The question of the subject is raised by the very existence of sciences that take as their object what is customarily called the ‘subject’, that object for which there are objects – sciences that consequently engage presuppositions diametrically opposed to those defended by ‘philosophies of the subject’. Even among specialists of the social sciences, there will always be those who will deny the right to objectify another subject and to produce its objective truth. And it would be naive to think that one can reassure the defenders of the sacred rights of subjectivity by giving guarantees of scientificity and pointing out that the assertions of the social sciences, which are based on a specific kind of labour armed with specially developed methods and tools subject to collective control, have nothing in common with the peremptory verdicts of everyday existence, based on partial, self-interested intuition – gossip, insult, slander, rumour and flattery – which are common currency even in intellectual life. Quite the contrary. It is the scientific intention itself which is rejected as an unbearable violence, a tyrannical usurpation of the inscrutable right to truth-telling that every ‘creator’ claims by definition for herself, especially when the object is none other than herself, in her singularity as an irreplaceable being, or for her peers (as is seen from the cries of affronted solidarity that are provoked by every attempt to objectify subject writers, artists or philosophers to scientific inquiry in its ordinary form). And it can even happen, in some corners of the intellectual world, that those who show themselves most concerned for the spiritual dimension of the ‘person’, perhaps because they confuse the methodical procedures of objectification with the rhetorical strategies of polemics, pamphlets, or worse, defamation or slander, do not hesitate to see the propositions of the sociologist as ‘denunciations’, which they feel entitled and required to denounce, or verdicts that bear witness to a diabolical pretension to usurp a divine power and make the judgement of science the last judgement.

In fact, even if some of them sometimes forget it, choosing the easy option of retrospective trial, historians or sociologists simply aim to establish universal principles of explanation and understanding, valid for every ‘subject’, normally including the agent who states them and who knows full well that he can be subjected to critique in the name of those principles. Their propositions, the expressions of the logic of a field subject to the impersonal dialectic of demonstration and refutation, are always exposed to the critique of their competitors and the test of reality, and when they apply to the scientific worlds themselves the whole movement of scientific thought is enacted through them, in and through this return upon itself.

Having said this, I am well aware that the very intention of objectively defining, through categories of thought that are necessarily categorical, and, worse, of explaining – and genetically, albeit with all the methodological and logical precautions of probabilistic reasoning and language (which are unfortunately often misunderstood) – is destined to be seen as especially scandalous when it applies to the scholastic worlds, in other words to people who see themselves as statutorily qualified to explain rather than be explained, to objectify rather than be subject to objectification, and who see no reason to delegate to another authority what they see as a discretionary power of symbolic life or death (which moreover they find it normal to exercise on a daily basis, without accepting the safety barriers of scientific discipline). It is not surprising that philosophers have always been in the front line of the battle against the scientific ambition of explaining when ‘man’ is in question, seeking to define the ‘sciences of man’, in accordance with Dilthey’s classic distinction, to ‘understanding’, which is seemingly more understanding of their freedom and their singularity, or ‘hermeneutics’, which, by virtue of the traditions linked to its religious origins, is more appropriate to the study of the sacred texts of scholastic production.1

1 As A. Grünbaum shows, in a cruel critique of so-called ‘hermeneutic’ philosophies, it is, bizarrely, in the name of a narrowly positivist definition, founded on typically positivist distinctions between theory and empirical observation, reasons and causes, the mental and the physical, etc., and an often somewhat simple view of the natural
To find a way out of this interminable debate, one can simply start out from a paradoxical observation, condensed by Pascal into an admirable formula, which immediately points beyond the dilemma of objectivism and subjectivism: ‘By space the universe comprehends and swallows me up like an atom; by thought I comprehend the world.’ The world encompasses me, comprehends me as a thing among things, but I, as a thing for which there are things, comprehend this world. And I do so (must it be added?) because it encompasses and comprehends me; it is through this material inclusion – often unnoticed or repressed – and what follows from it, the incorporation of social structures in the form of dispositional structures, of objective chances in the form of expectations or anticipations, that I acquire a practical knowledge and control of the encompassing space (I know confusedly what depends on me and what does not, what is ‘for me’ or ‘not for me’ or ‘not for people like me’, what it is ‘reasonable’ for me to do, to hope for and ask for). But I cannot comprehend this practical comprehension unless I comprehend both what distinctively defines it, as opposed to conscious, intellectual comprehension, and also the conditions (linked to positions in social space) of these two forms of comprehension.

The reader will have understood that I have tacitly expanded the notion of space to include, as well as physical space, which Pascal is thinking of, what I call social space, the locus of the coexistence of social positions, mutually exclusive points, which, for the occupants, are the basis of points of view. The ‘I’ that practically comprehends physical space and social space (though the subject of the verb comprehend, it is not necessarily a ‘subject’ in the sense of philosophies of mind, but rather a habitus, a system of dispositions) is comprehended, in a quite different sense, encompassed, inscribed, implicated in that space. It occupies a position which (from statistical analyses of empirical correlations) we know is regularly associated with position-takings (opinions, representations, judgements, etc.) on the physical world and the social world.

From this paradoxical relationship of double inclusion flow all the paradoxes which Pascal assembled under the heading of wretchedness and greatness, and which ought to be meditated on by all those

who remain trapped in the scholastic dilemma of determinism and freedom: determined (wretchedness), man can know his determinations (greatness) and work to overcome them. These paradoxes all find their principle in the privilege of reflexivity: ‘Man knows that he is wretched. He is therefore wretched, because he is so; but he is really great because he knows it.’ Or again: ‘The weakness of man is far more evident in those who know it not than in those who know it.’ It is no doubt true that one cannot expect any greatness, at least in matters of thought, except through knowledge of ‘wretchedness’. And perhaps, in accordance with the same, typically Pascalian dialectic of the reversal of values, sociology, a form of thought detested by ‘thinkers’ because it gives access to knowledge of the determinations which bear on them and therefore on their thought, is, more than the would-be radical breaks which often leave things unchanged, capable of offering them the possibility of escaping from one of the commonest forms of the wretchedness and weakness to which ignorance or the lofty refusal to know so often condemn thought.

Analysis situs

As a body and a biological individual, I am, in the way that things are, situated in a place; I occupy a position in physical space and social space. I am not atopos, placeless, as Plato said of Socrates, nor ‘rootless and free-floating’ as was rather too casually put by the man who is sometimes regarded as the one of the founders of the sociology of intellectuals, Karl Mannheim. Nor am I endowed, as in folk tales, with the physical and social ubiquity (which Flaubert dreamed of) that would enable me to be in several places and several times at once, to occupy simultaneously several physical and social positions. (Place, topos, can be defined absolutely, as the site where a thing or an agent ‘takes place’, exists, in short, as a localization, or relationally, topologically, as a position, a rank in an order.)

The idea of a separate individual is based, in a quite paradoxical way, on the naive apprehension of what, as Heidegger put it in a lecture in 1934, ‘is perceived from outside’, what is ‘graspable and solid’, that is, the body: ‘Nothing is more familiar to us than the impression that man is an individual living being among others and that the skin is his boundary, that inwardness is the seat of experiences and that he has experiences in the same way that he has a stomach and that he is subject to various influences, to which he

1 Pascal, Pensées, 416.
2 Pascal, Pensées, 418.
3 Pascal, Pensées, 376.
4 Pascal, Pensées, 376.
responds.' This spontaneous materialism, the most naive kind, which only wants to know what it can 'handle' (das Handgreifliche, as Heidegger puts it), could explain the tendency to physicalism which, treating the body as a thing that can be measured, weighed and counted, aspires to turn the science of 'man' into a science of nature. But it could also explain, more paradoxically, both the 'personalist' belief in the uniqueness of the person - the basis of the scientifically disastrous opposition between the individual and society - and the inclination towards 'mentalism', thematized in Husserl's theory of intentionality as noesis, an act of consciousness, containing noemata, the contents of consciousness.

(If 'personalism' is the main obstacle to the construction of a scientific vision of the human being and one of the focuses of past and present resistance to the imposition of such a vision, this is no doubt because it is a condensed form of all the theoretical postures - materialism, spiritualism, individualism, etc. - of the most common spontaneous philosophy, at least in societies of Christian tradition and in the most favoured regions of those societies. It is also because it encounters the immediate complicity of all those who, being concerned to think of themselves as unique 'creators' of singularity, are always ready to strike up new variations on the old conservative themes of the open and the closed, conformism and anti-conformism, or unknowingly to reinvent the opposition, constructed by Bergson against Durkheim, between 'orders dictated by impersonal social requirements' and the 'appeals made to the conscience of each of us by persons' - saints, geniuses and heroes. The social sciences, having been initially built up, often at the cost of indisputably scientific distortions, against the religious view of the world, found themselves constituted as a central bastion on the side of the Enlightenment - with, in particular, the sociology of religion, the heart of Durkheim's undertaking and of the resistance it aroused - in the political and religious struggle over the vision of 'humanity' and its destiny. And most of the polemics of which they are periodically the target simply extend the logic of political struggles into intellectual life. That is why one finds there all the themes of the old battles fought in the last century by writers like Barrès, Péguy or Maurras, but also Bergson, or by angry young reactionaries such as Agathon, the pseudonym of Henri Massis and Alfred de Tardieu, against the 'scientism' of Taine and Renan and the 'New Sorbonne' of Durkheim and Seignobos.6

One would only have to change the names in order for any of the inexhaustible refrains on determinism and freedom, on the irreducibility of creative genius to all sociologic explanations, or a cri du cœur like Paul Claudel's - 'At last I was leaving the repulsive world of a Taine or a Renan, of those horrible mechanisms governed by inflexible laws, which could moreover be known and taught' - to be attributable to one or another of those who now present themselves as the champions of human rights or the inspired prophets of the return of the subject.)

The 'mentalist' vision, which is inseparable from belief in the dualism of mind and body, spirit and matter, originates from an almost anatomical and therefore typically scholastic viewpoint on the body from outside. (Just as the perspective vision was embodied in the camera obscura of Descartes's Dioptrics, this point of view is in a way materialized in the circular amphitheatre, around a dissecting table for anatomy lessons, to be seen at the University of Uppsala.) 'A man is a substance,' wrote Pascal, 'but if we dissect him, will he be the head, the heart, the stomach, the veins, each vein, each portion of a vein, the blood, each humour in the body?7 This body-as-thing, known from outside as a mechanism, the limiting case of which is the body undergoing the mechanistic dismantling of dissection, the skull with the empty eye-sockets of pictorial vanities, and which is opposed to the inhabited and forgotten body, felt from inside as opening, energy, tension or desire, and also as strength, connivance and familiarity, is the product of the extension to the body of a spectator's relation to the world. Intellectualism, the scholastic spectator's theory of knowledge, is thus led to ask of the body, or about the body, problems of knowledge, like the Cartesian philosophers who, because they felt unable to account for the control exerted over the body and so have an intellectual knowledge of bodily action, were forced to attribute human action to divine intervention. The difficulty increases with speech: every speech act, as an incorporeal meaning expressed in material sounds, is nothing short of a miracle, a kind of transubstantiation.

On the other hand, the self-evidence of the isolated, distinguished body is what prevents the fact being realized that this body which indisputably functions as a principle of individuation (in as much as it localizes in space and time, separates, isolates, etc.), ratified and reinforced by the legal definition of the individual as an abstract, interchangeable being, without qualities, is also - as a real agent, that is to say, as a habitus, with its history, its incorporated properties - a

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Pascal, Pensées, 115.
principle of ‘collectivization’ (Vergesellschaftung), as Hegel puts it. Having the (biological) property of being open to the world, and therefore exposed to the world, and so capable of being conditioned by the world, shaped by the material and cultural conditions of existence in which it is placed from the beginning, it is subject to a process of socialization of which individualization is itself the product, with the singularity of the ‘self’ being fashioned in and by social relations. (One might also speak, as Strawson does, but perhaps in a slightly different sense, of ‘collectivist subjectivism’).

The social space

Just as physical space, according to Strawson, is defined by the reciprocal externality of positions (another way of referring to Leibniz’s ‘order of coexistences’), the social space is defined by the mutual exclusion, or distinction, of the positions which constitute it, that is, as a structure of juxtaposition of social positions (themselves defined, as we shall see, as positions in the structure of distribution of the various kinds of capital). Social agents, and also things in so far as they are appropriated by them and therefore constituted as properties, are situated in a place in social space, a distinct and distinctive place which can be characterized by the position it occupies relative to other places (above, below, between, etc.) and the distance (sometimes called ‘respectful’; e longinque reverentia) that separates it from them. As such, they are amenable to an analysis situs, a social topology (the very one which provided the object for my book Distinction, and which, it can be seen, is very far from the misreading of that work — no doubt on the basis of the title alone and despite what is expressly stated within it — according to which the quest for distinction is the principle of all human behaviours).

Social space tends to be translated, with more or less distortion, into physical space, in the form of a certain arrangement of agents and properties. It follows that all the divisions and distinctions of social space (high/low, left/right, etc.) are really and symbolically expressed in physical space appropriated as reified social space (with, for example, the opposition between the smart areas — rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré or Fifth Avenue — and the working-class areas or the suburbs). This space is defined by the more or less close correspondence between a certain order of coexistence (or distribution) of agents and a certain order of coexistence (or distribution) of properties. Everyone, therefore, is characterized by the place where he is more or less permanently domiciled (to be a ‘vagrant’, of no fixed abode, is to lack social existence; ‘high society’ occupies the high ground of the social world). He is also characterized also by the relative position — and therefore the rarity, a source of material or symbolic revenues — of his locations, both temporary (for example, places of honour and all the precedences of all protocols) and permanent (private and professional addresses, reserved places, unbeatable views, exclusive access, priority, etc.). Finally, he is characterized by the extent of the space he takes up and occupies (in law), through his properties (houses, land), which are more or less ‘space-consuming’.

Comprehension

What is comprehended in the world is a body for which there is a world, which is included in the world but in a mode of inclusion irreducible to simple material and spatial inclusion. Illusio is that way of being in the world, of being occupied by the world, which means that an agent can be affected by something very distant, even absent, if it participates in the game in which he is engaged. The body is linked to a place by a direct relationship of contact, which is just one way among others of relating to the world. The agent is linked to a space, that of a field, proximity within which is not the same as proximity in physical space (even if, other things being equal, what is directly perceived always has a sort of practical privilege). It is because of the illusio which constitutes the field as the space of a game that thoughts and actions can be affected and modified without any physical contact or even any symbolic interaction, in particular in and through the relationship of comprehension. The world is comprehensible, immediately endowed with meaning, because the body, which, thanks to its senses and its brain, has the capacity to be present to what is outside itself, in the world, and to be impressed and durably modified by it, has been protracted (from the beginning) exposed to its regularities. Having acquired from this exposure a system of dispositions attuned to these regularities, it is inclined and able to anticipate them practically in behaviours which engage a corporeal knowledge that provides a practical comprehension of the world quite different from the intentional act of conscious decoding that is normally designated by the idea of comprehension. In other words, if the agent has an immediate understanding of the familiar world, this is
because the cognitive structures that he implements are the product of incorporation of the structures of the world in which he acts; the instruments of construction that he uses to know the world are constructed by the world. These practical principles of organization of the given are constructed from the experience of frequently encountered situations and can be revised and rejected in the event of repeated failure.

(I am well aware of the critique of ‘dispositional’ concepts, a ritual one which can therefore secure large symbolic profits at a small cost in reflection. But, in the particular case of anthropology, it is not clear how one could avoid recourse to such notions without denying the self-evidence of the facts: to speak of dispositions is simply to take note of a natural predisposition of human bodies, the only one, according to Hume – as read by Deleuze\(^\text{10}\) – that a rigorous anthropology is entitled to assume, a conditionality in the sense of a natural capacity to acquire non-natural, arbitrary capacities. To deny the existence of acquired dispositions, in the case of living beings, is to deny the existence of learning in the sense of a selective, durable transformation of the body through the reinforcement or weakening of synaptic connections.\(^\text{11}\))

To understand practical understanding, one has to move beyond the alternatives of thing and consciousness, mechanistic materialism and constructivist idealism. More precisely, one has to discard the mentalism and intellectualism which lead to a view of the practical relation to the world as a ‘perception’ and of that perception as a ‘mental synthesis’ – without ignoring the practical work of construction which, as Jacques Bouveresse observes, ‘implements non-conceptual forms of organization’\(^\text{12}\) that owe nothing to the intervention of language.

In other words, one has to construct a materialist theory which (in accordance with the wish that Marx expressed in the Theses on Feuerbach) is capable of taking back from idealism the ‘active side’ of practical knowledge that the materialist tradition has abandoned to it. This is precisely the function of the notion of habitus, which restores to the agent a generating, unifying, constructing, classifying power, while recalling that this capacity to construct social reality, itself socially constructed, is not that of a transcendental subject but of a socialized body, investing in its practice socially constructed organizing principles that are acquired in the course of a situated and dated social experience.

Digression on scholastic blindness

If all these things that are so simple are ultimately so difficult to think, it is because the errors that are pushed aside, which have to be recalled at each stage in the analysis, come in pairs (one escapes from mechanism only through a constructivism that is immediately liable to fall into idealism), and because the opposing theses, which have to be rejected, are always ready to be reborn from their ashes, resurrected by polemical interests, because they correspond to opposing positions in the scientific field and in social space. It is also partly because we are haunted by a long theoretical tradition permanently supported and reactivated by the scholastic situation, which is perpetuated through a blend of reinvention and repetition and which is, for the most part, no more than a laborious theorization of the half-learned ‘philosophy’ of action. Twenty centuries of diffuse Platonism and of Christianized readings of the Phaedo incline us to see the body not as an instrument of knowledge but as a hindrance to knowledge, and to ignore the specificity of practical knowledge, which is treated either as a simple obstacle to knowledge or as an incipient science.

The common root of the contradictions and paradoxes that routinely scholastic thought thinks it finds in a rigorous description of practical logics is nothing other than the philosophy of mind that such thought implies, which cannot conceive of spontaneity and creativity without the intervention of a creative intention, or finality without a conscious aiming at ends, regularity without observance of rules, singification in the absence of signifying intention. To make a further difficulty, this philosophy is embedded in ordinary language and its grammatical constructions ready-made for teleological description, and in the conventional forms of story-telling, like biography, historical narrative or the novel, which, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was, as Michel Butor points out, almost entirely identified with the narration of the adventures of an individual and almost always takes the form of strings of ‘decisive individual actions, preceded by a voluntary deliberation, which determine one another’.\(^\text{13}\)

The idea of ‘voluntary deliberation’, which has provided matter for so many dissertations, leads it to be assumed that every decision, conceived as a theoretical choice among theoretical possibles constituted

as such, presupposes two preliminary operations: first, drawing up a complete list of possible choices; secondly, determining the consequences of the different strategies and evaluating them comparatively. This totally unrealistic representation of ordinary action, which is more or less explicitly applied by economic theory and which is based on the idea that every action is preceded by a premeditated and explicit plan, is no doubt particularly typical of the scholastic vision, a knowledge that does not know itself, because it ignores the privilege which inclines its possessors to privilege the theoretical point of view, detached contemplation, withdrawn from practical concerns and, in Heidegger's phrase, 'unburdened of the self as being-in-the-world'.

Habitus and incorporation

One of the major functions of the notion of habitus is to dispel two complementary fallacies each of which originates from the scholastic vision: on the one hand, mechanism, which holds that action is the mechanical effect of the constraint of external causes; and, on the other, finalism, which, with rational action theory, holds that the agent acts freely, consciously, and, as some of the utilitarians say, 'with full understanding', the action being the product of a calculation of chances and profits. Against both of these theories, it has to be posited that social agents are endowed with habitus, inscribed in their bodies by past experiences. These systems of schemes of perception, appreciation and action enable them to perform acts of practical knowledge, based on the identification and recognition of conditional, conventional stimuli to which they are predisposed to react; and, without any explicit definition of ends or rational calculation of means, to generate appropriate and endlessly renewed strategies, but within the limits of the structural constraints of which they are the product and which define them.

The language of strategy, which one is forced to use in order to designate the sequences of actions objectively oriented towards an end that are observed in all fields, must not mislead us: the most effective strategies, especially in fields dominated by values of disinterestedness, are those which, being the product of dispositions shaped by the immanent necessity of the field, tend to adjust themselves spontaneously to that necessity, without express intention or calculation. In other words, the agent is never completely the subject of his practices: through the dispositions and the belief which are the basis of engagement in the game, all the presuppositions constituting the practical axiomatics of the field (the epistemic doxa, for example) find their way into the seemingly most lucid intentions.

The practical sense is what enables one to act as one 'should' (ôs deó, as Aristotle put it) without positing or executing a Kantian 'should', a rule of conduct. The dispositions that it actualizes - ways of being that result from a durable modification of the body through its upbringing - remain unnoticed until they appear in action, and even then, because of the self-evidence of their necessity and their immediate adaptation to the situation. The schemes of habitus, very generally applicable principles of vision and division which, being the product of incorporation of the structures and tendencies of the world, are at least roughly adjusted to them, make it possible to adapt endlessly to partially modified contexts, and to construct the situation as a whole complex, whole endowed with meaning, in a practical operation of quasi-bodily anticipation of the immanent tendencies of the field and of the behaviors engendered by them (as a whole). Each of them is endowed with a thought, in a trained team, or an orchestra, they are in immediate communication because they are spontaneously attuned to them.

(It is not unusual for the advocates of 'rational action theory' to claim allegiance alternately, in the same text, to the mechanist vision, which is implied in their recourse to models borrowed from physics, and with the teleological vision, each being rooted in the scholastic opposition between pure consciousness and the body-as-thing (I am thinking in particular of Jon Elster,14 who has the merit of stating explicitly that he identifies rationality with conscious lucidity and that he regards any adjustment of desires to the possibilities that is secured by obscure psychological forces as a form of irrationality). It is thus possible for them to explain the rationality of practices, in contrast, by the hypothesis that agents act under the direct constraint of causes that the scientist is able to identify, or by the apparently quite opposite hypothesis that agents act with complete knowledge of the situation (en connaissance de cause, as the phrase goes) and are capable of doing by themselves what the scientist does in their place in the mechanist hypothesis.

If it is so easy to slide from one to the other of these opposing positions, this is because external mechanical determinism, by causes, and intellectual determinism, by reasons - reasons of 'enlightened self-interest' - meet up and merge. What varies is the propensity of the scientist, a quasi-divine calculator, to lend, or not, to the agent's perfect knowledge of the causes or his clear awareness of the

reasons. For the founders of utilitarian theory, and especially Bentham, whose major work was entitled *Deontology*, the theory of the economy of pleasures was explicitly normative. In rational action theory it is equally so but believes it is descriptive: it presents a normative model of what the agent should be if he wants to be rational (in the scientist's sense) as a description of the explanatory principle of what he really does. This is inevitable when one chooses to recognize no other principle of reasonable actions than rational intentions, purpose, project, no other explanatory principle of the agent's actions than explanation by reason or by causes which are efficient as reasons, enlightened self-interest (and the utility function) being, strictly speaking, nothing other than the agent's interest as it appears to an impartial observer, or, which amounts to the same thing, to an agent obeying 'perfectly prudent preferences', in other words one who is perfectly informed.

This enlightened self-interest is clearly not so remote from the 'objective interest' which is invoked by an apparently radically opposed theoretical tradition and which underlies the idea of 'imputed class consciousness' (the basis of the equally fantastical notion of 'false consciousness') as expressed by Lukács: 'the thoughts and feelings which men would have in a particular situation if they were able to assess both the situation as a whole [that is, from a scholastic viewpoint... and the interests arising from it in their impact on immediate action and on the whole structure of society]. It can be seen that scholastic interests do not need to be enlightened interests in order to be the thing in the world best distributed among scholars.'

With a Heideggerian play on words, one might say that we are disposed because we are exposed. It is because the body is (to unequal degrees) exposed and endangered in the world, faced with the risk of emotion, lesion, suffering, sometimes death, and therefore obliged to take the world seriously (and nothing is more serious than emotion, which touches the depths of our organic being) that it is able to acquire dispositions that are themselves an openness to the world, that is, to the very structures of the social world of which they are the incorporated form.

The relation to the world is a relation of presence in the world, of being in the world, in the sense of belonging to the world, being possessed by it, in which neither the agent nor the object is posed as such. The degree to which the body is invested in this relation is no doubt one of the main determinants of the interest and attention that are involved in it and of the importance – measurable by their duration, intensity, etc. – of the bodily modifications that result from it. (This is what is forgotten by the intellectualist vision, a vision directly linked to the fact that scholastic universes treat the body and everything connected with it, in particular the urgency of the satisfaction of needs and physical violence, actual or potential, in such a way that the body is in a sense excluded from the game.)

We learn bodily. The social order inscribes itself in bodies through this permanent confrontation, which may be more or less dramatic but is always largely marked by affectivity and, more precisely, by affective transactions with the environment. One thinks, obviously, especially after the work of Michel Foucault, of the normalization exerted through the discipline of institutions. But it would be wrong to underestimate the pressure or oppression, continuous and often unnoticed, of the ordinary order of things, the conditionings imposed by the material conditions of existence, by the insidious injunctions and 'inert violence' (as Sartre puts it) of economic and social structures and of the mechanisms through which they are reproduced.

The most serious social injunctions are addressed not to the intellect but to the body, treated as a 'memory pad'. The essential part of the learning of masculinity and femininity tends to inscribe the difference between the sexes in bodies (especially through clothing), in the form of ways of walking, talking, standing, looking, sitting, etc. And rites of institution are simply the limiting case of all the explicit actions through which groups work to inculcate the social limits or, which amounts to the same thing, social classifications (the male/female division, for example), to naturalize them in the form of divisions in bodies, bodily *hexis*, dispositions, which are meant to be as durable as the indelible inscriptions of tattooing, and the collective principles of vision and division. As much in everyday pedagogic action ('sit up straight', 'hold your knife in your right hand') as in rites of institution, this psychosomatic action is often exerted through emotion and suffering, psychological or even physical, particularly the pain inflicted when applying distinctive signs – mutilation, scarification or tattoos – to the surface of the body itself. The passage in *The Penal Colony* in which Kafka recounts that all the letters of the

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18 Alludes to Descartes's 'Common sense is the best distributed thing in the world, for everyone is convinced he is well supplied with it'; *scholars* here and elsewhere in English in the original. *Trans.*
law that a prisoner has broken are inscribed on his body 'radicalizes and literalizes with grotesque brutality', as E. L. Santner suggests, the ruthless mnemonic techniques that groups often resort to in order to naturalize arbitrariness and - another intuition of Kafka's (and Pascal's) - so confer on it the absurd and impenetrable necessity which is concealed, without a 'beyond', behind the most sacred institutions.

A logic in action

Misrecognition, or forgetting, of the relation of immanence to a world that is not perceived as a world, as an object placed before a self-conscious perceiving subject, as a spectacle or representation capable of being taken in with a single gaze, is no doubt the elementary, or original, form of the scholastic illusion. The principle of practical comprehension is not a knowing consciousness (a transcendental consciousness, as Husserl presents it, or even an existential Dasein, for Heidegger) but the practical sense of a habitus inhabited by the world it inhabits, pre-occupied by the world in which it actively intervenes, in an immediate relationship of involvement, tension and attention, which constructs the world and gives it meaning.

Habitus, a particular but constant way of entering into a relationship with the world which contains a knowledge enabling it to anticipate the course of the world, is immediately present, without any objectifying distance, in the world and the 'forth-coming' [l'être venir] that it contains (which distinguishes it from a menent momentanea without history). Exposed to the world, to sensation, feeling, suffering, etc., in other words engaged in the world, in play and at stake in the world, the body (well) disposed towards the world is, to the same extent, oriented towards the world and what immediately presents itself there to be seen, felt and expected: it is capable of mastering it by providing an adequate response, having a hold on it, using it (and not decoding it) as an instrument that is 'well in hand' (in the terms of Heidegger's famous analysis) and which, never considered as such, is run through, as if it were transparent, by the task that it enables the agent to perform and towards which it is oriented.

The agent engaged in practice knows the world but with a knowledge which, as Merleau-Ponty showed, is not set up in the relation of externality of a knowing consciousness. He knows it, in a sense, too well, without objectifying distance, takes it for granted, precisely because he is caught up in it, bound up with it; he inhabits it like a garment [un habit] or a familiar habitat. He feels at home in the world because the world is also in him, in the form of habitus, a virtue made of necessity which implies a form of love of necessity, amor fati.

The action of practical sense is a kind of necessary coincidence - which gives it the appearance of pre-established harmony - between a habitus and a field (or a position in a field). Someone who has incorporated the structures of the field (or of a particular game) 'finds his place' there immediately, without having to deliberate, and brings out, without even thinking about it, 'things to be done' (business, pragmata) to be done 'the right way', action plans inscribed like a watermark in the situation, as objective potentialities, urgencies, which orient his practice without being constituted as norms or imperatives clearly defined by and for consciousness and will. To be able to use a tool (or do a job), and to do it 'comfortably' - with a comfort that is both subjective and objective, and characterized as much by the efficiency and ease of the action as by the satisfaction and felicity of the agent - one has to have 'grown into it' through long use, sometimes methodical training, to have made one's own the ends inscribed in it as a tacit 'manual'; in short, to have let oneself be used, even instrumentalized, by the instrument. It is on that condition that one can attain the dexterity that Hegel referred to, the knack that hits on the right result without having to calculate, doing exactly what needs to be done, as and when it needs to be done, without superfluous movements, with an economy of effort and a necessity that are both inwardly felt and externally perceptible. (One thinks of what Plato describes as orthè doxa, right opinion, the 'learned ignorance' that hits the mark, owing nothing to chance, by a kind of adjustment to the situation that is neither thought nor willed as such: 'This is the means which statesmen employ for their direction of states, and they have nothing more to do with wisdom than soothsayers and diviners; for these people utter many a true thing when inspired, but have no knowledge of anything they say.').

In so far as it is the product of the incorporation of a nomos, of the principle of vision and division constitutive of a social order or a field, habitus generates practices immediately adjusted to that order, which are therefore perceived, by their author and also by others, as 'right', straight, adroit, adequate, without being in any way the product of obedience to an order in the sense of an imperative, to a norm or to legal rules. This practical, non-thetic intentionality, which has

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20 Plato, Meno, 99c.
nothing in common with a cogitatio (or a noesis) consciously oriented towards a cogitatum (a noema), is rooted in a posture, a way of bearing the body (a hesis), a durable way of being of the durably modified body which is engendered and perpetuated, while constantly changing (within limits), in a twofold relationship, structured and structuring, to the environment. Habitus constructs the world by a certain way of orienting itself towards it, of bringing to bear on it an attention which, like that of a jumper preparing to jump, is an active, constructive bodily tension towards the imminent forthcoming (alloquy, the mistake we sometimes make when, waiting for someone, we seem to see that person in everyone who comes along, gives an accurate idea of this tension).

(Practical knowledge is very unequally demanded and necessary, but also very unequally adequate and adapted, depending on the situation and the realm of activity. In contrast to the scholastic universes, some universes, such as those of sport, music or dance, demand a practical engagement of the body and therefore a mobilization of the corporeal 'intelligence' capable of transforming, even inverting, the ordinary hierarchies. And one would need to collect methodically all the notes and observations which, dispersed here and there, especially in the didactics of these physical skills - sports, obviously, and more especially the martial arts, but also theatrical activities and the playing of musical instruments - would provide precious contributions to a science of this form of knowledge. Sports trainers seek effective ways of speaking to the body, in the situations, with which everyone is familiar, where one understands with an intellectual understanding the movement to make or not to make, without being able actually to do what one has understood, for lack of comprehension through the body.21 Likewise a number of stage directors resort to pedagogic practices whose common feature is that they seek to induce a suspension of intellectual, discursive understanding and, in accordance with Pascal's model of the production of belief, to lead the actor, by a long series of exercises, to rediscover postures of the body which, being charged with mnemonic experiences, are capable of stirring up thoughts, emotions and imagination.)

Just as habitus is not an instantaneous being, condemned to the Cartesian discontinuity of successive moments, but, in the language of Leibniz, a vis insita that is also a lex insita, a force endowed with a law, and therefore characterized by constants and constancies (often underlined by explicit principles of truth to self, constantia sibi, like

contributing (with the help of objective mechanisms such as the logic of the legal field or the educational field) to the reproduction of existing positions and the social order.

The orchestration of habitus which, being the product of the same conditions of existence and the same conditionings (with variants, corresponding to particular trajectories), spontaneously produces behaviour adapted to the objective conditions and tending to satisfy the shared individual interests, thus enables one, without appealing to conscious, deliberate acts and without involving any kind of functionalism, to account for the appearance of teleology which is often observed at the level of collectives and which is ordinarily ascribed to the 'collective will' (or consciousness, or even to a conspiracy of collective entities that are personalized and treated as subjects collectively determining their goals (the 'bourgeoisie', the 'dominant class', etc.). I am thinking for example of the strategies for the defence of the corporate body which, implemented blindly and on a strictly individual basis, by the teachers in French higher education, in a period of rapid expansion of student numbers, enabled them to reserve access to the highest positions in the education system to newcomers corresponding as closely as possible to the old principles of recruitment, that is, as little different as possible from the ideal of the male agréé from the École Normale. And it is again the orchestration of habitus which shows the way out of the paradoxes invented ex nihilo by utilitarian individualism, such as the 'free rider dilemma': the investment, the belief, the passion, the amor fati, which are inscribed in the relationship between habitus and the social world (or the field) of which it is the product mean that there are things that cannot be done in certain circumstances ('that's not done') and others that cannot not be done (the example par excellence being everything that is demanded by the principle noblesse oblige). Among these things are all kinds of behaviours which the utilitarian tradition cannot account for, such as loyalties and commitments to people and groups, and, more generally, all the behaviours of disinterestedness, the limiting case of which is pro patria mori, analysed by Kantorowicz, the sacrifice of the egoistic ego, an absolute challenge to all utilitarian calculators.

Coincidence

Phenomenological description, though indispensable in order to break with the scholastic vision of the ordinary vision of the world, and

While it comes close to the real, is liable to stand in the way of a full understanding of practical understanding and of practice itself, because it is totally ahistorical and antigenetic. One therefore has to return to the analysis of presence in the world, but historicizing it, in other words, raising the question of the social construction of the structures or schemes which the agent implements in order to construct the world (and which are excluded as much by a Kantian type of transcendental anthropology as by an eidetic analysis in the style of Husserl and Schutz, and, after them, ethnomethodology, or even the otherwise very enlightening analysis by Merleau-Ponty); and secondly one has to examine the question of the social conditions that have to be fulfilled to make possible the experience of the social world as self-evident which phenomenology describes without providing itself with the means of accounting for it.

The experience of a world that is 'taken for granted' presupposes agreement between the dispositions of the agents and the expectations or demands immanent in the world into which they are inserted. This perfect coincidence of practical schemes and objective structures is only possible in the particular case in which the schemes applied to the world are the product of the world to which they are applied, that is, in the ordinary experience of the familiar world (as opposed to foreign or exotic worlds). The conditions for such an immediate mastery remain the same when one moves away from experience of the common-sense world, which presupposes mastery of instruments of knowledge accessible to all and capable of being acquired through ordinary practice of the world - up to a certain point, at least - into experience of the scholastic worlds and the objects produced there, such as works of art, literature or science, which are not immediately accessible to the untutored eye.

The indisputable charm of stable and relatively undifferentiated societies, the sites par excellence, according to Hegel, who had a very acute intuition of it, of concrete liberty as 'being at home' (bei sich sein) in what is, arises from the quasi-perfect coincidence between habitus and habitat, between the schemes of the mythic vision of the world and the structure of domestic space, for example, organized according to the same oppositions, or between expectations and the objective chances of realizing them. In differentiated societies themselves, a whole series of social mechanisms tend to ensure the adjustment of dispositions to positions, thereby offering those who benefit

22 For lack of space to spell out here the subtlety, revealed by statistical analysis, of the strategies of substitution which were implemented, I refer the reader to Homo Academicus (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), esp. pp. 136-51.
from them an enchanted (or mystified) experience of the social world. Thus it can be observed that, in very different social universes (employers, the episcopacy, professors, etc.), the structure of the space of agents distributed according to the characteristics capable of characterizing habitus (social origin, education, qualifications, etc.) that are attached to the social person corresponds fairly closely to the structure of the space of positions or posts (companies, bishoprics, faculties or disciplines, etc.) distributed according to their specific characteristics (for companies, for example, turnover, number of employees, age, legal status).

Thus, because habitus is, as its name suggests, a product of a history, the instruments of construction of the social that it invests in practical knowledge of the world and in action are socially constructed, in other words structured by the world that they structure. It follows from this that practical knowledge is doubly informed by the world that it informs; it is constrained by the objective structure of the configuration of properties that the world presents to it; and it is also structured through the schemes, resulting from incorporation of the structures of the world, that it applies in selecting and constructing these objective properties. In other words, action is neither 'purely reactive', in Weber's phrase, nor purely conscious and calculated. Through the cognitive and motivating structures that it brings into play (which always depend, in fact, on the field, acting as a field of forces, of which it is the product), habitus plays its part in determining the things to be done, or not to be done, the urgencies, etc., which trigger action. Thus, to account for the differential impact of an event like the crisis of May 1968, as recorded by statistics relating to very different areas of practice, one is led to assume the existence of a general disposition which can be characterized as sensitivity to order (or disorder) and which varies depending on social conditions and the associated social conditionings. It is this disposition which means that objective changes to which others remain insensitive (economic crisis, administrative measures, etc.) can be translated, for some agents, into modifications of behaviour in various areas of practice (and even in fertility strategies).

One could thus extend a proposition of Gilbert Ryle's to the explanation of human behaviours: just as one should not say that a window broke because a stone hit it, but that it broke, when the stone hit it, because it was breakable, similarly, as can be seen with particular clarity when an insignificant, apparently fortuitous event unleashes enormous consequences that are bound to appear disproportionate to all those who have different habitus, one should not say that a historical event determined a behaviour but that it had this determining effect because a habitus capable of being affected by that event conferred that power upon it. Attribution theory establishes that the causes which a person attributes to an experience (and which, as the theory does not say, depend on his or her habitus) are one of the major determinants of the action she will perform in response to that experience (for example, in the case of a battered wife, going back to her husband in conditions that her counsellors judge intolerable). This must not lead us to say (as Sartre does, for example) that the agents choose (in 'bad faith') what determines them, since, while we can say that they determine themselves inasmuch as they construct the situations that determine them, it is clear that they have not chosen the principle of their choice, that is, their habitus, and that the schemes of construction they apply to the world have themselves been constructed by the world.

One can also say, following the same logic, that habitus helps to determine what transforms it. If it is accepted that the principle of the transformation of habitus lies in the gap, experienced as a positive or negative surprise, between expectations and experience, one must suppose that the extent of this gap and the significance attributed to it depend on habitus: one person's disappointment may be another's unexpected satisfaction, with the corresponding effects of reinforcement or inhibition.

Dispositions do not lead in a determinate way to a determinate action; they are revealed and fulfilled only in appropriate circumstances and in the relationship with a situation. They may therefore always remain in a virtual state, like a soldier's courage in the absence of war. Each of them can manifest itself in different, even opposite, practices, depending on the situation. For example, the same aristocratic disposition of bishops of noble origin may be expressed in apparently opposite practices in different historical contexts, in Meaux, a small provincial town, in the 1930s and in Saint-Denis, a 'red suburb', in the 1960s. Having said this, the existence of a disposition (as a lex instita) is a basis for predicting that, in all conceivable circumstances of a particular type, a particular set of agents will behave in a particular way.


26. Cfr. P. Bourdieu and M. de St Martin, 'La Sainte famille. L'épiscopat français dans le champ du pouvoir', Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales, no. 44-5 (1982), pp. 2-53, where it can be seen that bishops of aristocratic origin, who previously conformed to the role in its most traditional form, can, notably at Saint-Denis, adopt entirely progressive positions, in particular on immigration. Trans.
Habitus as a system of dispositions to be and to do is a potentiality, a desire to be which, in a certain way, seeks to create the conditions of its fulfilment, and therefore to create the conditions most favourable to what it is. In the absence of any major upheaval (a change of position, for example), the conditions of its formation are also the conditions of its realization. But, in any case, the agent does what is in his power to make possible the actualization of the potentialities inscribed in his body in the form of capacities and dispositions shaped by conditions of existence. And a number of behaviours can be understood as efforts to maintain or produce a state of the social world or of a field that is capable of giving to some acquired disposition — knowledge of an ancient or modern language, for example — the possibility and opportunity of being actualized. This is one of the major principles (with the available means of realization) of everyday choices as regards objects or persons. Guided by one's sympathies and antipathies, affections and aversions, tastes and distastes, one makes for oneself an environment in which one feels 'at home' and in which one can achieve that fulfilment of one's desire to be which one identifies with happiness. And we do indeed observe (in the form of a significant statistical relationship) a striking agreement between the characteristics of agents' dispositions (and social positions) and those of the objects with which they surround themselves — houses, furniture, household equipment, etc — or of the people with whom they most durably associate — spouses, friends and connections.

The paradoxes of the distribution of happiness, of which La Fontaine supplied the principle in his fable of the cobbler and the financier, are fairly easily explained. Since the desire for fulfillment is roughly measured by its chances of realization, the degree of inner satisfaction that the various agents experience does not depend as much as one might think on their effective power in the sense of an abstract, universal capacity to satisfy needs and desires abstractly defined for an indifferent agent; rather, it depends on the degree to which the mode of functioning of the social world or the field in which they are inserted enables his habitus to come into its own.

The encounter of two histories

The principle of action is therefore neither a subject confronting the world as an object in a relation of pure knowledge nor a 'milieu' exerting a form of mechanical causality on the agent; it is neither in the material or symbolic end of the action nor in the constraints of the field. It lies in the complicity between two states of the social, between history in bodies and history in things, or, more precisely,
The body is in the social world but the social world is in the body (in the form of hēxis and eidos). The very structures of the world are present in the structures (or, to put it better, the cognitive schemes) that agents implement in order to understand it. When the same history pervades both habitus and habitat, dispositions and position, the king and his court, the boss and his firm, the bishop and his diocese, history communicates in a sense to itself, gives back to itself its own reflection. The doxic relation to the native world is a relationship of belonging and possession in which the body possessed by history appropriates immediately the things inhabited by the same history. Only when the heritage has taken over the inheritor can the inheritor take over the heritage. And this appropriation of the inheritor by the heritage, the precondition for the appropriation of the heritage by the inheritor (which has nothing inevitable about it), takes place under the combined effect of the conditionings inscribed in the position of inheritor and the pedagogic action of his predecessors, themselves possessed possessors.

The inherited inheritor, appropriated by his heritage, does not need to want, in the sense of deliberating, choosing and consciously deciding, in order to do what is appropriate, what corresponds to the interests of the heritage, its conservation and its increase. He may not strictly speaking know what he says or does and yet do and say nothing that is not appropriate to the demands of perpetuation of the heritage. (This is no doubt what explains the role given to professional heredity, especially through the procedures, largely obscure to themselves, of co-option to corporate bodies: the inherited and therefore immediately attuned habitus, and the corporeal constraint exercised through it, are the surest guarantee of direct and total adherence to the often implicit demands of these institutions. The reproductive strategies which it engenders are one of the mediations through which the social order fulfils its tendency to persevere in its being, in a word, its conatus.)

Louis XIV is so completely identified with the position he occupies in the field of gravitation of which he is the sun that it would be as futile to try to determine which of the actions occurring in the field is or is not the product of his will as it would be, in a concert, to try to distinguish what is done by the conductor and what by the players. His very will to dominate is a product of the field that it dominates and which makes everything turn to his advantage: The people thus ensnared held each other fast in this situation, however grudgingly they bore it. Pressure from those of lower rank or less privileged forced the more favoured to maintain their advantages, and conversely the pressure from above compelled those on whom it weighed to escape it by emulation, forcing them too into the competition for status.27

Thus, a State which has become the symbol of absolutism and which, even for the monarch himself (‘L’État, c’est moi!’), who has most direct interest in this representation, presents, in the highest degree, the appearances of an ‘Apparatus’ in fact masks a field of struggles in which the holder of ‘absolute power’ must engage at least enough to maintain and exploit the divisions and so mobilize for his own benefit the energy generated by the balance of tensions. The principle of the perpetual movement which stirs the field does not lie in some motionless prime mover – here, the Sun King – but in the struggle itself, which is produced by the constitutive structures of the field and tends to reproduce its structures and hierarchies. It is in the actions and reactions of the agents: they have no choice but to struggle to maintain or improve their position, that is, to conserve or increase the specific capital which is only generated in this field; and so they help to bring to bear on all the others the constraints, often experienced as unbearable, which arise from the competition (unless, of course, they exclude themselves from the game, in a heroic renunciation which, from the point of view of the illusio, is social death and therefore an unthinkable option). In short, no one can benefit from the game, not even those who dominate it, without taking part in the game and being taken in by the game. Hence there would be no game without players’ (visceral, corporeal) commitment to the game, without the interest taken in the game as such which is the source of the different, even opposite, interests of the various players, the wills and ambitions which drive them and which, being produced by the game, depend on the positions they occupy within it.

Thus, objectified history becomes activated and active only if the more or less institutionalized position, with the more or less codified programme of action that it contains, finds – like a garment, a tool, a book or a house – someone who sees in it enough of themselves to take it up and make it their own, and by the same token to be taken up by it. The café waiter is not playing at being a waiter, as Sartre would have it.28 When he puts on his black trousers and white jacket, which might have been designed to express a democratic and quasi-bureaucratic version of the devoted dignity of the servant of an aristocratic household, and performs the ceremonial of eagerness and

attention, which may be a strategy to cover up delay or an omission, or to pass off mediocre fare, he is not making himself a thing (or an ‘in-itself’). His body, which contains a history, espouses his job, in other words a history, a tradition, which he has never seen except incarnated in bodies, or more precisely, the uniforms inhabited by a certain habitude that are called waiters. This does not mean he has learned to be a waiter by imitating waiters, constituted as explicit models. He enters into the character of the waiter not as an actor playing a part, but rather as a child imitates his father and, without even needing to ‘pretend’, adopts a way of using the mouth when talking or of swinging his shoulders when walking which seems to him constitutive of the social being of the accomplished adult. It cannot even be said that he takes himself for a waiter; he is too completely taken up by the job to which he was socio-logically destined – for example, as the son of a small shopkeeper who must earn enough to set up his own business. By contrast, one only has to put a student in his position (as was sometimes seen after May ’68, in some ‘avant-garde’ restaurants) to see him signal in countless ways the distance he means to keep, precisely by affecting to play it as a role, from a job which does not correspond to the (socially constituted) idea he has of his being, that is, of his social destiny, a job for which he does not feel made, and in which, as the Sartrian café-goer puts it, he does not intend to ‘be imprisoned’.

For proof that the intellectual distances himself no more than the waiter from his post and from what defines him as an intellectual, that is, the scholastic illusion of distance from all positions, one only has to read as an anthropological document the analysis with which Sartre extends and ‘universalizes’ the famous description: ‘In vain do I fulfill the functions of a café waiter. I can be only in the neutralized mode, as the actor is Hamlet, by mechanically making the typical gestures of my state and by aiming at myself as an imaginary café waiter through these gestures taken as an “analogue”. What I attempt to realize is a being-in-itself of the café waiter, as if it were not in my power to confer their value and their urgency upon the duties and the rights of my position, as if it were not my free choice to get up each morning at five o’clock or to remain in bed, even though it meant getting fired. As if from the very fact that I sustain this role in existence I did not transcend it on every side, as if I did not constitute myself as a beyond of my condition. Yet there is no doubt that I am in a sense a café waiter – otherwise could I not just as well call myself a diplomat or a reporter?’

One could dwell on every word of this almost miraculous product of the social unconscious which, with the aid of the double game allowed by an exemplary use of the phenomenological ‘I’ and of an ‘understanding’ identification with the other (Sartre made much use of it) projects an intellectual’s consciousness into a café waiter’s practice, or into the imaginary analogue of this practice, producing a kind of social chimera, a monster with a waiter’s body and a philosopher’s head. No doubt one needs to have the freedom to stay in bed without being fired to be able to see the person who gets up at five to sweep the floors and start up the coffee pot before the customers arrive as freeing himself (freely?) from the freedom to stay in bed, at the cost of being fired. The logic seen here, that of identification with a phantasm, is the one which has enabled others, presenting the ‘intellectual’ relation to the working-class condition as the working-class relation to that condition, to produce a worker entirely engaged in ‘struggles’ or, alternately, by simple inversion, as in myths, a worker desperately resigned to being only what he is, his ‘being-in-itself’ as a worker, lacking the freedom that comes from being able to count among one’s possible positions like those of diplomat or journalist.

The dialectic of positions and dispositions

In cases of more or less perfect coincidence between ‘vocation’ and ‘mission’, between the ‘collective expectations’, as Mauss puts it, inscribed, most often implicitly, in the position and the expectations or hopes buried in dispositions, between the objective structures and the cognitive structures through which they are perceived, it would be futile to seek to distinguish, in most cases, the aspects of practice that derive from the effect of positions and those that are the product of the dispositions which the agents bring into them – dispositions which govern their whole relation to the world, in particular their perception and appreciation of the position, therefore their way of holding it and so the very ‘reality’ of that position.

There is action, there is history, structures are conserved or transformed, only because there are agents who cannot be reduced to what common sense, and after it ‘methodological individualism’, put under the heading of individuals; agents who, as socialized bodies, are endowed with a set of dispositions implying both the propensity and the aptitude to enter into the game and to play it with more or less success.

Only recourse to dispositions can – short of the disastrous hypothesis of rational calculation of all the ramifications of action – account

29 Ibid., p. 60.
for the immediate understanding that agents obtain of the world by applying to it forms of knowledge derived from the history and structure of the very world to which they apply them; it alone can account for the feeling of self-evidence which, paradoxically, masks the particular (but relatively frequent) conditions which make it possible, even from those who describe it best, like Husserl or Schutz.

But the cases of adjustment of dispositions to situations additionally provide one of the most striking illustrations of the inanity of the preconstructed opposition between the individual and society or the individual and the collective. If this half-learned opposition withstands refutations so well, this is because it is sustained by the purely social force of routine thinking and automatic language; by the logic of the academic oppositions which underlie the subjects of dissertations and lectures (Tarde, or Weber, versus Durkheim, methodological individualism versus holism, RATS—rational action theorists—against CATS—collective action theorists, etc.); by the literary-philosophical tradition of libertarian dissidence against social powers and especially the State; and above all by the potency of the underlying political oppositions (liberalism against socialism, capitalism against collectivism) which unthinking and unscrupulous ‘theorists’ eagerly adopt in a sometimes barely euphemized form.30

The notion of habitus makes it possible to escape from this deadly dilemma and, by the same token, to move beyond the opposition between the realism which hyposizes the social in an entity such as the Durkheimian ‘collective consciousness’, a false solution to a real problem, and radical nominalism, for which ‘social realities’ are just words. It is in each agent, and therefore in the individuated state, that there exist supra-individual dispositions capable of functioning in an orchestrated or, one could say, collective way (the notion of habitus makes it possible, as has been seen, to account for collective social processes, endowed with a kind of objective finality – like the tendency of dominant groups to ensure their own perpetuation – without appealing to personified collectives postulating their own ends, or the mechanical aggregation of the rational actions of individual agents, or a central consciousness or will, capable of imposing itself through a discipline).

Because the social is also instituted in biological individuals, there is, in each biological individual, something of the collective, and

30 Thus, in an exemplary text, François Bourricaud described the academic world as divided into two camps whose very names, ‘totalitarian realism’ and ‘individualistic liberalism’, make it clear that the logic in which he thinks them is at least as political as it is scientific (cf. F. Bourricaud, ‘Contre le sociologisme: une critique et des propositions’, Revue Française de Science Politique, supplément 1975, pp. 583–603).
of potential as the phrase goes, leave their occupants the possibility of defining them by bringing in the embodied necessity which is constitutive of their habitus, their future depends on what is made of them by their occupants, or at least those of them who, in the struggles within the 'profession' and in confrontations with neighbouring and rival professions, manage to impose the definition of the profession most favourable to what they are.

But the effects of the dialectic between the inclinations inscribed in habitus and the demands implied in the definition of the post are no less strong in the most regulated and rigidified sectors of the social structure, such as the oldest and most codified professions of public service. Thus, far from being a mechanical product of bureaucratic organization, some of the most characteristic features of the conduct of lower-rank civil servants, such as the tendency to formalism, fetishistic attachment to punctuality or rigid adherence to regulations, are the manifestation, in a situation particularly conducive to their actualization, of a system of dispositions which is also expressed outside the bureaucratic situation, in all areas of practice, and which would be sufficient to predispose the members of the petite bourgeoisie to the virtues demanded by the bureaucratic order and exalted by the ideology of 'public service': probity, attention to detail, punctiliousness and the propensity to moral indignation. The tendency of the bureaucratic field, a relatively autonomous space of relations (of power and struggle) among explicitly constituted and codified positions (defined in terms of rank, authority, etc.), to 'degenerate' into a 'total institution' demanding complete, mechanical identification of the 'functionary' with his function and with strict, literal application of the rules of law, regulations, directives, circulars, etc., is not linked mechanically to the morphological effects that size and number can exert upon structures (with, for example, the constraints imposed on communication); it can only take place in so far as it encounters the complicity of dispositions.

The further one moves away from the ordinary functioning of fields towards limits, which are perhaps never reached, where, with the disappearance of all struggle and all resistance to domination, the space of play rigidifies and shrinks into a 'total institution', in Goffman's sense, or - in a rigorous sense this time - an apparatus, the more the institution tends to consecrate agents who give everything to the institution (the Party, the Church, the Company, etc.) and who perform this oblation all the more easily the less capital they have outside the institution (the holders of 'in-house qualifications', for example), and therefore the less freedom with respect to it and to the specific capital and profits that it offers. The apparatchik, who owes everything to the apparatus, is the apparatus personified, ready to give everything to the apparatus that has given him all he has. He can be safely entrusted with the highest responsibilities because he can do nothing to advance his own interests that does not thereby satisfy the expectations of the apparatus. Like the oblate, he is predisposed to defend the institution, with absolute conviction, against the threats posed by the heretical deviations of those whom a capital acquired outside the institution authorizes and inclines to distance themselves from the internal beliefs and hierarchies.

Mismatches, discordance and misfirings

The fact that the responses habitus generates without calculation or project generally appear as adapted, coherent and immediately intelligible should not lead one to see them as a kind of infallible instinct, capable of producing responses miraculously adjusted to all situations. The adjustment, in advance, of habitus to the objective conditions is a particular case, no doubt particularly frequent (in the universes familiar to us), but it should not be treated as a universal rule.

(It is no doubt on the basis of the particular case of adjustment between habitus and structure that critics have often seen a principle of repetition and conservation in a concept, habitus, which originally forced itself upon me as the only way to understand the mismatches which were observed, in an economy like that of Algeria in the 1960s and still today in many 'developing' countries, between the objective structures and the incorporated structures, between the economic institutions imported and imposed by colonization (or nowadays by the constraints of the market) and economic dispositions brought to them by agents formed in the precapitalist world. This quasi-experimental situation had the effect of showing up in negative form - through all the behaviours which were then described as lapses from 'rationality' and as 'resistance to modernity', and often attributed to mysterious cultural factors, such as Islam - the hidden conditions of the functioning of economic institutions, that is, the economic dispositions which agents have to possess in order for the economic structures to work harmoniously, so harmoniously that this essential condition of their functioning passes unnoticed, as in societies where economic institutions and dispositions have developed at the same rate.

I was thus led to question the universality of so-called rational economic dispositions and, by the same token, to address the question of