

QUESTIONS OF METHOD: HEIDEGGER AND BOURDIEU

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1. INTRODUCTION: CULTURAL DIVERGENCES IN PHILOSOPHY

While doing the preparatory work for my book *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation*, I was struck by salient divergences between the ways in which Heidegger's texts are interpreted within various national communities of philosophers. (1) In France, for example, the religious dimension of Heidegger's thought has never been denied. (2) Indeed, it has been argued that the strong links between Roman Catholicism and philosophy in France predisposed French philosophers to a favorable opinion of Heidegger's thought, in which the initiated reader will discern many structural resemblances with Christian theology. (3) American interpreters of Heidegger, however, with the exception of a few Catholic priests, tend to play down the religious connotations of Heidegger's œuvre. They are inclined to interpret Heidegger's philosophy either as a variety of pragmatism or as akin to the later Wittgenstein, or, finally, as a specimen of secular transcendental philosophy. (4)

(1) Herman PHILIPSE, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998.

(2) This does not imply, of course, that in France Heidegger is perceived as an essentially or primordially religious thinker.

(3) Cf. Tom ROCKMORE, *Heidegger and French Philosophy: Humanism, Antihumanism and Being*. London and New York, Routledge, 1995. For parallels between Heidegger's thought and Christianity, see PHILIPSE (1998), § 11.

(4) For a pragmatist interpretation, see for instance Mark OKRENT, *Heidegger's Pragmatism: Understanding, Being, and the Critique of Metaphysics* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1988). The best known Wittgensteinian interpretation is by Hubert

Such divergences raise at least three intriguing questions. First, there is the sociological issue as to how one might explain global differences in interpretation between philosophical communities. ⁽⁵⁾ In a recent paper, Pierre Bourdieu discusses this problem and lays down two basic principles for its solution. ⁽⁶⁾ On the one hand, he says, 'texts circulate without their context'. When texts move into another cultural domain, 'they do not bring with them the field of production of which they are a product'. On the other hand, the recipients of these texts, 'who are themselves in a different field of production, re-interpret the texts in accordance with the structure of the field of reception'. ⁽⁷⁾ Since the structure of the philosophical field in France is very different from that in the United States, we get a different set of interpretations of Heidegger in each case.

In his paper, Bourdieu uses the role of Heidegger in French intellectual life as an example of how migrating texts are put to new uses within the field of reception. Among the cultural factors that explain Heidegger's exceptional popularity in France, he singles out 'the fact that Sartre held the intellectual field in a stranglehold throughout the

L. DREYFUS, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press). In their editor's introduction to *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, Mass., Blackwell, 1992), Hubert DREYFUS and Harrison HALL try to play down the religious aspects of Heidegger's philosophy that are stressed by Continental interpreters (see pp. 3-5), although Dreyfus acknowledges these aspects in "Heidegger on the Connection between Nihilism, Art, Technology, and Politics", in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by Charles GUIGNON (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 289-316).

(5) Of course, part of the explanation might be that, to the extent that they do not work on the German originals, French and American Heidegger scholars simply do not interpret one and the same body of texts: they work on translations into French and English, respectively, and not all of Heidegger's works have been translated.

(6) Pierre BOURDIEU, "The Social Conditions of the International Circulation of Ideas", in *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, edited by Richard Shusterman. Oxford and Malden, Mass., Blackwell, 1999, pp. 220-228. Cf. also *Romanistische Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte* 14 (1990), pp. 1-10.

(7) BOURDIEU (1999), p. 221. The extent to which these factors will lead to mistaken interpretations will vary with the context-sensitivity of texts and with the extent to which the fields of production and of reception differ from each other. Mathematical and scientific texts are much less liable to mistaken interpretations than philosophical texts of the so-called continental tradition. Bourdieu must have thought of these latter texts where he writes (1999, p. 224): 'Very often with foreign authors it is not what they say that matters, so much as what they can be made to say. This is why certain particularly elastic authors transfer so well.'

1950s'. In that situation, 'one of Heidegger's major functions for the French was to diminish Sartre's impact, with teachers saying for example that all of Sartre's major ideas were already there in Heidegger, where they were better elaborated'. Bourdieu stresses the pivotal role of Jean Beaufret, who, having been a contemporary of Sartre's at the École Normale Supérieure, must have perceived Sartre as a philosophical rival. According to Bourdieu, Beaufret managed 'to create a sort of status for himself as philosopher by bringing Heidegger to France'. (8)

One might add that Heidegger must have had interests of his own for bestowing lavish praise on Beaufret and for feeding unpublished German manuscripts to this pupil during the thirty years of their friendship. Beaufret's 'politically impeccable past of a soldier captured in the war' was an invaluable asset for an ambassador in France of the German thinker who, on 19 January 1946, had been deprived of his professorial rights because of his involvement with Nazism. (9) One should not forget that Heidegger wrote his letter on 'Humanism' to Beaufret during the fall of that same year, a letter that, according to one commentator, 'exemplifies Heidegger's characteristic ability to assume a position of the highest philosophical rigor while positioning himself in the most opportune political light'. (10) Whereas the field of production of Heidegger's letter included the German debate on humanism between Hellocentric and Nordic Nazi ideologues in 1940/41, this context was bound to remain unnoticed in France after 1947, since, following Beaufret, the French situated the letter within the context of the debate on existentialism and Marxism. (11) This re-

(8) BOURDIEU (1999), pp. 223-224. One might point to many other factors that explain Heidegger's popularity in France, such as Heidegger's anti-Cartesianism, the cultural role of Kojève in Paris, the fact that French philosophical training at the École Normale Supérieure is linked to literature and history rather than to the sciences, the fact that Heidegger restored philosophy to some kind of fundamental role, which it had lost after the demise of neo-Kantianism at the hands of the positivists, etc. Cf. also ROCKMORE (1995), pp. 1-40.

(9) This ruling of the senate of Freiburg University was made final on 28 December 1946. See Hugo OTT, *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie*. Frankfurt am Main, Campus Verlag, 1988, pp. 291-324. The quote on Beaufret's past is from ROCKMORE (1995), p. 108.

(10) The characterization of the letter on 'Humanism' is quoted from Anson RABINBACH, "Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* as Text and Event", *New German Critique*, no 62 (1994), p. 6.

(11) Cf. RABINBACH (1994), § vi.

contextualisation explains the astonishing fact that French Marxists such as Henri Lefebvre, François Châtelet, and Kostas Axelos professed to be Heideggerians, a move by which they sought to link Heidegger's philosophical prestige to the *plebeia philosophia* of Marxism. ⁽¹²⁾

Bourdieu observes that heretical imports of texts are often the work of minor players, who try to further their career by attacking the dominant positions in their home field with the help of foreign masters. This sociological remark holds not only for France but also for the reception of Heidegger in the United States. Thus, Heidegger's critiques of science and technology, which are late sprouts of his early Catholic anti-modernist roots, were useful weapons in the hands of American philosophers who aimed at undermining the dominant scientific views of Quine and the pupils of Logical Positivism. In order to minimize the risk that within the American context Heidegger would be perceived as altogether foreign to the field of analytical philosophy, his thought had to be assimilated to legitimate positions within that field, such as pragmatism or the views of the later Wittgenstein. If prominent French scholars such as Jean-Luc Marion use Heidegger in renewing philosophical theology, whereas American authors propose Wittgensteino-pragmatist interpretations of Heidegger that are absent in France, one cannot but conclude with Bourdieu that the 'sense and function of a foreign work is determined not simply by the field of origin, but in at least equal proportion by the field of reception'. ⁽¹³⁾

Assuming that our first question may be answered along these lines, a second question has to be raised, which should be discussed with regard to each and every interpretation of texts. To what extent is a specific interpretation biased by the social mechanisms of the field of reception and by a lack of knowledge of the field of production? This question is a pertinent one because, as Bourdieu writes, differences between the field of production and the field of reception may 'generate... formidable misunderstandings' in the interpretation of texts. ⁽¹⁴⁾

(12) BOURDIEU (1988 — see note 15 for reference —), pp. 107-108/ 94-95.

(13) BOURDIEU (1999), p. 222.

(14) BOURDIEU (1999), p. 221.

In sections two to four of the present paper, I discuss this second question with regard to Bourdieu's book *L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger* (1988), the substance of which was first published as an article in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* of 1975. (15) I shall try to determine to what extent Bourdieu's interpretation of Heidegger may be seen as a re-interpretation structured by the French cultural matrix rather than by the original texts and the field of their production. Bourdieu has anticipated the possibility of applying his sociological analyses to his own personality and works. Indeed, in one of his recent books, *Méditations pascaliennes*, he explicitly aims at acquiring knowledge of himself as a knowing subject by using the 'most brutally objectivating epistemic instruments' available, by which he means the instruments of sociological analysis. (16) I do not doubt, then, that I act in the spirit of Bourdieu's intellectual enterprise when I analyse Bourdieu's book on Heidegger from his own sociological perspective.

The second question immediately leads up to a third, that is the central issue from a philosophical point of view. By what method will it be possible to overcome the divergences in interpretation of an author such as Heidegger, to the extent that these divergences are due to differences between the various fields of reception? Bourdieu suggests that in order to facilitate a rational dialogue between members of different philosophical communities, we have to raise awareness of 'the ways in which different national fields function'. This is the task of a reflexive sociology of national fields of production, that 'would unveil the historical foundations of various categories of thought' typical of national traditions. (17) Bourdieu's book on Heidegger may be seen as an attempt to provide a sociology of the philosophical field of production in Germany during the interwar years, and to show that

(15) Pierre BOURDIEU, *L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1988. Published in English as *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (translated by Peter Collier; Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991). References are to the (1988) French text, followed by the page number of the translation in italics. All references in the main text are to this book.

(16) Pierre BOURDIEU, *Méditations pascaliennes*. Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1997. Cf. p. 12 of this book: '... j'ai toujours demandé aux instruments de connaissance les plus brutalement objectivants dont je pouvais disposer d'être aussi des instruments de connaissance de moi-même, et d'abord comme "sujet connaissant".'

(17) BOURDIEU (1999), pp. 226-227.

this sociology suggests an interpretation of Heidegger's texts that is not available to French Heidegger experts. In section five I argue that although sociology will indeed help to overcome national prejudices in intellectual matters, it is not a sufficient condition for a rational dialogue on the interpretation of Heidegger's (or anyone else's) œuvre. What is also needed is a sophisticated method of historical interpretation. Only by using such a method, one will be able to correct the 'formidable misunderstandings' in Heidegger scholarship generated by local intellectual traditions.

2. *L'ONTOLOGIE POLITIQUE DE MARTIN HEIDEGGER* FROM A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

As we have seen, Bourdieu explains striking differences between national communities with regard to the interpretation of the same foreign texts by reference to differences between the fields of reception and to the position of the interpreters within their home field. I argued that this analysis is illuminating for the overall reception of Heidegger in France and in the United States. Will it also be instructive if applied to Bourdieu's own book on the subject, *L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger* (*The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*)?

One might adduce two interconnected reasons for answering this question in the negative, the first of which pertains to the explanatory value of the sociology of knowledge in general, while the second is concerned with the specific nature of Bourdieu's book. It has often been argued that the sociology of knowledge is more valuable in explaining biases and misunderstandings than in accounting for correct opinions and adequate interpretations. If an interpretation or opinion is correct, the explanation of why it is held may simply refer to the texts interpreted or to the state of affairs with which the opinion is concerned, and add that the knowing subject studied these texts or states of affairs with care, using an adequate methodology. However, if there are salient biases or mistakes, such a reference is not sufficient. We have to trace factors that explain the particular biases, and these factors may belong to the domain of sociology. With regard to the interpretation of foreign philosophical texts, the main factor is that interpreters often are ignorant about the

field of production and re-contextualise the texts within their field of reception. ⁽¹⁸⁾

But this distorting factor, it might be argued, is absent in the case of Bourdieu's book on Heidegger. It is the explicit objective of this book to reconstruct the field of production in which Heidegger was working. ⁽¹⁹⁾ If Bourdieu has succeeded in doing this, his interpretation will not be biased by the mechanism of re-contextualisation. As a consequence, the sociology of knowledge may not have much to say on *L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger*. At best, it might explain why Bourdieu was able to avoid the *illusio* which, according to him, is typical of the philosophical field in France, to wit, the assumption that the meaning of philosophical texts may be revealed entirely by reading philosophical texts only. Bourdieu could avoid this illusion of the absolute autonomy of philosophy because he had turned into a sociologist. ⁽²⁰⁾

In spite of these reasons for giving a negative answer I shall defend the thesis that a sociological analysis à la Bourdieu of *L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger* is surprisingly instructive. While this book is a perceptive study of certain aspects of Heidegger's thought, it also suffers from specific biases that may be explained by reference to structures of the French philosophical field and to the position of Bourdieu within that field. What were these structures around 1975, when Bourdieu's study on Heidegger was first published, and what was Bourdieu's position in the field of French philosophy?

As I happen to have studied philosophy at the University of Paris IV-Sorbonne in the years 1974-6 on a grant provided by the French state, I am somewhat acquainted with the French philosophical field at that time. Having completed master's degrees in law and in philosophy in Leiden, The Netherlands, and having spent a term in Oxford shortly before arriving in Paris, I could not help being struck by a number of peculiarities of the French philosophical scene. Let me mention two of them that are relevant to our theme. First, it seemed

(18) Of course there is a prominent school in the sociology of knowledge (Barnes, Bloor, and others) that rejects this asymmetry between the explanation of errors and the explanation of sound knowledge.

(19) BOURDIEU (1988), p. 13/6: 'Thus, in the present case, our task should be no less than to reconstruct the structure of the field of philosophical production...'

(20) Cf. BOURDIEU (1988), p. 10/2: 'l'illusion de l'autonomie absolue'.

that not much value was attached to the question of whether a philosophical doctrine was true or even made sense. I vividly remember my vexation with one of my professors, Henri Birault, who declared repeatedly that whether a text is beautiful is more important than whether what it says is true, and who ridiculed as 'naïve' those students who raised the issue of truth with regard to Heidegger's thought. Birault may have been an exception because of his Nietzschean aestheticism, but in general other values were placed higher than the value of truth. ⁽²¹⁾

One of the main criteria for evaluating philosophical ideas seemed to be what political position their author took, a criterion that played no role whatsoever in Oxford. This impression is confirmed by Vincent Descombes, who wrote in 1979 that 'in France, the taking of a political position is and remains the decisive test; it is what has to uncover the ultimate sense of a philosophy'. ⁽²²⁾ Descombes explains this peculiar characteristic of the French philosophical field by the institutional setting of French philosophy. The extremely centralised hierarchical setup of teaching institutions (*lycées*, *khâgne*, *École Normale Supérieure*, faculties), programmes (*CAPES*, *agrégation*), and procedures of selection (national *concours*) not only requires that the same curriculum is taught in the entire country, but also makes it nearly inevitable that there is a political influence on, and relevance of, the philosophical field. Descombes stresses the role of the *président du jury d'agrégation*, who, nominated by the minister of education, chooses the other members of the jury and decides on the programme of the *agrégation*. He also shows that this president imposes a philosophical programme which is related to the overall political situation in France, at least in times of crisis.

A second salient characteristic of the French philosophical field around 1975 is also stressed by Descombes: it is the popularity of the 'three masters of suspicion', Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, authors who in Oxford at that time were not regarded as paradigmatic philosophers at all. Descombes argues that the peculiar dynamics of French philo-

(21) Of course there were exceptions, such as the late professor Ferdinand Alquié.

(22) Vincent DESCOMBES, *Le même et l'autre: Quarante-cinq ans de philosophie française (1933-1978)*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979, p. 17: 'La prise de position politique est et reste en France l'épreuve décisive, c'est elle qui doit révéler le sens final d'une pensée'.

sophy may be explained in part by the conflict of generations. After 1960, the generation of philosophers who adored 'the three H's', namely Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger, made place for the generation that admired the holy trinity of suspicion. ⁽²³⁾ What the masters of suspicion have in common is a specific epistemological model that is of dubious value from the point of view of scientific method. According to this model, the real meaning and motivation of what people say or write is hidden, and all utterances have a concealed meaning or significance, which is determined either by class interests (Marx), or by unconscious sexual impulses (Freud), or, finally, by a will to power (Nietzsche). The model is useful for undermining establishments of all sorts, and it is not surprising that the trinity of suspicion became popular in the sixties, when the repressive fifth republic of De Gaulle seemed to suffocate the aspirations of the post-war generation.

Bourdieu reminds us that when he entered the philosophical field in the fifties, philosophy was still regarded in France as the queen of all intellectual disciplines ('*la discipline du couronnement*'). ⁽²⁴⁾ Selected by the system of *concours général* and *Khâgne*, the young students in philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure of the Rue d'Ulm were conceived of as members of an intellectual aristocracy, who would cheapen themselves if they showed an interest for empirical disciplines such as the social sciences. The most ambitious among them became devotees of esoteric and obscure authors such as Husserl and Heidegger, whose texts were practically inaccessible for lack of translations. Like Descombes, Bourdieu explains the dynamics of philosophical production in France by the succession of generations. Young scholars tried to become prominent by taking a position in relation to the *status quo* of the philosophical field, either as successors to occupants of minor positions of power, or, in the case of the boldest students, by revolutionary subversions which alone could bring the positions of highest prestige. ⁽²⁵⁾

Let us now suppose that Bourdieu was such a bold student, whose professional *habitus* was formed by the French philosophical field of the fifties. How can we explain that, having become a social scientist

(23) DESCOMBES (1979), p. 13.

(24) BOURDIEU (1997), p. 46.

(25) BOURDIEU (1997), pp. 46-49.

later on, he decided to write an essay or book on Heidegger, whereas he did not write a book on any other philosopher? And are we able to 'predict' in retrospect, by applying Bourdieu's own sociological insights, what *kind* of book on Heidegger would be written by someone who passed through a trajectory such as Bourdieu's in the French intellectual field?

In order to answer the first of these questions, we may suppose that as a young student of the *Khâgne* Bourdieu plunged into Heidegger's arcane texts and that, perhaps, these texts nourished the 'assured dissatisfaction (*insatisfaction certaine*) with regard to the game of philosophy' of which Bourdieu speaks in his 'impersonal confessions'.⁽²⁶⁾ If this dissatisfaction and his stay in Algeria motivated him to become a social scientist, such a career change will have caused an inner conflict in Bourdieu, given the *habitus* of a philosopher that he had acquired by his training in Paris. Should a philosopher not despise social scientists? If so, should Bourdieu not despise himself? Did the young philosopher Bourdieu not fall into disgrace by taking up a *métier* that ranked lower than philosophy in the hierarchy of intellectual disciplines?

I suggest that Bourdieu may have suffered from this inner conflict and that he resolved it by attempting to show that as a sociologist he was better equipped than professional philosophers to understand philosophical texts. He would argue that philosophers suffer from a specific *illusio* of which the sociologist is free, the illusion of the intellectual independence and overriding importance of philosophy. No doubt Heidegger was by far the most suitable topic for such a book, because of his pre-eminence in the French philosophical field and because of his role in the genesis of Bourdieu's inner conflict. Moreover, Heidegger's philosophy, in particular the opposition between authentic *Dasein* and *das Man*, paradigmatically expresses the philosophical attitude of superiority which Bourdieu had to destroy in himself, and, perhaps, in France, in order to get rid of his problem.⁽²⁷⁾

If we want to predict by hindsight the *kind* of book on Heidegger that someone like Bourdieu would write in the seventies, we have to remind ourselves of the general rupture in the French philosophical

(26) BOURDIEU (1997), p. 53.

(27) Cf. BOURDIEU (1997), pp. 36-39.

field described by Descombes. At that time, the dominating position of 'the three H's', Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger, had been undermined by the popularity of the three masters of suspicion, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Assuming that Bourdieu took part in this revolutionary subversion, as did, according to him, the boldest young philosophers of the time, we will expect that he uses in his book on Heidegger the general epistemological model of the trinity of suspicion. But, of course, as a sociologist, he could not simply endorse Nietzsche's or Freud's variety of this model. Nor would it be a profitable move to accept the Marxist orthodoxy or the 'imaginary Marxism' of Althusser, to use Aron's phrase. We may expect, then, that Bourdieu developed his own, sociological variety of the model. According to such a variety, Heidegger's texts have a hidden meaning that is determined by Heidegger's position in the social field and by the social phantasms produced by that position. Given the predilection for politics in French philosophy, we will further expect that, according to Bourdieu, these phantasms are predominantly political.

It may or may not surprise the reader that this is exactly the kind of essay that Bourdieu wrote and published under the title *L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger*. The central thesis of the book is that apart from their 'official' philosophical meaning, Heidegger's texts also have a hidden and repressed sense, which is the product of ethico-political phantasms typical of Heidegger's social position, and which is 'censored' by the structure of the philosophical field. Bourdieu's view is not that *some* of Heidegger's texts have such a repressed meaning, a view which everyone might accept. Rather, he claims that Heidegger's philosophy *as a whole* possesses a concealed political sense. Indeed, he suggests that Heidegger's philosophy is 'only a sublimated philosophical version, imposed by the forms of censorship specific to the field of philosophical production, of the political or ethical principles which determined the philosopher's support for Nazism' (11/3-4). In Heidegger's texts there is, Bourdieu claims, a 'constant, omnipresent reference to the historical situation', that is, the political situation (9/2), and the production of such texts is '*always* guided by a politico-moral sense of orientation which... endows *every word and topic* — even those apparently least relevant to politics... with an unambiguous place in the ideological field...' (33-34/23, my italics). As a consequence, even Heidegger's 'most purely theoretical options' have 'specifically political implications'

(79/67), and if philosophy professors manage to 'forget that Heidegger's philosophy is political from beginning to end', this is because they 'have... profoundly internalised the definition which excludes from philosophy any overt reference to politics' (109/96). Thus it is an *illusio* typical of the philosophical field that blinds philosophical readers of Heidegger to a deep structure of meaning that can be discerned by the sociologist. Bourdieu's philosophical colleagues in France are imprisoned in the cave, whereas the sociologist sees the light and, by means of a *lecture double*, is able to reveal the hidden sense of Heidegger's œuvre.

Clearly, then, Bourdieu's book on Heidegger is structured by the French philosophical field in the seventies, for, consciously or not, Bourdieu applies the strategy of the masters of suspicion to Heidegger's works. His version of the strategy is a clever blend of Marxist and Freudian elements, integrated into the perspective of a sociologist. For example, whereas according to Freud *sexual* drives are censored by the (*super*)ego, Bourdieu holds that *ethico-political* expressive drives are censored by the structure of *professional fields*, such as the field of philosophical production.⁽²⁸⁾ And whereas Marxists tended to *reduce* philosophical ideas to class interests, Bourdieu follows Max Weber in opposing such a reductionism. 'Any adequate analysis', says Bourdieu, 'must accommodate a dual refusal, rejecting not only any claim of the philosophical text to absolute autonomy..., but also any direct reduction of the text to the most general conditions of its production' (10/2). Every text of Heidegger has *both* a philosophical meaning *and* a disguised political sense, and the challenge for a *lecture double* à la Bourdieu is to reveal both meanings at the same time, in spite of the fact that the overt philosophical meaning is a repression and a transformation of the concealed political meaning.

3. THE ARGUMENT FROM HOMOLOGY

The discovery that *L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger* has been structured by the French philosophical field of the 1970s does

(28) BOURDIEU (1988), chapter 4.

not imply anything about the truth of Bourdieu's central thesis. The thesis might be true even though it is a typical product of the French field of reception. To think otherwise would be committing a genetic fallacy. Yet its truth is not at all unproblematic. One may wonder, for instance, whether the thesis holds for all philosophers or only for Heidegger, whose works are characterised by an unusual semantic polyphony. ⁽²⁹⁾ Would Bourdieu want to argue that the later works of Frege also have a hidden right-wing political meaning, because Frege confided in his diary in 1924 that although he had once thought of himself as a liberal, his heroes now were General Ludendorff and Adolf Hitler? ⁽³⁰⁾ If so, could Bourdieu explain to us what hidden political sense is attached to Frege's discussion of *Gedankengefüge*, for example? ⁽³¹⁾ However, if the thesis is true merely for Heidegger and not for all philosophers, it is suspect as a *sociological* thesis, since a sociological thesis must hold for groups and not for one individual only. The sociologist might escape between the horns of this dilemma and claim that the thesis holds for a subset of philosophers only. But which subset, exactly? Bourdieu does not tell us.

There is a similar problem of quantification with regard to the corpus of Heidegger's texts. Some of these texts are overtly political. Other texts, that are not clearly political, may have had a political point within the situation in which they were written, and we might be able to discover their implicit political meaning by studying the original contexts and the field of production of the time. But there are many texts of which we will not be able to discover a political meaning by this method of contextualisation. Yet, according to Bourdieu's central thesis, they possess such a meaning. How are we supposed to test this thesis? How can Bourdieu substantiate a thesis of which he claims that it holds for *all* texts, even though it is really plausible only for *some* texts and highly implausible for many others?

At this point, a general weakness of the epistemological model of suspicion comes to light, a weakness that has been amply discussed with regard to Marx and Freud by authors such as Karl Popper and

(29) Cf. BOURDIEU (1988), pp. 58/47, 69/57, 84/71, 86/73-4, 89/76.

(30) Cf. Hans SLUGA, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 99.

(31) Gottlob FREGE, "Logische Untersuchungen. Dritter Teil: Gedankengefüge", *Beiträge zur Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus* 3 (1923-1926), pp. 36-51.

Adolf Grünbaum. ⁽³²⁾ According to the core thesis of this model, the deeper meaning of texts or other utterances is concealed, and it can be revealed only by those who have a privileged access to this hidden domain of sense, such as the psychoanalyst or the sociologist. In chapter four of his book, titled 'Censorship and the imposition of form', Bourdieu argues that Heidegger's political expressive drives have been censored by the philosophical field, the very structure of which admits of an expression of these drives only in a sublimated form. As a result, concepts and words that originally belong to the domain of politics 'undergo a radical transformation which renders them barely recognisable', at least in the eyes of philosophical readers (47/36). Indeed, according to Bourdieu, Heidegger submitted 'his social phantasms and his ethical or political dispositions, without consciously intending to do so, to a restructuring liable to render them *misrecognisable*' (51/40). If this is so, the fact that we cannot discover a hidden political meaning of a great many Heideggerian texts will not count as an objection to Bourdieu's central thesis. On the contrary, this is only to be expected, because we may suppose that in these cases the censorship of the philosophical field has completely repressed or sublimated Heidegger's expressive drives. Yet, according to the thesis, the drives persist, smouldering deep under the surface of Heidegger's writings, and determining clandestinely their hidden sense.

The problem is, of course, that the doctrines of repression and sublimation immunise Bourdieu's central thesis against direct empirical falsification. If the thesis cannot be made plausible by means of the empirical examples that Bourdieu adduces as illustrations, such as his analysis of the Heideggerian concept of *Fürsorge*, because it would be unwarranted to extrapolate from these examples (if sound) to the oeuvre as a whole, it cannot be refuted by empirical counterexamples either. However, it would be rash to conclude, as naïve falsificationists would, that Bourdieu's central thesis is not admissible in (social) science because it cannot be tested by direct confrontations with the empirical material. There may be arguments of a more theoretical nature that render it plausible, arguments that are linked less directly to the empirical (textual) basis. Bourdieu advances one argument of this kind, the argument from homology, an argument that pervades his

(32) Cf. for example, Adolf GRÜNBAUM, *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984.

book. What is the argument from homology, what does it establish, and is it sound?

Bourdieu does not take the trouble to explain explicitly the key term 'homology' to his readers. In one of its uses, this is a technical term from projective geometry, introduced by Sophus Lie (1842-1899), and stands for a perspective collineation of which the center and axis are not incident.⁽³³⁾ I suspect that Bourdieu uses the word in a somewhat more general sense, as an equivalent for 'collineation', which means a transformation of a plane which transforms collinear points into collinear points. Perhaps, he has an even more general sense in mind, for instance that of all operations which establish *any* point-to-point correlation between two planes or structures. He might then use the noun 'homology' also to designate the relation between two structures that can be established by such an operation. It is equally possible that Bourdieu has no specific sense in mind, and uses the term as an imprecise metaphor.

However this may be, the argument from homology goes as follows:

- (1) there is a homology between the socio-political field and the philosophical field;
- (2) because of this homology, each specific point or 'position' in the one field corresponds to a position in the other;
- (3) Hence, a specific position in the philosophical field 'connotes' or 'implies' the corresponding position in the political field;
- (4) Hence, positions in the philosophical field contain, as their hidden meaning, positions in the socio-political field;
- (5) Heidegger's position in the philosophical field may be characterised as a conservative revolution;
- (6) Heidegger's philosophy contains, as its hidden meaning, the political conservative revolution championed by authors such as Jünger, Spengler, Sombart, or Moeller van den Bruck.⁽³⁴⁾

If sound, this argument from homology would perhaps substantiate the central thesis of Bourdieu's book, that Heidegger's philosophy is 'only a sublimated philosophical version, imposed by the forms of

(33) Cf. for instance, H. S. M. COXETER, *Introduction to Geometry*. New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1969, pp. 247-248.

(34) BOURDIEU (1988), pp. 39/28-29, 53/42, 54/43, 58/47, 64/53, 69-70/57-8, 79/67, 80-81/69, 84/71, 110/97, 114/99-100.

censorship specific to the field of philosophical production, of the political or ethical principles which determined the philosopher's support for Nazism' (11/3-4). But is the argument sound? There are many reasons for doubting both the truth of its premises and the validity of the inference. A small selection of these reasons will suffice to refute Bourdieu's argument from homology.

With regard to (1), there is both a problem of meaning and a problem of modelling. As long as Bourdieu has not explained clearly what he means by 'homology', the first premise of his argument does not make sense and we cannot decide whether it is true or false. Now supposing that Bourdieu defines 'homology' as some specific kind of point-to-point relation between two fields, we will have a problem of modelling. It may be possible to model one and the same field by means of a great many geometrical structures. For example, we might model France geometrically on a map by drawing straight lines between cities with more than a hundred thousand inhabitants, but we may also model France by drawing straight lines between vineyards that produce a *grand cru*. The resulting geometrical models will be different, and one of them may be homologous (in the relevant sense) to some model of, say, China, whereas the other is not. As a consequence, we can decide whether (1) is true or false only if Bourdieu first reveals his choice of modelling principles, and the truth or falsity of (1) will depend upon this choice. As a consequence, the truth of (1) will be partly conventional, and this considerably weakens Bourdieu's conclusion. Even worse, any field may be made homologous (in some specific sense) to any other field by some method of modelling. Hence, thesis (1) is void of empirical content as long as the models have not been specified.

Sociologists do not seem to be bothered by such subtleties pertaining to the philosophy of science. The American sociologist Randall Collins, author of the more than thousand-page book *The Sociology of Philosophies*, simply denies premise (1). He holds that the philosophical field is *neither* homologous to the social space, *nor* to the intermediate field of university positions, as Bourdieu claims. According to Collins, the intellectual field 'is governed by the struggle for attention under the law of small numbers, with its limit of a half dozen effective factions and its structural pressures for oppositions and regroupings; whereas the social and political worlds do not operate by this kind of struggle over attention space'. Furthermore, the structure

of the university field in Germany after 1900, with its 'overcrowding of candidates for faculty positions..., and huge influx of students in the 1920s', does not 'account for the range of opposing positions in philosophy of this time' either, because this phenomenon is not at all unique in the history of modern education. ⁽³⁵⁾ I am convinced neither by Bourdieu nor by Collins, for the reasons given above. So let us leave the issue of whether (1) is true to the sociologists. It does not matter much, since the argument from homology is not sound even if (1) were meaningful and true.

The reason is that the argument contains a fallacy of equivocation. If (1) is true, (2) is also true, by definition. But premises (1) and (2) entail the intermediate conclusion (3) only if one reads 'connote' or 'implies' in a special and unusual sense, a sense determined by projective geometry. If two structures A and B are homologous, one might obtain a point in structure B by applying a transformation to a point in structure A. In this first sense, and in this sense only, does a position in field A 'connote' or 'imply' a position in field B. But this sense is not at all the sense in which a philosophical position might 'imply' or 'contain' specific conclusions that are not explicitly stated in it, for here the term 'imply' has the logical meaning of either a material implication or the relation of entailment. Yet it is the second, logical, meaning of 'imply' or 'contain' that is used in conclusion (4). In the first sense, 'imply' is a transformation of points into points. In the second sense, 'imply' is a logical relation between propositions. Only in this second sense of 'imply', one might say that what is implied by a set of propositions is implicitly 'contained' in them as a hidden meaning.

We must conclude that Bourdieu's theses (4) and (6) cannot be established by the argument from homology, even if premise (1) were true. The central argument of *L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger* is a logical howler, which remains unnoticed only because the argument is not clearly and distinctly stated in the book.

Bourdieu might object that my interpretation of his argument is uncharitable. For the argument would be valid if the word 'contain' in (4) also had a mere projective or structural sense, the sense in which a

(35) Randall COLLINS, *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1998, pp. 1019-1020, note 41, and p. 948, note 4.

position in field A 'contains' a position in field B if the fields are homologous and the positions are mere projective transformations of each other. There is one passage in Bourdieu's book that suggests this weak interpretation of his conclusion, where he says that Heidegger's thought is 'a *structural equivalent* in the "philosophical" order' of a position in the political order (118/104, my italics).

But this weak interpretation is confronted by two problems. First, there are too many passages in Bourdieu's book that suggest the stronger interpretation expressed in theses (4) and (6). Mostly, Bourdieu claims that the very *meaning* of Heidegger's entire œuvre is both philosophical and political. In French, he uses expressions such as 'sens' (*passim*), 'connotations politiques' (78), 'significations secondaires' (79), 'implications proprement politiques' (79), 'des doubles sens et des sous entendus' (79), 'associations' (110), and 'vérité objective' (102). Accordingly, Bourdieu not only claims that Heidegger's philosophical position is *structurally equivalent* to a specific political position, but he also holds that its *content* includes this political position. According to Bourdieu, choosing the philosophical position *eo ipso* is choosing that political position: 'there is no philosophical option... which does not entail its concomitant academic and political options, and which does not owe to these secondary, more or less unconsciously assumed options, some of its deepest determinations' (69/57).

Second, in the weak interpretation, Bourdieu's conclusion is irrelevant to the interpretation of Heidegger's oeuvre. A mere structural analogy does not entail very much about the *content* of Heidegger's philosophical position. We may suppose that France, if modeled geometrically in a specific manner, is homologous to China, modeled in a specific manner, and that Paris occupies a position in France that is structurally equivalent to the position of Peking in China. But it does not follow that if I choose to spend a week in Paris, I *eo ipso* choose to spend a week in Peking. Consequently, the weak thesis would substantiate neither Bourdieu's claim that in choosing a philosophical position, Heidegger *eo ipso* opted for a political position, nor his contentions that the sociologist is able to understand Heidegger's works better than philosophers are, and that philosophers are prey to specific illusions. We may confront Bourdieu with the following dilemma. Either the central argument of his book contains a fallacy of equivocation, or its conclusion is philosophically irrelevant.

4. CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTIONS

There is, however, one plausible reply to these criticisms. Bourdieu might hold that the argument from homology merely states a necessary condition for the alleged fact that Heidegger's philosophical stance implies a specific political position, a condition that is not at all sufficient. Other conditions might be necessary as well, conditions pertaining to the details of Heidegger's background, his *habitus*, and his particular philosophical stance. In that case, it is only to be expected that the premises of the argument from homology do not entail its conclusion. The argument would be inductive or probabilistic rather than deductive.

In order to see whether Bourdieu's argument is effective if interpreted as an induction, we have to discuss theses (5) and (6). In what sense does Bourdieu claim that Heidegger's philosophical stance is a 'conservative revolution' in philosophy? And are there specific reasons for assuming that this particular stance is 'only a sublimated philosophical version, imposed by the forms of censorship specific to the field of philosophical production, of the political or ethical principles which determined the philosopher's support for Nazism', that is, of a conservative revolution in politics (11/3-4)?

In fact, Bourdieu uses two very different conceptions of a conservative revolution in philosophy, and Heidegger's philosophical stance is a conservative revolution in both senses. The first conception (CR1) is concerned with the relation between philosophy and science. Whereas traditionally, philosophy conceived itself as a foundational discipline that is more fundamental than the sciences, both neo-Kantianism and logical positivism tended to reduce philosophy to a mere reflection on science. Heidegger's first conservative revolution in philosophy consisted in re-installing philosophy as a foundational discipline by arguing that the ontological question of the meaning of Being is more fundamental than the sciences. As Bourdieu says, 'By establishing philosophy as a fundamental science, which is able to found others, but cannot itself be founded, he restores to philosophy the autonomy which the school of Marburg had caused it to lose...' (70/58).

It is easy to see how this first conservative revolution in philosophy might be linked to a position within the field of academic institutions. Philosophers who felt threatened in their professional independence and competence by the neo-Kantian and positivist attacks on tradi-

tional philosophy, will have been anxious to secure for themselves an independent professional field, clearly separated from scientific disciplines. Both the phenomenologists in Europe and the ordinary-language philosophers in the United Kingdom accomplished this feat. But it is less easy to understand how this first conservative revolution in philosophy might be linked to a conservative position in politics, even though several philosophers who argued either that philosophy is foundational (Husserl) or that philosophy is strictly separated from the sciences (Wittgenstein) were in fact political conservatives of sorts.⁽³⁶⁾ Indeed, there are clear counterexamples to such a link. Alexander Pfänder (1870-1941), for instance, developed a foundational conception of phenomenology in his later works, but he abhorred Nazism and the conservative revolution in politics.

The reverse holds for the second conception of a conservative revolution in philosophy (CR2) which Bourdieu uses. This second conception is indeed related to the traditional notion of a conservative revolution in the cultural and political realm, i.e. the notion of a counter-movement against the French Revolution and the ideas of the Enlightenment, motivated in Germany by the treaty of Versailles. In philosophy, Bourdieu says, Heidegger's conservative revolution is a radical reversal of Husserl's defence of reason and philosophy as a rigorous science. By placing history and time 'at the very origins of knowledge', and 'steeping truth in history and its relativity', Heidegger called reason radically in question, and deprived 'scientific truth of the eternity which it claims and which is granted by classical philosophy' (72-75 /60-63). This antirationalist conservative revolution in philosophy is not so much *homologous* to the conservative revolution in political thought. Rather, it is partially *identical* with the ideology of at least some of the politically conservative revolutionaries, such as Ernst Niekisch in his earlier works. It should be stressed, however, that the notion of a conservative revolution in politics is a family resemblance concept. Not all conservative revolutionaries in politics were antiscientific and opposed to technology. We

(36) Husserl was something like a German national conservative; Wittgenstein was perceived as an old-time conservative by Fania Pascal, but during the mid-1930s, his allegiance was with the Left, although, in general, he was not much interested by politics. Cf. Ray MONK, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty Of Genius*. London, Vintage, 1991, pp. 342-343.

find a protechnology attitude in some authors such as Moeller van den Bruck, Oswald Spengler, Carl Schmitt, Hans Freyer, and Ernst Jünger. In other authors, the antitechnology attitude prevailed: Ernst Niekisch, the so-called Tat-Kreis, Edgar Julius Jung, L. Ziegler, and Wilhelm Stapel. (37)

These considerations lead us to the following conclusion. Bourdieu attributes two different conservative revolutions in philosophy to Heidegger, a foundationalist revolution (CR1) and an antirationalist revolution (CR2). That these are really different revolutions cannot be denied, because in the sense of CR1, Husserl and Heidegger were corevolutionaries, whereas in the sense of CR2, Heidegger's revolution is a revolution against Husserl. Husserl was a foundationalist and a rationalist, whereas Heidegger was (at least in *Sein und Zeit*) a foundationalist and an antirationalist. If there is a homology between CR1 and the conservative revolution in politics, this is not a good reason at all to assume that CR1 also implies, as its hidden meaning, that political revolution. In the case of CR2, the homology argument is superfluous, because CR2 is *identical* with one element of the ideology of at least some conservative revolutionaries in German politics. Furthermore, there is no valid inference from CR1 to CR2 or vice versa. It follows that, even if interpreted as an inductive argument, the argument from homology is either unconvincing (CR1) or irrelevant (CR2).

This negative conclusion concerning the central argument of Bourdieu's book on Heidegger implies a positive conclusion with regard to the explanatory power of Bourdieu's sociology of knowledge. Many scholars hold that the sociology of knowledge is especially successful in explaining illusions and mistakes. Bourdieu's thesis that Heidegger's thought is 'only a sublimated philosophical version... of the political or ethical principles which determined the philosopher's support for Nazism' (11/3-4) is such a mistake. I have argued that it can be explained on the basis of Bourdieu's sociology of knowledge by reference to the structure of the French intellectual field in the 1970s and to Bourdieu's own trajectory in that field.

(37) Cf. Stefan BREUER, *Anatomie der konservativen Revolution*. Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993, pp. 76-77.

5. QUESTIONS OF METHOD

The results of section four leave us with two final questions. First, if Bourdieu's argument to the effect that 'Heidegger's philosophy is political from beginning to end' (109/96) is not convincing, how are we to conceive of the relation between Heidegger's philosophical thought and his political stances? Second, if even Bourdieu, an experienced sociologist, who has the explicit intention of reconstructing the field of production in which Heidegger was working, falls prey to illusions generated by the French field of reception, by what method will we be able to avoid misunderstandings in the interpretation of texts due to differences between the field of production and the field of reception? Clearly, a reflexive sociology of national fields of production does not suffice, for Bourdieu applied such a sociology to Heidegger.

With regard to the first question, there are two extremes that we should avoid. On the one hand, authors such as Jean Wahl, François Fédier, and Richard Rorty argued that there is no link at all between Heidegger's philosophical position and his allegiance to National Socialism.⁽³⁸⁾ This view is highly implausible, among many other reasons because Heidegger mixed his philosophy with politics in a number of texts, such as the rectoral address of 1933, and because he is said to have told his pupil and friend Karl Löwith in 1936 that his political involvement with Nazism was based upon his philosophical account of historicity in *Sein und Zeit*.⁽³⁹⁾ On the other hand, authors such as Bourdieu and Rockmore hold that Heidegger's philosophy is politically contaminated through and through. We saw that Bourdieu's argument is not convincing, and I have criticised elsewhere Rockmore's contention that Heidegger's 'fundamental ontology is basically political'.⁽⁴⁰⁾ If there is neither complete separation nor a global coincidence between Heidegger's philosophy and his political stance, how should we determine what specific links there are between the one and the other, and what logical strength these links possess?

(38) Jean WAHL, "Déclin ou floraison de la métaphysique", *Critique* (April 1956), pp. 354-361; François FÉDIER, "Trois attaques contre Heidegger", *Critique* (November 1966), pp. 883-904; Richard RORTY, "Taking Philosophy Seriously", *The New Republic* 88 (April 11, 1988), pp. 32-33.

(39) Cf. PHILIPSE (1998), p. xiv.

(40) PHILIPSE (1998), pp. 258-259.

In my book on Heidegger, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation*, I argued that there is only one convincing strategy. One must first develop a comprehensive *philosophical* interpretation of Heidegger's œuvre, taking the chronology and contexts of his works into account. On the basis of my overall interpretation, I then investigated the specific links between Heidegger's philosophy, in its various historical stages, and his political texts and actions. (41) One of my hypotheses is that when Heidegger invented the outlines of his later philosophy in the years 1935-1940, he aimed at providing the Nazi revolution with a philosophico-religious basis, working in the tradition of Paul de Lagarde and others, who pleaded for the development a German religion. If this hypothesis is plausible, it is not because of some general sociological argument, but for the reasons that it solves a number of specific interpretative problems concerning Heidegger's later oeuvre, and that it fits in well with his biography. (42)

This is not to say that sociology is useless for the interpretation of Heidegger's works. On the contrary, the socio-political situation in which Heidegger was producing his œuvre may contain many clues as to the meaning of obscure passages in his texts and it may suggest valuable interpretative hypotheses, as the details of Bourdieu's book amply show. (43) But of course, the political situation is not the only context that might be relevant to the interpretation of philosophical works. In Heidegger's case, the religious context is even more important, and, generally speaking, philosophical texts may be clarified by studying any kind of contemporary developments outside of philosophy in the strict sense, such as developments in economics, mathematics, physics, psychology, music, literature, historical scholarship, etc. We cannot understand Plato's *Timaeus* without studying Greek mathematics, and we cannot understand Kant's first *Critique* without studying Newtonian mechanics. Hence Bourdieu's idea of a *lecture double* is much too limited. A priori, there is no restriction to the number of extraphilosophical domains that may be relevant to the interpretation of philosophical texts. By placing Heidegger in one

(41) I changed my mind on the relation between *Sein und Zeit* and Nazism later on. See Herman PHILIPSE, "Heidegger and Ethics", *Inquiry* 42 (1999), pp. 439-474.

(42) PHILIPSE (1998), pp. 266-272.

(43) Bourdieu also refers to Paul de Lagarde, and notes that 'The philosopher Franz Böhm sees in Lagarde the central defender of the Germanic spirit against Cartesian rationalism and optimism' (37/27).

extraphilosophical context only, the socio-political one, Bourdieu a priori and illicitly limits the resources for developing interpretative hypotheses, and creates a bias in favour of his political interpretation of Heidegger.

From a methodological point of view, developing interpretative hypotheses must be distinguished from testing them. How should we put to the test hypotheses if our game is the interpretation of philosophical texts? In my book on Heidegger, I suggested that we must apply by analogy the competitive hypothetico-deductive method used in the empirical sciences. Instead of carefully constructed experiments and measurements, we use as our empirical basis carefully formulated problems of interpretation and the entire corpus of Heideggerian texts in the original language (German). We then adjudicate on competing interpretative hypotheses, put forward by all relevant authors on Heidegger (ourselves included), by using analogues of the criteria for theory choice applied in theoretical science. Which of the competing hypotheses solves most problems of interpretation? What is the most plausible hypothesis, given the extant corpus of German texts and Heidegger's historical situation? Which hypothesis provides the greatest and deepest unification of Heidegger's works? In Bourdieu's book on Heidegger, as in most other books on the topic, such a competitive method of testing interpretative hypotheses is lacking altogether. Yet it is only by using this method that we will be able to create a rational dialogue between Heidegger scholars of different national communities, and to avoid undue influences of our field of reception on the interpretation of Heidegger's texts. ⁽⁴⁴⁾

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(44) Cf. for an explicit illustration of this method: Herman PHILIPSE, "Heidegger's Grand (Pascalian) Strategy: On the Problem of Reinterpreting the Existentialia", in *Metaphysics: The Proceedings of the XXth World Congress of Philosophy*, Vol. 2, Bowling Green, Philosophy Documentation Center, 1999, pp. 49-64.