a unique individual which is an artistic talent, the *auctor* of the work of art (Bourdieu, 1993a; 1994b). But this idea is demystified by Bourdieu in his relational analysis of the field of cultural production. He states that this idea, or rather, this belief, is a 'well-founded illusion'[3]. Well-founded, since, as a structuring principle, all 'objective' signs point in the same direction, yet an illusion, brought about by the synchronization of *habitus* and field of positions. As he unmasks this *illusio*, the details of which are of secondary importance here, Bourdieu argues that he knows 'the real nature of the practices', as it reads in *The Field of Cultural Production* (Bourdieu, 1993a: 74). And so, for the fields Bourdieu describes, history has what Aldous Huxley has called its 'charm and enigmatic lesson': nothing changes and yet everything is completely different. What we think changes, is a mere arbitrary derivative of ever-present structuring principles.

5. Latourian relationist sociology

Bourdieu's ideas on a social *docta ignorantia* appear to be, to Latour, a *doxa arrogantia*. But where does Latour himself come from? What is his 'relationist'

sociology? It seems Latour has gone through some changes. The recent Latour is far removed from the Latour of *Laboratory Life* (Latour and Woolgar, 1986 [1979]) and *Science in Action* (Latour, 1987). While it is possible to regard those studies as attempts to stress constructivism to a 'radical' degree, Latour now seems to have a more sophisticated (and, in my opinion, a more fruitful) stance. I will emphasize the difference, yet in the end also the similarity, between this recent Latour and Bourdieu's 'classical sociology'. In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour explains what I think is fundamental to his recent work. While Bourdieu's was an attempt to overcome the structure – agency dichotomy within society, Latour's is an attempt to overcome the Society – Nature dichotomy. Two thinkers that have influenced Latour on this point are Gabriel Tarde and Alfred North Whitehead. With regard to the concept of 'society', which Latour often replaces by 'network' or 'collective', he stands in a tradition that has, certainly in sociology, been hugely ignored. The sociologist that needs to be mentioned here is Gabriel Tarde (see Latour, 2001b; Latour, 2005: 13). Tarde is one of few *explicitly* metaphysical sociologists. His starting-point was Leibniz' monadology. And he said Leibniz' monads have come a long way since their father (Tarde, 1999: 33). Looking at science, Tarde noticed what he called a 'pulverization of the universe' (Tarde, 1999: 43), long before Bachelard spoke of the scientific movement of 'dematerializing materialism' (Bachelard, 1988: 70). Society, for Tarde, is everywhere and everything: '. . . tout chose est une société, tout phénomène est un fait social' (Tarde, 1999: 58). Since every being is made up of infinite beings in our pulverized universe, being is always a being-together. This naturally leads to an inclusion of objects in 'society'. Society is no longer an artificial device used by sociologists that is defined in their actual object of inquiry: the social (See Tarde, 2001: 119–48 for a less 'philosophical' account of 'society' by Tarde). If the social consists of societies, and if 'society' is a conceptual tool in order to make specific constellations of events intelligible, the social is not limited to human beings, but it is extended to all beings that influence each other, that are perceptive, in some way, of each other. Sociology has, for too long, resembled a materialism that acknowledges but one substance: people with passports.

From an entirely other tradition, similar remarks have been made that have left their traces in Latour's work. The philosophy of A.N. Whitehead can be seen as a radical way of overcoming the opposition between subject and object. In so doing, Whitehead offers an alternative to the materialistic view in dispensing with the idea of 'hard matter' altogether by stating that reality consists of *process*. He furthermore speaks of 'actual entities' or 'actual occasions' and of an 'event' as a nexus of actual occasions (Whitehead, 1978: 73). 'Actual occasions' are the final real things of which the world is made up (Whitehead, 1978: 18). He then introduces the idea of 'prehensions', as an extension of Descartes' *cogitationes*, to give to actual occasions the kind of *sensibilité* that Diderot gave to matter. Experience is no longer a strictly human thing, but it is everywhere. Each actual occasion has some kind of 'emotion, purpose, valuation and causation' (Whitehead, 1978: 19). This leads

Whitehead to say: 'The doctrine that I am maintaining is that neither physical nature nor life can be understood unless we fuse them together as essential factors in the composition of "really real" things whose interconnections and individual characters constitute the universe' (Whitehead, 1938: 150). This makes all the difference between a conception of 'nature lifeless' or 'nature alive'. And interestingly, it also makes for a broader notion of 'society': 'The term "society" will always be restricted to mean a nexus of actual entities which are "ordered" among themselves' (Whitehead, 1978: 89; compare: Latour, 2005: 218).

5.1. The modern Constitution

The separation of Nature and Society, which Latour calls the modern Constitution, leads to two paradoxes. On the one hand, there is a Nature that transcends us whilst at the same time there is a self-made Society. Yet on other occasions the tables turn and Nature becomes the artificial creation of laboratories whilst Society transcends us eternally (Latour, 1994: 51). And this separation of Nature and Society, which Whitehead has called the 'bifurcation of nature', leads to a blind eye for the hybrids between both, which have, according to Latour, precisely because of this blind eye, increased exponentially in number. He says: 'The Constitution explained everything, but only by dropping everything in the middle' (Latour, 1994: 72). These things in the middle are not inert things, mere pieces of dead matter, but they are, as Serres calls them, 'quasi-objects' (Serres, 1987). The focus on non-human 'actors' runs through Latour's work from the beginning. It is present in *Science in Action* (1987).[4] But the more recent Latour has far more developed ideas on the stuff that the real is made of. In Latour's sociology then, the focus is on what he calls, incorporating a key concept in Benveniste's theory of narrative, 'actants'. Actants are comprised of four properties. They are endowed with 'subject-properties', 'object-properties', 'discourse-properties' and 'existential properties'. To the modern mind, such 'properties' are actually separated spheres that are known, for instance, under the heading of 'functional differentiation' (Luhmann, 1997). This becomes apparent in an early sociological attempt to capture modernity – which would, *a propos*, do equally well as a description of post-modernity – by W.I. Thomas:

> The world has become large, alluring, and confusing. Social evolution has been so rapid that no agency has been developed in the larger community of the state for regulating behavior which would replace the failing influence of the community and correspond completely with present activities. There is no universally accepted body of doctrines or practice. The churchman, for example, and the scientist, educator, or radical leader are so far apart that they cannot talk together. They are, as the Greeks expressed it, in different "universes of discourses" (Thomas, 1966: 237).

For each of these spheres, Latour contends, a modern discourse of purification exists, of negating the interwovenness of humans, discourses and objects. There is the discourse on an external nature we humans cannot control, then there is the discourse concerning the 'social contract', a social world called 'society', which we have made yet which exerts an autonomous influence upon us', a third discourse concerns discourse itself: the grand narratives which transcend us but which are at the same time mere texts themselves, with their narrative structures, tropes and other rhetorical peculiarities through which our experiences, our adventures are transmitted, while a fourth discourse of purification concerns Being, the forgotten ground in discourse on being and beings (Latour, 1991: 127). And so the natural sciences do their work of purification in studying 'hard matter' as an external objectivity over against the 'soft matter' that subjects are made of and that is studied by phenomenology, doing its work of purification in the emphasis on the endless unicity of the human being and its constitution in historicity. In this vein Merleau-Ponty for instance says that 'I am not the outcome or the meeting-point of numerous causal agencies which determine my bodily or psychological make-up' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: viii). And Cassirer, Bourdieu's influence: 'If we were to know all the laws of nature, if we could apply to man all our statistical, economic, sociological rules, still this would not help us to "see" man in this special aspect and in his individual form. Here we are not moving in a physical but in a symbolic universe. And for understanding and interpreting symbols we have to develop other methods than those of research into causes' (Cassirer, 1970: 216). Latour insists that we have never really been modern, and that the ruptures between nature and society that the moderns thought up have been only further stressed by the post-moderns, to proportions of complete or 'hyper' incommensurability (Latour, 1994: 86). The post-moderns share in the modern belief that modernity ever existed. Yet at the same time, hybrids were being created that defied the very idea of modernity and its separate spheres. Sociology and anthropology are, for Latour, typical products of the modernist Constitution. And as a result, the social sciences has been avoiding objects to such an extreme that sociology itself does not have a real 'object' of inquiry (Latour, 1996b). He explains how sociology is tangled up in a Gordian knot.

5.2. The advocates of society

Sociologists like Bourdieu have, according to Latour, always known better than the actors themselves, unmasking ordinary beliefs. The naïve belief in a freedom of the subject have been demystified on the basis of the idea that objects, as Bourdieu deals with them in *La distinction*, do not possess any intrinsic capacities which justify beliefs people have concerning them. To attribute these characteristics to objects would be to naturalize what is socially constructed, and naturalization is what Bourdieu's sociology fiercely opposed. Yet, in order to be able to unmask these naïve ideas, Latour says, Bourdieu must in his turn rely on the nature of things. For his scientific debunking of

ordinary beliefs requires a 'hard' methodology. And now naturalization suddenly ceases to be a curse-word (Latour, 1994: 78). Therefore, Latour claims that the modernist settlement entails that on the one hand society is a powerful *sui generis* entity that is so strong that it can shape arbitrary, formless matter. Yet on the other hand, society is weak and shaped by objective forces that determine her. Central to these ideas is the pre-Socratic opposition of *physis* and *nomos*. Nature is regarded as a realm entirely different from society, *bios*, the life form of the *zoon politikon*, the political being. Social science is based on this opposition. Paraphrasing Nietzsche, who said that philosophers are advocates of the prejudices they turn into truths, one could say social scientists are advocates of the social, which they turn into society. Lévi-Strauss, for instance, concludes his *Tristes tropiques* by saying that man exists not as an individual, but rather as the plaything between the external society and an internal society of brain cells, and what more (Lévi-Strauss, 1962: 408). But Comte already stressed the difference between the natural determination and the social determination: 'In all social phenomena we perceive the working of the physiological laws of the individual; and moreover something which modifies their effects, and which belongs to the influence of individuals over each other' (Comte, 1855: 45). Or take Durkheim's thoughts on nature and society: 'For he [man, WS] cannot escape from nature save by creating another world in which he dominates it. That world is society' (Durkheim, 1984: 321). Tarde, on the other hand, would insist on saying that 'society' is merely that world in which natural, biological and psychic entities (in the end: monads) interact, without separating these into wholly different spheres which somehow collide. But in 'modern' sociology, society is both too weak and too strong over against objects that are either too strong or too arbitrary.

A Latourian sociology, on the other hand, would drop the concept of society altogether, and bring networks of actants of different natures[5], yet with subject- and object-properties alike, into view. Then, different connections become apparent. The political nature of neutrons can be discussed. For, as Latour says in his discussion on the relationship between the history of science and the history of France: '. . . *nothing* in the ordinary definition of what society is could account for the connection between a Minister of armaments and neutrons' (Latour, 1999: 91–2). In a similar vain, the relationship between Boyle's air-pump and Hobbes' political theory (see Shapin and Schaffer, 1985), in which something like an immaterial body, a vacuum, would be a possible threat to a sovereign in complete control, is discussed by Latour (1994: 28–47). What is created in the laboratory plays a political role. Latour moves beyond the conceptual separation of science and politics as two relatively independent spheres, the influences between which can be social scientifically studied. Rather, he allots to the stuff of science a similar and relatively autonomous political weight as he does to the stuff of society, to people. The study of humans and non-humans interacting ('associating') in networks, that would be Latourian sociology in a nutshell. As opposed to what he calls the 'Flat-Earthers' of social theory (Latour, 2001a), he sees hybrids and quasi-

objects in action as actants in networks; humans with non-humans interacting. And this, to him, is more *real* than the modern and ordinary views of nature and society. For he says of his own views of science in *Pandora's Hope*: 'Is this 'deambulatory' philosophy of science not more realist, and certainly more *realistic*, than the old settlement?' (By which he means the Modern Constitution, author) (Latour, 1999: 79). Yet at this stage, there are undoubtedly traces of 'classical sociology' in Latour's work, for in the Glossary to the same book, he gives the following definition of 'society': 'The word does not refer to an entity that exists in itself and is ruled by its own laws by opposition to other entities, such as nature; it means the result of a settlement that, for political reasons, artificially divides things between the natural and the social realms' (Latour, 1999: 311). Here, Latour does nothing other than give an account of a process of social construction with regard to the concept of 'society'. He speaks in Bourdieu's terms: this concept '*artificially* divides things'. Moreover, he is somewhat one-sided here, for he says this construction exists for 'political reasons'. Yet earlier on in the same book, he rejects such one-sided talk of either 'politics' or 'science' (Latour, 1999: 85–92), which is here social science. The social sciences, Latour is able to say based on the research done in Science and Technology Studies, have been working with a totally wrong deontology:

> 'When the sage points at the Moon,' says the Chinese proverb, 'the fool looks at his fingertip'. Well, we have all educated ourselves to be fools! This is our deontology. This is what a social scientist learns at school, mocking the unwashed who naively believe in the Moon. (Latour, 1999: 286)

In *Politics of Nature* (2004), Latour further develops his Actor Network Theory into a political theory. Here, the move towards a sociology of association (which has now come to be Latour's preferred term over against 'relations') is done with somewhat more scrutiny, and the political function of the concept is not directly related to its 'artificiality' – after all, Latour knows that beliefs have ontological content (Latour, 1999: 286). Now the definition of 'society' has shifted and appears to have become more consistent with his own theory: 'The terms "society" or "social world" are used to designate the half of the old Constitution that has to unify subjects detached from objects and always subjected to the threat of unification by nature; it is an already-constituted whole that explains human behaviour and thus makes it possible to short-circuit the political task of composition' (Latour, 2004: 249).[6] What remains is the 'political task' carried out through 'society', but the 'debunking' of 'society' is now directly associated with a pejorative conceptualization of the word 'social': 'the adjective "social" (. . .) is thus always pejorative, since it designates the hopeless effort of the prisoners of the Cave to articulate reality while lacking the means to do so' (Latour, 2004: 249). This critique of 'the social' is brought to a conclusion in his recent *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Latour, 2005). In a description of Actor-Network-Theory, Latour already stated: 'to put it simply, ANT is an

argument not about the "social" but about the *associations* which allow connections to be made between non-social elements' (Latour, 2003: 35). We have seen that Latour replaces 'society' with with 'collective', by which he means 'the associations of humans and nonhumans' (Latour, 1999: 304). In *Reassembling the Social*, this leads him to formulate the task of sociology in terms of a 'tracing of associations' (Latour, 2005: 5, 11). The core of Latour's argument here, and he never before put it quite in this way, is that the use of 'social' in the social sciences has the effect of doubling reality. His argument comes close to what Wittgenstein says in his *Philosophische Untersuchungen* with respect to the notion of a rule (see also Latour, 2005: 242). Wittgenstein contends that a 'rule' should not be considered as a substance independent of the regulated order of actions (Wittgenstein, 2003). One cannot name rules, and to formulate them would be to double reality into regulated patterns of behaviour *and* the rules that supposedly govern them. Similarly, Latour contends that 'social' should not be seen as an 'extra' attribute of objects, nor as a 'material' in its own right, but as the associations between actors. On the one hand, Latour broadens the notion of the social, by including ties with all kinds of (non-human) entities in it, while on the other hand, he limits it strictly to such ties or associations. That means that there are no 'organizations' *and* 'their social context', that there is no 'science' *plus* its 'social environment'; the 'social' does not *add* anything that is of different substance. Rather, organizations *are* a specified network of associations, science *is* an assemblage of ties, relations, connections or associations.[7] In the end, no 'social explanation' is necessary (Latour, 2005: 99). For this approach Latour still prefers the epithet of 'sociology' (though he also speaks of 'slowciology': Latour, 2005: 122, 165), but only after it has reformulated its notions of 'social' and of 'science' (Latour, 2005: 9).

7. Extending the relational? Bourdieu & objects

When Bourdieu boasts that his sociology of art is surely more 'human' than an acceptance of what to him are doxic beliefs (Bourdieu, 1993a: 191), he illustrates precisely the reason Latour disapproves of Bourdieusian sociology. It would appear, then, that from Latour's perspective there is an unfaced challenge of the *objects* or simply of *things*, or perhaps of *nature* in Bourdieu's sociology, whether one finds this regrettable or not. Objects are here a mere 'projection screen' (Latour, 1994; 1996b) or mirror (Latour, 2005: 84) of various forms of capital. In order not to lose its home ground of objectivity, which is based on the subject-object dichotomy that always leaves the object- or nature-side to the natural sciences, the sociology of science is, according to Latour, never really a sociology of all there is to science: 'sociology of science should limit itself to career patterns, institutions, ethics, public understanding, reward systems, legal disputes and it should propose only with great prudence to establish "some relations" between some "cognitive" factors and some "social" dimensions, but without pressing the point too hard. Such is the

positions of a sociology of *scientists* (as opposed to a sociology of *science*) put forward, for instance, by Robert K. Merton and later Pierre Bourdieu' (Latour, 2005: 95). In one of Bourdieu's latest publications, entitled *Science de la science et réflexivité* (2001b) (about which Latour speaks in the quote above), he reacts against Latour's objects as 'missing masses' in sociology (Latour, 1993), and he reflects on the sociology of science. Now if Latour is right, Bourdieu will have to make an exception in his own field-analysis of natural science. For to demystify 'hard' science would be to undermine his own objective analysis. At first sight, Bourdieu does not appear to make such an exception. When he starts the explanation of the surplus-value of his concept of a 'field' (*champ*), he even refers to Comte's *physique sociale* to indicate the *moment physicaliste* in sociology (Bourdieu, 2001b: 69).

But then he comes with what is, to me, an exceptional statement. He says: 'it is true that in the scientific field, strategies are always Janus-faced. They have a pure and purely scientific function and a social function within the field' (author's translation) (Bourdieu, 2001b: 109). But nowhere else, not in his analysis of consumption goods, of art, of education, philosophy or economics does Bourdieu leave his object as intact as he does the first time he elaborately spends on the laboratory. It's as if he suddenly says: 'there's that *pure* activity, and then there's the social'. Elsewhere in this book Bourdieu states that one problem in analyzing science is that one does not have the dispositions to understand what it really is about (Bourdieu, 2001b: 18, 82). But it is unthinkable that Bourdieu would have said this in *Les règles de l'art*. And indeed he explicitly says that there is an important difference between art and science here (Bourdieu, 2001b: 81–3). Art, religion, culture and markets had always turned out to be 'softer' than the crushing wheels of critical, demystifying social science (Latour, 2005: 97), but 'science represented a completely different challenge' (Latour, 2005: 98). According to Latour, the failure of social theory in the case of science is indicative of its failure elsewhere as well (Latour, 2005: 94). But of course there is a flipside to this coin: Bourdieusian sociology is quite capable of sociologically analyzing its Latourian counterpart. To that discussion, the next paragraph is devoted.

8. Bourdieu on Latour: what was said & what might have been said

Latour's critique does seem to hit home. In turn, Bourdieu has, rather disappointingly, only dealt with Latour in an almost *ad hominem* kind of way. This is a mode of analysis with which reader's of Bourdieu will be familiar. Bourdieu for instance similarly attacked a 'semiologico-literary fad' such as Roland Barthes, or the 'fanatics' of *Tel Quel* (Bourdieu, 1997; 1998b). When referring to Latour, he speaks of those at the border of sociology and philosophy who are able to profit from symbolic capital on both sides, and he even goes so far as to say that the dispositions of arrogance and bluff are extremely profitable in that area (Bourdieu, 2001a: 65–6).[8] As for bringing

objects into the analysis, he ridiculed the idea (cf. Bourdieu, 2001b). Bourdieu agreed with Sokal & Bricmont (1998), Latour is an impostor. It seems, then, that Bourdieu has been less to the point in discussing Latour's views than Latour has been in his account of Bourdieu's. That is, Bourdieu, a sociologist-philosopher himself, has to stretch his theory to explain Latour in terms that would apply equally well to Bourdieu himself, and that would therefore undermine the attempt at analysis altogether. Latour, however, has been able to predict where Bourdieu would have to make a necessary exception, in order not to contradict himself. One reason for the lack of power of Bourdieu's analysis here may be that Bourdieu's theory does not suit an analysis of an individual. Indeed, Bourdieu himself has said that the true object of sociology should not be the individual, but the field (Bourdieu, 1990b). Though he has given extensive discussions of individuals such as Flaubert and Zola, these were examples of the historical genesis of a particular field that is defined by means of statistical variation. It has been said, amongst others by Michel de Certeau (1990), that such a mathematical analysis does, in the end, not lend itself for an analysis of the *quotidien*, the daily practice with its individual deviations. Outliers can not be adequately studied in Bourdieu's *mathesis universalis*, except by means of the apparently all too easy and statistically untestable hypothesis that the outlier, the difference, constitutes a difference for the sake of difference, as a strategy of distinction. That would seem to be less a (causal) explanation than a rather arbitrary explication pinned upon a state of affairs. It is, however, the way Bourdieu wished to analyze Latour. As stated above, this remains somewhat disappointing, and (in defence of Bourdieu) it is possible sketch the outlines of a more elaborate Bourdieusian analysis of Latourian sociology.

Such an analysis would involve the field in which Latourian sociology is born, which would explicate the social conditions of the genesis of Actor Network Theory. A starting point for such an analysis can be found in Steve Fuller's article on Science Studies, bearing the subtitle 'Some Recent Lessons on How to Be a Helpful Nuisance and a Harmless Radical' (Fuller, 2000). Subscribing to an analytical mode Fuller has established under the name of 'social epistemology', he analyses Latour's position as the culmination of a client-driven environment. Latour is seen by Fuller as a 'self-avowed radical' in a debate within the Science & Technology Studies (STS). The crucial difference between Latour and Harry Collins, who has remained true to the Edinburgh School of the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge, is that Latour sees the work done in STS not as restricted to STS-researchers, but as of practical use to practitioners in various settings. Fuller relates this difference to the different working-conditions – Bourdieu would speak of the 'objective conditions' of the field here – of both authors. Latour's case is not that of the conventional academic. The *Ecole nationale supérieure des mines* (Paris)[9] constitutes an academic environment in which links with state and industry are necessary for the sustainment of research programs. According to Fuller, Latour represents a kind of 'policy-driven "postdisciplinary" research, which

welcomes the university's permeability to extramural concerns' (Fuller, 2000: 9). The crux of Fuller's analysis is his statement that the reason for vanguard-status of the Paris school in STS (in which, respectively, Latour and Callon occupy the main positions) is due to the 'material conditions under which its work has been done'. Its policy-driven research 'has come to be the norm throughout an academy increasingly moved by market pressures' (Fuller, 2000: 9). This position explains Latour's critique of sociologists critique of society. Latour, from this point of view, could not but adopt a more affirmative stance towards current society, since he was dependent in his position as a researcher not protected by traditional academic autonomy, on the differentiation of that society, and on the networks he was able to forge with parties outside his research-base. Fuller makes an explicit comparison between Bourdieu and Latour regarding their views on the relationship between the state and the economy:

> Bourdieu and Latour can be seen as trying to capture the same transformation from opposing perspectives: Bourdieu, the director of the leading state-supported research institute in the social sciences, critiquing the ways the state has buckled under external economic pressures; Latour, the resident sociologist at a leading beneficiary of the emerging neoliberal order, denying that the state ever had much control in the first place (Fuller, 2000: 16).

Fuller's analysis is informed by a kind of economism that is due to his materialistic focus – in fact, Fuller critiques Latour's uncritical preoccupation with capitalism, renaming *We Have never Been Modern* as 'We Have Never Been Socialist' – but this is a focus that is to a certain extent shared by Bourdieu. Bourdieu, however, while acceding that social and cultural capital can be 'cashed in' and transformed into economic capital, did place higher emphasis on symbolic capital. In a wholly Bourdieusian analysis of Latour's position, then, the material conditions that shaped the ANT-habitus need to be supplemented with an analysis over symbolic capital in the scientific field. This may be achieved by first of all stripping Latour's oeuvre of substantial content, of regarding that content as consisting of, in the end, arbitrary significations, whose real purpose is to be distinctions in the field of social science. The work of Latour would be formulated, as in part it is, in relation to an established oeuvre such as Bourdieu's. Bourdieu's work would then constitute an already consecrated distinction, whereas Latour would count as an avant-garde, recognizing the initial innovative merits of the established Bourdieu, but strongly criticizing the consecrated version of Bourdieusian sociology. Indeed, Latour has said that Bourdieu's sociology, 'after an often remarkable descriptive moment' has coagulated into a repetition of a small number of concepts in which each situation is forced (Latour, 1998). This would fit with the Bourdieusian picture of a (relatively) young scientist making a distinction by means of challenging consecrated beliefs. Bourdieu's

model for such a struggle is adapted from Weber's sociology of religion and involves the opposites of priests and prophets. What is at stake in such a struggle between a consecrated scientific star such as Bourdieu ('priest') after his secession to the throne of the French scientific field (the chair of sociology at the Collège de France, which he occupied since 1980) and a new vanguard headed by Latour ('prophet'), would be scientific capital as symbolic capital. In such a struggle, which is, as it is in other fields as well as in the social space of the classes in society, always a struggle over the legitimate classificatory schemes (i.e., habitus), epistemological conflicts can in fact be regarded as political conflicts (Bourdieu, 1976: 90). In the case of Bourdieu and Latour, a threefold strategy on the part of the 'prophet' can be discerned. On the level of epistemology, which is the most fundamental and hence in a sense the most 'political' level, a departure from Bourdieusian relational realism is forced by means of a radical constructivism. On the level of the subject of analysis, a shift is made from reproduction of inequality and a critique of neoliberal encroachment on various autonomous fields to the analysis of the products of capitalism, termed not 'commodities' (in Marxist language), not 'objects' (in the wrong epistemological language), but 'things' (retaining a Heideggerian connotation of a multiplicity, as in a parliament; see Heidegger, 1962).[10] Lastly, on the normative level, a difference is forced by occupying a position critique vis-à-vis the consecrated critical position occupied by Bourdieu. Against Bourdieu's 'gauche de la gauche', Latour questions whether the left is at all in good hands with Bourdieu, since the position of latter entails a reduction of the capacities of resistance of people themselves, for whom Bourdieu, according to Latour, pretends to speak (Latour, 1998).[11] Latour's rhetorics of distinction could be analyzed for instance in his use of the concept of 'classical sociology', which (in line with Latour's (1998) recognition of the importance of the work of the early Bourdieu) allots Bourdieu a place in the canon of sociology as a consecrated hero whose innovative potential has now coagulated and diminished. 'Classical sociology' is an epithet at once honorary and dismissive. Such a more elaborate Bourdieusian analysis would thus reveal not the person of Latour, as Bourdieu's *ad hominem* critique implies, but the position he occupies, and the genesis of a field of positions.

Yet perhaps it was not in Bourdieu's interest to continue his mode of analysis in such a consistent way, since it would run the risk of ending up in a self-refutation due to the fact that all Bourdieu's concepts would be suspended, placed between brackets as well. But where would such an *epochè* of the *epochè* leave Bourdieu's own analysis? This is a consequence that cannot be drawn, since, as Latour has argued, it would take out the 'objective' basis of Bourdieusian sociology. A Bourdieusian way of conceptualizing Bourdieusian versus Latourian sociology can always be only half-Bourdieusian. For only Latour's concepts will be suspended in their intended meaning, not Bourdieu's. This may have led Bourdieu to a certain doxic blindness for the substance of Latour's arguments.

Conclusion

The result of such fundamental discussions runs the risk of being that of the 'poor sociologist' in Latour's little story *Three Little Dinosaurs or A Sociologist's Nightmare*:

> He woke up suddenly, shaking off the last fog of his nightmare, and, after breakfast, settled down in his office to compile the statistics of the Science Citation Index, swearing, though a little too late, never to become involved with philosophy again (Latour, 1991)

But doesn't this point actually illustrate a major point in Bourdieu's analysis after all? Can this not in fact be read, however much to the regret of Bruno Latour, as an acknowledgement of the functioning of the scientific field, with its interest in publication- and citation-capital as symbolic capital? In the end, the scientific field reproduces itself by means of a kind of revolutionary conservatism: everything changes, yet all stays the same. It is on the basis of an in the end undisputed *doxa* of the scientific field that scientific struggles, such as those between Bourdieu and Latour, take place. This means that consensus is at the basis of their dissensus, and that for all their struggling over the legitimate scientific classifications – should we speak of fields or of networks, should we analyse power or mediation – what is in the end achieved is the reproduction of the scientific field, just as Bourdieu's analysis predicts. Bourdieu and Latour are or were two *homines academici* struggling to gain symbolic capital in a field the basic *doxa* of which they mostly unconsciously acknowledged, and which they therefore affirmed through difference. Indeed, as we have seen, even a radical heretic such as Latour can be quite easily accounted for in Bourdieu's analysis.

Yet on the other hand, we have also seen that there are fundamental problems in Bourdieu's analysis that Latour has neatly pointed out. Bourdieu's stance rests on his retreat to a last unquestionable base which is the bedrock of 'hard', natural science beyond which there is no demystifying. As Latour has effectively shown, this is what justifies Bourdieu's meta-stance and at the same time sets limits to the ability of Bourdieusian self-reflexivity. It would appear that these two sociologies each have a forceful hold of each other. Discarding the possibility of playing judge in deciding whose theory comes closest to 'the truth', one might say we are dealing with different 'paradigms' in sociology (compare: Kuhn, 1970). Indeed, Latour seems to imply as much when he says that

> sociologists of the social have traced, with *their* definition of a social, a vast domain that bears no relation whatsoever with the maps we are going to need for *our* definition of the social. I am not only saying that existing maps are incomplete, but that they designate territories with such different

> shapes that they don't even overlap! (. . .) The job now before us is no longer to go to different paths – but to generate an altogether different landscape so we can travel through it (Latour, 2005: 165).

Indeed, Latour speaks of the 'incommensurability' and the 'insurmountable difference' between critical sociology and his sociology of associations (Latour, 2005: 36, 40), and of a 'radical paradigm shift' (Latour, 2005: 70).[12] So one might consider Bourdieu and Latour as proponents of two competing paradigms, typical of sociology as a 'multi-paradigm science' (Ritzer, 1992: 662), and leave it at that. But that would be unsatisfactory, and it would forego an important commonality between Bourdieu and Latour: however they call it, both place heavy emphasis of the relational, and less on structures, functions, conflicts, frames, roles, rational deliberation or other well-known sociological *topoi*.[13] I will hence investigate the possibility of capturing the *statements* apparent in Bourdieu and Latour as part of one and the same *discourse*. For perhaps what is called for here is not the final judgment on which sociology is 'better' than the other, but the realisation that we are in fact dealing with positions in a discourse in the way Foucault speaks of 'discourse' in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Foucault here says that what 'the positivity of a discourse' reveals is not 'who told the truth, who reasoned with rigour, who most conformed to his own postulates'. Instead, what is revealed is:

> the extent to which Buffon and Linnaeus (or Turgot and Quesnay, Broussais and Bichat) [or Bourdieu and Latour, WS] were talking about 'the same thing', by placing themselves 'at the same level' or at 'the same distance', by deploying 'the same conceptual field', by opposing one another on 'the same field of battle' (Foucault, 1969: 142).

Nonetheless, this does not mean, according to Foucault, that one searches for a common theme or underlying consensus in texts that make up a discourse (Foucault, 1969: 170). What archaeology describes are 'spaces of dissension'. Analysis of the positions described here in terms of statements in a discourse introduces some characteristics familiar from Bourdieu's analysis, such as the fact that a discourse is, according to Foucault, an object of a political struggle in which hence the question of power is never far away (Foucault, 1969: 136). On the other hand, it would do away with the subject-object duality that is still present in Bourdieu and that is critiqued by Latour. It would introduce subject-positions not dissimilar to specific kinds of associations in Latour's analysis. Foucault stresses that the focus of his archaeological analysis is not an individual or a transcendental subject, and that no reference to a *cogito* is involved in archaeological discourse analysis (Foucault, 1969: 70, 104, 126, 129, 137–8). So what the Bourdieu-Latour controversy would amount to is a kind of discourse – 'a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation' (Foucault, 1969: 131). The question is, however, whether such is really the case. Foucault defines a 'discursive formation' as a 'general

enunciative system that governs a group of verbal performances' (Foucault, 1969: 130). A discursive formation refers to the law of a series of signs (Foucault, 1969: 82, 120–1). But can such a similarity be sufficiently uncovered in Bourdieu's and Latour's approaches to sociology? That depends on the 'width' of the space opened up by discourse that one wishes to recognize. Discourse constitutes an enunciative field consisting, to name but a few of the properties Foucault ascribes to it, of a field of presence (consisting of statements from outside but adhered to within discourse), a field of concomitance (statements from outside discourse serving as analogy or model), a field of memory (statements no longer recognized as part of discourse serving the recognition of historical discontinuity). If Bourdieu and Latour were to occupy subject-positions within the same discourse, one will have to find statements on a level that is more fundamental than that of statements concerning 'the social', 'subject vs. object', et cetera. Surely there will be fundamental convergences at the level of *episteme* (Foucault, 1966, 1969), but on the level of discourse it would require an extensive analysis – of the kind Foucault undertakes for instance in *Les mots et les choses* – to justify speaking of positions within a shared discourse. In a premilinary sense, however, we can note how a discursive contradiction is active between Bourdieu and Latour. This concerns the notion of the *relational*, which, as illustrated above, is at the core of both Bourdieu's and Latour's analysis. It is on this concept that the two converge, but it is at the same place that their positions are dispersed. Bourdieu's relational sociology is opposed to Latour's relationist or relativist sociology. Yet, as Latour (2005: 40) says, both offer 'two view points of the same object'. However, the concept of relation is articulated differently in each case. Whereas in Bourdieu's case of 'generative structuralism', the relational is a notion in which the influence of Cassirer and especially Saussure is present, Latour's concept of relation, as does his concept of association (which, especially in his work in Actor Network Theory, he uses more frequently than 'relation'), draws more from Tarde and Whitehead. Bourdieusian sociology sees one kind of relations; Latourian sociology sees many kinds of assemblages. They differ, moreover, on the kinds of actors that are included in the web of relations. But they nonetheless involve statements formed by the underlying idea of entities that are related and, although they differ vastly in their articulations thereof, they hold that these entities would not be what they are if they weren't related. A more elaborate analysis might reveal that statements concerning the relational disperse in a field of formation according to what for Foucault are rules of formation. One might relate positions such as Luhmann's, or Bhaskar's, to this field, and one might also relate Foucault's position to it. And here the attempt to define and describe such a discourse of the relational runs into a serious problem.

Establishing an 'archaeology of the present', an archaeology of the theory of the relational (which does not necessarily overlap with the discipline of sociology; compare Foucault, 1969: 196–200), remains problematic, since we are dealing with what Foucault analyses as the 'archive' of discourse. Archive

is a structuring principle of discourse, the 'law of what can be said' (Foucault 1969: 145). It is what defines the system of enunciability of statements, and at the same time it is the system of the functioning of the statement. In other words, Foucault is here concerned with what gives a discourse its structuring core, with that which regulates the formation of the statements making up the core of discourse. And what Foucault asserts is that our archive cannot be described by us: 'it is not possible for us to describe our own archive, since it is from within these rules that we speak' (Foucault, 1969: 146). This means that sociology, when considered as a discourse, is in a very bad position to determine the fundamental rules governing the enunciation of 'sociological statements'. According to Foucault, such would be impossible. Even a 'reflexive sociology' would remain bound by a 'general system of the formation and transformation of statements' (Foucault, 1969: 148). It would then be vain to search, from within sociology, for the pattern of discourse that may be common to the work of Bourdieu and Latour. In the end, one would need a position outside sociological discourse to observe exactly how Bourdieu and Latour would in the end subscribe to the same discourse. This problem is well recognized in Niklas Luhmann's sociological adaptation of Spencer Brown & Von Foersters observational logics. Luhmann maintains that the basic distinctions used to observe from within a particular social system (such as sociology) remain a 'blind spot' for such a system itself (Luhmann, 1984). This may well be what we are dealing with here: if the positions taken by Bourdieu and Latour, despite their explicitly acknowledged fundamental differences, are both part of the same 'discourse', *we* – sociologists communicating within that supposed discourse – won't be in a position to recognize it. An 'archaeology of the present' remains, for Foucault, an impossible task. From this perspective, what we are looking for is obscured by sociology's blind spot. Later generations may tell, although it is important to remember that at the time when Durkheim lectured in Bordeaux, Gabriel Tarde occupied a chair at the Collège de France, as Bourdieu later would. But it took nearly a century to 'rediscover' Tarde, and he will probably never replace or even match Durkheim as 'founding father' of sociology.

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Notes

1 Thanks to Mike Savage, Charlotte van Tilborg and two anonymous referees for very helpful comments.
2 That is to say that Bourdieu seems to have been, above all, a sociologist in Durkheim's vain. It is, however, undeniable that Max Weber has been a major influence on Bourdieu as well, especially in his theory of symbolic power.
3 Compare Durkheim (1915), who says of the *delirium* of the religious man that it is, after all, a 'well-founded delirium'.

4 Latour's 'fourth rule of method' in *Science in Action* reads: 'We should consider *symmetrically* the efforts to enrol and control human and non-human resources' (Latour, 1987: 144)
5 A critique concerning the one-sidedness of Latour's treatment of actants (as mostly men and machines) is given by Haraway (1992: 331).
6 Compare Latour in *Reassembling the Social* (2005: 110): ' "Society" and "Nature" do not describe domains of reality, but are two *collectors* that were invented together largely for polemical reasons, in the 17th century'.
7 In *Reassembling the Social*, Latour uses all these terms, as well as 'interactions', to designate what he is talking about. He nonetheless prefers to speak of 'associations' because of its etymological proximity to the root of the word 'social' (Lat. *socius*) (Latour, 2005: 64).
8 '. . . comme nos sociologues-philosophes de la science, qui sont particulièrement bien placés pout inspirer une croyance abusée, *allodoxia*, en jouant de tous les double-jeux, garants de tous les doubles profits que permet d'assurer la combinaison de plusieurs lexiques d'autorité et d'importance, dont celui de la philosophie et celui de la science'. (Bourdieu, 2001: 66).
9 Latour currently occupies a position at Sciences-Po in Paris, but was at the Ecole des Mines until 2006.
10 This follows from Heidegger's analysis of 'das Ding', in which Heidegger uncovers a multiplicity also active for instance in *res publica* (which refers to an object of public deliberation), and still present in a *tingsrat*, a lower judiciary such as can be found in Sweden.
11 'Peut on nommer "de gauche" cette réduction des capacités de parole, d'invention et de résistance de ceux au nom desquels on prétend parler!' (Latour, 1998).
12 From a Bourdieusian perspective, it is of course all too clear why Latour would be the one to speak of a 'paradigm shift'; Latourian sociology would after all be the contender to the throne of the consecrated critical (Bourdieusian) sociology, and by positioning itself as another paradigm, Latourian sociology is able to present itself as an alternative to 'normal science' (Kuhn, 1970).
13 Of course both 'structures' and 'conflicts' are very much present in Bourdieu's work, but if anything, he would have agreed that his was in the first place a sociology of the relational.

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