Response to Simon Susen's "Bourdieusian Reflections on Language:
Unavoidable Conditions of the Real Speech Situation".

After the collaboration between Jean-Claude Passeron and Pierre Bourdieu had come to an end at about 1972, Passeron wrote a thèse d'état based on the teaching he had done at the University of Nantes after establishing a Department of Sociology there in the late 1960s. It was submitted at the University of Nantes and entitled Les mots de la sociologie [the words of sociology] (Passeron 1980). Passeron selected large amounts of this thesis for inclusion in his Le raisonnement sociologique [Sociological reasoning], first published in 1991 and republished in 2006 (Passeron 1991 and 2006). Selecting articles he had written in the 1980s, Passeron regarded Le raisonnement sociologique as his improvement of Le métier de sociologue [the sociological craft] which he had co-authored with Bourdieu and Chamboredon in 1968 (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, Passeron 1968, [1991]). As its title suggests, the theme of Passeron's thesis was the nature and status of the words adopted in seeking to conduct enquiries in the sociology of culture. The text was the product of his engagement with the problems of his research students and also based on his observations of the language of adjudication adopted by staff when acting as jurors in assessing the research reports submitted by students. Passeron's main intention was to insist that the language of sociology is different in kind from the language of philosophy. He referred to Lalande's Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie [technical and critical vocabulary of philosophy] (Lalande (1908), 1960) and also to the attempt made to imitate that work by disciples of his former tutor, Daniel Lagache, in producing a Vocabulaire de la psychoanalyse [vocabulary of psycho-analysis] (Laplanche & Pontalis 1967), in order to argue that a comparable lexicon of sociological words would be 'impossible' (1980), (changed to 'infaisable' [impractical or undo-able] in 1991). Language deployed in sociological explanation is always contingent. Unlike philosophical or psychoanalytic language, sociological language is always necessarily in a dialectical relationship with what it seeks to analyse precisely because much social and cultural behaviour is expressed in words and because, therefore, the language of explanation is immersed linguistically in what it seeks to explain. Passeron's determination about this point explains, in part, his dissociation from Bourdieu. Passeron believed that Bourdieu began to treat more absolutely than contingently the conceptual framework which they had developed together. The 'habitus', for instance, was, in origin, a philosophical concept which Bourdieu initially used heuristically but which, in Passeron's view, he began to reify. Passeron's accusation was not simply that Bourdieu began to treat concepts philosophically. More questionably still, in Passeron's view, Bourdieu had begun to use a word like 'reproduction' to signify an universally valid correlation between the transmission of cultural tastes and social positions rather than as a linguistic device adopted contingently to explain the particular situation in France at the end of the 1960s. (see Passeron 1986, which became Chapter 4 of Passeron ((1991), 2006, [2013]).

Simon Susen has given us a brilliantly lucid expository systematisation of Bourdieu's thinking in respect of language. He is explicit in acknowledging that Bourdieu was opposed to Habermas's 'communication-theoretic approach' and that Bourdieu rightly identified that 'we need to identify the unavoidable conditions of the real speech situation, rather than the avoidable conditions of the ideal speech situation, in order to understand that the legitimacy of linguistic validity is always contingent upon the validity of social legitimacy' (p.1). Susen proposes to examine Bourdieu's work on language to consider whether it provides an adequate conceptual framework to sustain an anti-Habermasian position. He recognises that there are three reasons why the task of identifying the 'ontological presuppositions, that is, ... a set of universal assumptions about the very nature of language' (p.1) held by Bourdieu appears not to have been attempted before. The three reasons are well stated and, in essence, amount to the reluctance to consider philosophically discussions of language which Bourdieu advanced sociologically and in specific social contexts. Nevertheless, Susen persists in his intention to demonstrate that 'there is not only a Bourdieusian theory of language, but also a Bourdieusian philosophy of language'. In trying to evaluate philosophically a Bourdieusian philosophy of language, Susen simultaneously responds to the tendency in the development of Bourdieu's thinking which Passeron disparaged and is himself, again in Passeron's argument, 'guilty' of attempting to criticise that thinking in terms of an inappropriate intellectual discourse. In this endeavour, Susen specifies in respect of language the wider argument he advanced in respect of the social theories of Bourdieu and Habermas in his The foundations of the social (Susen 2007), and I find myself re-stating the position which I sought to express in my review of his book (Robbins 2010). It isn't just that Susen tries to extract a philosophy of language from texts in which Bourdieu was writing sociologically. Much more importantly, he de-contextualises those texts. Bourdieu was always insistent that his texts were interventions, that his writings and talks were 'performative' rather than referential.[1] In the 1960s, this non-representational dimension was sustained in the sequence of books offering sociological accounts of the cultural implications of schooling, photography, and art galleries, by the commitment to submit details within published findings of the procedures adopted instrumentally to produce general findings from particular enquiries[2]. Passeron could have agreed with Bourdieu's rejection of the attempts of structuralism to provide a theory of society in his 'Structuralism and theory of sociological knowledge' (Bourdieu 1968), but not with the alternative which Bourdieu seemed to espouse – that of, rightly, emphasizing sociological method but, wrongly, identifying that method as a variant of unified scientific method, a revival of Comtist 'prime philosophy', rather than as accepting its pluralist character and its historical contingency. From the point at which Bourdieu began to outline his 'theory of practice', he began to attempt to amalgamate this philosophy of science with a resurgent interest in the Husserlian emphasis (expressed in The crisis of European sciences) on the rootedness of science in the pre-predicative experiences of

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[1] It is significant that Susen gives no reference to the work of J.L. Austin (Austin (1962), 1976) which clearly influenced Bourdieu, nor to Choses dites (Bourdieu 1987, [1990]) which, as the title suggests, was Bourdieu's attempt to be explicit about his speech acts. ('Things spoken' or, perhaps better, 'Spoken things' would each convey the sense of Bourdieu's title that he was offering linguistic performances rather than referential statements. The title actually adopted in the published translation – In other words (Bourdieu, [1990]) – wrongly conveys the sense of paraphrase as if there are prior meanings which are expressed in words, implying a commitment to a Saussurian langue/parole duality.

[2] I tried to demonstrate this in Robbins (2007).

the life-world, and to do this experientially rather than rationally. It was as if he had contrived to incorporate his philosophical position within his own social trajectory, thereby rendering it neither exclusively rational nor exclusively subjective. This balancing act explains why Passeron thought that Bourdieu had both moved towards 'culturalist' subjectivism and adopted a philosophical perspective. This also explains how Bourdieu sought to practise what he preached (or it may be that what he preached was a rationalisation of the way in which he always instinctively practised). He tried to adopt his theory of practice in his own practice. His attitude towards language was no exception. It is not possible to extrapolate a study of language from his writing. His writing about language no more constituted a sociology of language than a philosophy of language. Rather it sought to enact sociological reflexivity in practice. He was not interested in contributing to 'sociolinguistics' but, rather, in practising socio-linguistics. (He insisted on the hyphen). The problem, therefore, is that the framework which Susen adopts for his discussion necessarily imposes formally a judgement which is not contained in his consideration of the substantive position which he derives from Bourdieu's work. As I concluded earlier: 'The "foundations of the social" need to be defined in social exchange which entails establishing socially inclusive institutional foundations of social theoretical discourse' (Robbins 2010).

Bourdieu's writing about language needs to be contextualised in two ways – first as itself situated and strategic action, and, second, as the assimilation of previous writing. The first way is Bourdieusian in interpreting his texts in relation to his social trajectory. The second way could be said to be Passeronian in identifying socio-historically the textual influences which became constitutive of Bourdieu's synthesized approach. Both involve the search for what Passeron variously called in the sub-title to his Le raisonnement sociologique, either 'L'espace non poppérien du raisonnement naturel' [the space for non-Popperian natural reasoning] (1991) or 'Un espace non poppérien de l'argumentation' [a space for non-Popperian argument] (2006). In spite of this nuanced difference between Passeron's terminology in 1991 and 2006, the essential common factor in both contextual orientations lies in the opposition to the attempted development of a formal epistemology of social science such as Popper had advanced for the natural sciences in the Logic of Scientific Discovery. The same opposition applies in respect to the study of language.

In relation to Bourdieu's study of 'literature', Anna Boschetti confronted the same issue as does Susen in commenting on Bourdieu's study of 'language'. In commencing her discussion, she responded by reminding readers that 'Bourdieu himself stated, referring to Gaston Bachelard, that "epistemology is always conjunctural; its propositions and thrust are determined by the principal scientific threat of the moment" (Bourdieu & Wacquant [1992], 174)' (Boschetti 2006, 135). Susen is not inclined to accept this starting point. He early states that Bourdieu 'dedicated a significant part of his work to the study of language' and, in evidence, offers a footnote which appears to cite twelve separate texts. Of these, however, six texts are chapters of Ce que parler veut dire [what speaking means] (Bourdieu 1982i). The other six are: "La production de la croyance" [the product ion of belief] (Bourdieu 1977i, [1980]); 'Sur le pouvoir symbolique' [On symbolic power], cited as 1992 [1977] but which was first given as a lecture at Harvard in 1973 (Bourdieu 1977ii, [1977]; 'Le marché linguistique'[the linguistic market], cited as 1993 [1984e] but which was first given as a lecture in Geneva in December, 1978; 'Le fétichisme de la langue'[the fetichism of

language], co-authored with Luc Boltanski and published in 1975 (Bourdieu & Boltanski 1975); 'Le couturier et sa griffe' [the couturier and his label], co-authored with Yvette Delsaut and also published in 1975 (Bourdieu & Delsaut 1975); and, finally, a section of An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology (Bourdieu & Wacquant [1992]) – 'Interest, habitus, rationality' – based on discussion at a Chicago workshop of the Spring of 1988. The six texts derived from Ce que parler veut dire do not reflect the totality of the contributions selected for that volume. Although this text of 1982, with its sub-title - L'économie des échanges linguistiques [the economy of linguistic exchanges] – may be branded as a study of language, it does in fact mainly constitute a collection of earlier occasional papers which relate predominantly to other concerns. The text cited by Susen as 1982d is the first chapter of the first of the three parts of Ce que parler veut dire. The first section ('L'économie des échanges linguistiques') is dated from the summer of 1980, and the first chapter, with the same title, is a revised version of a seminar paper which Bourdieu had given in the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) at the end of 1976 and published in 1977 (Bourdieu 1977iii) which, in turn, builds upon 'Le marché des biens symboliques' [the market of symbolic goods] which he had published in 1971 (Bourdieu 1971i). The text cited by Susen as 1982g is the first of four chapters in Part II of Ce que parler veut dire – a part which was given the title adopted subsequently for the English edition of 1991 and the French re-edition of 2001 (Language and Symbolic Power/Langage et pouvoir symbolique) (Bourdieu 1991, 2001). This chapter was 'Le langage autorisé: les conditions sociales de l'efficacité du discours rituel'[Authorized Language : the Social Conditions for the Effectiveness of Ritual Discourse], which had first been published in Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales in 1975 (Bourdieu 1975i). Susen does not cite the three other chapters of this part which were 'Les rites d'institution' [Rites of Institution] which had originally been given as a conference paper in Neuchâtel in October, 1981 (Bourdieu 1982ii); 'La force de la représentation' [in full: Identity and Representation: elements for a Critical Reflection on the Idea of Region] first published in the book; and 'Décrire et prescrire: les conditions de possibilité et les limites de l'efficacité politique'[Description and Prescription: the Conditions of Possibility and the Limits of Political Effectiveness], originally published in 1981 (Bourdieu 1981). Susen cites the first chapter of Part III as 1982h. This is 'Censure et mise en forme'[Censorship and the Imposition of Form], which was originally published in 1975 as part of the article which Bourdieu wrote on Heidegger (Bourdieu 1975ii) which he later revised to be published in book form as L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger[The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger] (Bourdieu 1988, [1991]). The other chapters of Part III were re-issues of Bourdieu's article of 1975 analysing Etienne Balibar's critical remarks on Lire Le Capital [in full: Reading Marx: some critical remarks on 'Some critical remarks about *Lire le Capital*'](Bourdieu 1975iii), and of his 'Le Nord et le Midi' [in full: North and South. Contribution to an analysis of the Montesquieu effect], first published in 1980 (Bourdieu 1980)[3].

Susen identifies ten key features 'that can – and, from a Bourdieusian perspective, indeed should – be regarded as inherent in language' (p.1). He offers his account as apparently a paraphrase of elements of Bourdieu's discourse so as to construct an uniform, systematic sense. My point in pursuing above in detail Susen's use of sources is to argue that in essence he derives his presentation from Bourdieu texts which belong to the period between 1972 and 1982, but he does so without acknowledging that there may have been features of this historical period which caused Bourdieu to formulate his views in strategic ways related to

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[3] These bibliographic comments are derived from my discussion in Robbins (1991) where they are elaborated in Chapter 10, pp. 151-168.

his position-taking at the time. After his systematic presentation, Susen provides a synthesis followed by 'critical reflections' corresponding with each of the key features. I want to try to illustrate the way in which a contextualisation of Susen's use of Bourdieu texts might challenge the systematic formulations which he derives from them and, in turn, throw doubt on the validity of some of his critical remarks. In the space available to me, I want to focus specifically on Susen's fifth key feature – 'The Discursivity of Language' – and, within that, on two of the five levels which he identifies – a) between ordinary and scientific discourses and d) between instituted and ephemeral discourses. Each of Susen's key features demand comparable examination and I hope I have not chosen to focus only on those elements which help me most to make my case. I believe that my kind of reservation applies throughout, although obviously to varying degrees.

For his first 'level', Susen says in relation to 'The Discursivity of Language', that ' ...a distinction should be drawn between ordinary and scientific discourses'. (p.8). In support of this general summary of Bourdieu's view, Susen cites Bourdieu texts ranging from 1968 to 2001, and a range of secondary discussions of the topic, but his specific elaboration draws upon remarks in Le métier de sociologue (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron 1968) (Susen's endnotes 52, 53, and 54). Based on the reference in that text, derived from Bachelard, to the need for 'epistemological vigilance', Susen proceeds to outline Bourdieu's general view of the relationship between ordinary and scientific discourses. Without further reference to specific Bourdieu texts, Susen presents, as if paraphrases of Bourdieu, five bases of differentiation between the two discourses. Without evidence, he asserts that Bourdieu considered scientific and ordinary discourse to be qualitatively different, and, equally without detailing any source for his comment, Susen states categorically that 'Ordinary and scientific discourses stand in a hierarchical relation to each other: the naïve spontaneity of the former is epistemologically inferior to the critical reflexivity of the latter.' (p.9). Susen concludes this part of his discussion with the summary statement that the discourses must be sharply distinguished and, in support of this contention, he offers two short quotes from Bourdieu's inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, delivered on April 23rd, 1982.

For his fourth 'level', Susen says in relation to 'The discursivity of language', that 'a distinction is to be drawn between instituted and ephemeral discourses' (p. 10). Here he draws on the English version of Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique (Bourdieu 1972) which was published in 1977 (Bourdieu 1977iv) as Outline of a Theory of Practice, citing this as Bourdieu (1977, [1972]), and the response which Bourdieu made in 1999 (Bourdieu 1999) included in a collection of articles assembled by the European Journal of Social Theory on Méditations pascaliennes which had been published in 1997 (Bourdieu 1997, [2000])..

In offering his critical remarks on his representation of Bourdieu's view of the relationship between ordinary and scientific discourses, Susen usefully distinguishes between three possible positions which he labels 'positivist', 'interpretivist', and 'contextualist'. He concludes that 'Since Bourdieu unambiguously favours scientific over ordinary forms of knowledge, he tends to disregard the epistemic capacities of social actors ...' (p. 31). Rather than regarding these capacities, which he breaks down into seven types, 'as an epistemic privilege of scientists and experts' (p.32), Susen insists that 'we need to recognize that they are built into the human condition'(p. 32).

In offering his critical remarks on his representation of Bourdieu's view of the relationship between instituted and ephemeral discourses, Susen comments that 'Bourdieu has a tendency to emphasize the relationally determined nature and reproductive function of the former and

disregard the relatively unpredictable emergence and potentially transformative impact of the latter.' (p. 33).

It should be clear that my view is that Susen's representations and critiques of Bourdieu are diminished because they are a-historical. My contention is that the majority of the Bourdieu texts which Susen treats as being 'about language' derive from the decade between 1972 and 1982 in which Bourdieu was 'position-taking' after having seized control of the Centre de Sociologie Européenne (CSE) from Aron after the events of May, 1968, and leading up to his appointment to the Chair of Sociology at the Collège de France at the end of 1981. Of course, Bourdieu had always been interested in the relationship between ordinary and scientific discourses. In Algeria, he had collected the narratives of interviewees during his research projects and had published them as 'spontaneous sociology' in the appendices of Travail et travailleurs en algérie (Bourdieu, Darbel, Rivet, & Seibel 1963). As a young researcher he had experienced conflict between the need to dissociate his scientific analysis from the colonial perspective and the desire to justify a distinction between his observation of situations and those of participants. He advocated the development of a dialectical relationship between perspectives derived from case-studies and those derived from statistical analysis (in his introduction to Part I of Travail et travailleurs en Algérie: 'Statistique et sociologie', Bourdieu, Darbel, Rivet & Seibel 1963, 9-13). This was conceived of as a methodological, rather than ontological, dialectic and, as such, ordinary discourse was subsumed under scientific discourse during the work of the 1960s. The fact that the dialectic had originally been seen as a phenomenological encounter between discourses and that neither case-study transcripts nor statistical data offered 'truth' was suppressed in the interest of producing research findings which would advance the scientific reputation of the CSE. Perhaps it was the aftermath of the events of May, 1968, that caused Bourdieu to revive the notion of research as phenomenological encounter, a notion which was in direct opposition to Aron's endorsement of the Weberian separation of scientific and political vocations. Bourdieu's thoughts and actions of the 1970s were both dominated by tensions associated with the political implications of the relationship between ordinary and scientific discourses. There was the inclination to recognize the validity of everyday discourse and, simultaneously, the recognition that the professional raison d'être of the sociologist had to be to produce a discourse which was distinct from the everyday. Whilst being sceptical about the 'truth' of sociological explanations, Bourdieu formulated a mission whereby he would go along with the recognised status of social science in order to liberate and give voice to 'vulgar' views. Appropriating the legitimacy of instituted social science would give Bourdieu the power to advance the political interests of those without voice. Bourdieu's concern about language was essentially a concern about power. The full titles of the component essays of Ce que parler veut dire indicate that Bourdieu was perplexed about political representation and about the relationship between description and prescription. 'L'opinion publique n'existe pas' [public opinion does not exist] was first given as a paper at a conference at Arras in 1971 (Bourdieu 1971ii) precisely when Bourdieu was re-opening the question of the relationship between spontaneous and scientific sociology. Pollsters generate 'public opinion' by structurally discriminating against ordinary language users who do not possess the language of survey questions. In 1971, the role of the social scientist was conceived to be that of a meta-sociologist who could analyse both the intentions of pollsters and the nil responses of those polled. This meta-sociological sociological reflexivity seemed to safeguard both the objectivity of the social scientist and the validity of ordinary discourse as also outlined at the time in 'Three Forms of Theoretical Knowledge' (Bourdieu 1973) which was a spin-off from his progression from Esquisse (Bourdieu 1972) to Outline (Bourdieu 1977iv). When Bourdieu came to re-use the text of 'L'opinion publique n'existe pas' in the chapter of La

Distinction (Bourdieu 1979ii, [1986]) entitled 'Cultural Politics', however, he had introduced the view that ordinary discourses are not pure expressions of ordinary experience, as presupposed by the notion of habitus, but rather are partially assimilated versions of instituted discourses – in particular that political opinions are not held in radically individualistic ways but instead through the mediation of policy positions formulated by political groups or parties. In other words, during the 1970s, Bourdieu's reflections on the distinction between ordinary and scientific language became inseparable from consideration of the relationship between the inherited dispositions of individuals and public positions represented by institutions. This was the period when, to Passeron's disquiet, these reflections became overtly reflexive, self-regarding, or self-presentational. In a mutually reinforcing manner, Bourdieu's emerging theory of practice was implemented in his practice. This was a delicate balancing act. At the same time as Bourdieu was writing an analysis of Heidegger's philosophy which attempted to show that Heidegger had perverted philosophical discourse and the institutional space it occupied by absorbing volkisch popular discourse within it, he was aspiring to an institutional position which would enable him to deploy the legitimacy of sociological discourse as a device to disclose the quotidian world views of ordinary people. The essay entitled 'L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger' (Bourdieu 1975ii) appeared in Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales at the end of the year in which the journal had been launched. We know from Luc Boltanski's reminiscences in Rendre la réalité inacceptable (Boltanski 2008) that the journal was launched in part because members of the CSE had become frustrated that their work was not being accepted for publication by mainstream French sociological journals. The journal was itself, therefore, an attempt to give a voice to a dominated sociological discourse – a discourse which methodologically sought in turn to give a voice to people who were traditionally simply the objects of dominant sociological discourse. Meanwhile, Bourdieu was substantively ambivalent about Heideggerian philosophy because he was disposed to incorporate the ontological critique of epistemology developed by Heidegger within his own practical critique of sociology. At some point in the second half of the 1970s Bourdieu must have decided to apply for a post at the Collège de France. Concern with 'rites of institution' and the potency of 'authorized language' were elements of a kind of intellectual reconnaissance of the social move he was about to make. It is no surprise that 'Les trois états du capital culturel' [the three states of cultural capital] (Bourdieu 1979i) explicitly recognised the force of 'instituted' capital, nor that the inaugural lecture manifested some deference to instituted discourse. It would have been counter-productive to seek to question the validity of the institutional authority that he was about to seek to exploit for his own purposes.

In short, consideration of Bourdieu's professional trajectory in the 1970s suggests that the positions extrapolated by Susen as being 'about language' can be seen, both prospectively and, later, retrospectively, to have been elements of a strategy of self-clarification and self-justification. I do not think that evidence exists for the contention that Bourdieu believed in the superiority of scientific discourse within a hierarchy of discourses. Bourdieu wanted to sustain the authority of social science so as to safeguard his power to subvert the hierarchy but, of course, that ran the risk of actually perpetuating or being thought to perpetuate the structure he wanted to disrupt. Similarly, Bourdieu's apparent support for stable, instituted discourse in opposition to 'ephemeral' discourse was an instrumental strategy, equally wide open to misinterpretation, to mobilise existing sources of power for the benefit of the relatively impotent. To offer this judgement in these terms is, of course, to accept Bourdieu's account of the unavoidable homogeny between social trajectory and cultural/intellectual identity in defence of that account. This recourse to contextualisation as defence is circular and, as a consequence, I want to offer the headings of an argument which would suggest a

contextualisation of Bourdieu on language that is independent of association with his social trajectory (the Passeron approach). This involves acknowledging that Bourdieu's thinking about language was constituted out of a range of influences which he sought to synthesize. As such, it is to be understood developmentally in relation to these influences rather than a-historically as a set of propositions.

Briefly, we know that Bourdieu wrote his diplôme d'études supérieures on Leibniz's Animadversiones on Descartes. In the absence of extant copy of that diploma thesis, we can only speculate on Bourdieu's philosophical engagement with the issues at the time it was written (in 1954). However, it seems safe to assume that he would have reflected on Leibniz's distinction between reasons of fact and reasons of logic and would have been familiar with Leibniz's interest in generating a universal language, and possibly with secondary texts on Leibniz, such as those of Russell and Couturat at the turn of the century, reflecting divergent philosophical positions. We know from Bourdieu's recollections in 'Fieldwork in philosophy' in Choses dites (Bourdieu 1987, [1990]) and from his introduction to Ce que parler veut dire (Bourdieu, 1982i) that he had early carried out extensive work on de Saussure, written a study of de Saussure which he subsequently suppressed, and lectured on his linguistic theory when he was an assistant at the University of Algiers at the end of the 1950s. By the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s, Bourdieu had clearly become familiar with the linguistic dimension of Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms. He cited an article of Cassirer on language in 'Structuralism and Theory of Sociological Method' (Bourdieu 1968), translated a text of one of Cassirer's disciples - Panofsky (Bourdieu 1967) -, and edited the Le sens commun series for the Editions de Minuit which included several translations of works of Cassirer including his Langage et mythe (Cassirer (1953), 1973). He positioned himself in relation to Panofsky in 'Sur le pouvoir symbolique' (Bourdieu 1977ii) as well as in relation there to Sapir and Whorf. As a part of his intellectual revision in writing Esquisse (Bourdieu 1972), he defined himself in opposition to Chomsky's generative grammar and deployed the ideas of Lakoff to harness 'soft logic' in support of his case for strategic rather than rule-dominated action[4]. None of this is to suggest that Bourdieu's thinking was indiscriminately eclectic, but it is to argue that his 'position' on language was intellectually complex and composite without reference to his plea that his works should be understood socio-genetically[5] in relation to his social trajectory.

In spite of our disagreements in relation to Bourdieu on language which arise from our methodological differences and which lead to contrary judgements, there are, nevertheless, two important points on which Susen and I concur. Firstly, we both want to acknowledge the conceptual capacities of ordinary people and to resist the professionalization of social knowledge. In opposition to Susen's insistence that Bourdieu privileged scientific discourse, however, I believe that our common orientation here is one that we share with Bourdieu. Secondly, we agree that ontological predispositions are to be found in Bourdieu's work and that these are in need of further exploration. Susen identifies a fundamental ontology of language which amounts to a subterranean philosophy of language and which underlies Bourdieu's commitment to an understanding of linguistic communication within the social context which makes it possible. My inclination, rather, is to find a phenomenological ontology at the heart of Bourdieu's work, although not one of a Sartrean variety. If this amounts to an underlying philosophical position, it is a 'negative philosophy' as Bourdieu stated in Méditations pascaliennes (Bourdieu 1997,15; [2000, 7] and the kind of philosophy

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[4] I have discussed some of these issues in more detail in Robbins (2000) and Robbins (2005; in English in 2006, 185-196)

[5] See Bourdieu (1993)

advocated by Merleau-Ponty in his inaugural lecture delivered at the Collège de France in January, 1953: L'Eloge de la philosophie [in praise of philosophy] (Merleau-Ponty, 1953). As an undergraduate at the time, Bourdieu would certainly have been aware of this lecture and, more importantly, of Merleau-Ponty's paper given at the first Colloque international de phénoménologie, held in Brussels in 1951, entitled: 'Sur la phénoménologie du langage' [on the phenomenology of language] (Merleau-Ponty 1960, 136-158). In that paper, Merleau-Ponty admitted to understanding at last, based on his reading of late Husserl texts in the archive at Louvain, what Husserl meant when he asserted that 'transcendental subjectivity is inter-subjectivity' (quoted in Merleau-Ponty 1960, 157). My contention is that it was this commitment to an egalitarian, pre-predicative inter-subjectivity which constituted Bourdieu's fundamental predisposition, enabling him to encourage socio-analytic discursive encounter without hierarchical prejudice[6].

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[6] I have recently discussed in more detail the influence of Husserl on Bourdieu, mediated by Merleau-Ponty in Robbins (2012). In Robbins (2011), I also suggested (pp. 191-2) that an approchement between the intellectual projects of Bourdieu and Lyotard, grounded in their common awareness of the work of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, might be beneficial in responding to current intellectual and social problems.

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Biographical note:

Derek Robbins is Professor of international social theory in the School of Law and Social Sciences, University of East London, Docklands campus, 4, University Way, London E16 2RD, UK. His most recent book is French post-war social theory: international knowledge transfer, (Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore/Washington DC: Sage Publications. 2011).