Pascalian Meditations

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Stanford University Press
Stanford, California
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Symbolic Violence and Political Struggles

Acquisition of the primary habitus within the family is very far from being a mechanical process of simple inculcation, analogous to the imprinting of a ‘character’ imposed by constraint.¹ The same is true of the acquisition of the specific dispositions demanded by a field, which takes place in the relationship between the primary dispositions, more or less remote from what the field calls for, and the constraints inscribed in the structure of the field: the work of specific socialization tends to favour the transformation of the original libido, that is, of the socialized affects constituted in the domestic field, as one or another form of specific libido, in particular through the transference of this libido onto agents or institutions belonging to the field (for example, for the religious field, major symbolic figures such as Christ or the Virgin, in their various historical representations).

Libido and illusio

New entrants bring in dispositions previously constituted within a socially situated family group, which are therefore more or less adjusted in advance (especially as a result of self-selection, experienced

¹ It is probably because some people have understood the notion of habitus in terms of a mechanistic representation of learning that they have seen it as a social variant of what is understood by ‘character’, a socially constituted destiny, fixed and frozen once and for all, for life.

as a ‘vocation’, or of occupational heredity) to the explicit or implicit requirements of the field, its pressures or demands, and more or less ‘sensitive’ to the signs of recognition and consecration calling for a matching recognition of the order which grants them. It is only through a whole series of imperceptible transactions, half-conscious compromises and psychological operations (projection, identification, transference, sublimation, etc.), socially encouraged, supported, channelled and even organized, that these dispositions are little by little transformed into specific dispositions, after all the infinitesimal adjustments needed in order either to ‘rise to the challenge’ or to ‘back down’, which accompany the infinitesimal or abrupt redirections of a social trajectory. In this process of transmutation, rites of institution, and especially those of the educational system, such as the initiatory tests of preparation and selection, which are quite similar in their logic to those of archaic societies, play a determinant role in favouring initial investment in the game.

One can equally well say that agents take advantage of the possibilities offered by a field to express and satisfy their drives and their desires, in some cases their neurosis, or that fields use the agents’ drives by forcing them to subject or sublimate themselves in order to adapt to their structures and to the ends that are immanent within them. In fact, the two effects are observed in each case, no doubt in unequal proportions, depending on the field and the agent, and, from this point of view, one could describe each singular form of a specific habitus (of the artist, writer, or scientist, for example) as a kind of ‘compromise formation’ (in Freud’s sense).

The process of transformation through which one becomes a miner, a farmer, a priest, a musician, a teacher or an employer is long, continuous and imperceptible, and, even when it is sanctioned by rites of institution (such as, in the case of the academic nobility, the long preparatory separation and the magic trial of the competitive examination), it normally excludes sudden, radical conversions. It starts in childhood, sometimes even before birth (since, as is particularly clear in what are sometimes called ‘dynasties’ – of musicians, entrepreneurs, academics, etc. – it involves the socially elaborated desire of the father or mother and sometimes a whole lineage). It generally carries on without crises or conflicts – though this does not mean without psychological or physical suffering, which, as a series of tests, is part of the conditions of development of the illusio; and it is never possible, in any case, to determine who, the agent or the institution, really chose; whether it is the good pupil who chooses the school or the school that chooses him, because everything in his docile behaviour shows that he chooses it.
The initial form of *illusio* is investment in the domestic space, the site of a complex process of socialization of the sexual and sexualization of the social. And sociology and psychology should combine their efforts (but this would require them to overcome their mutual suspicion) to analyze the genesis of investment in a field of social relations, thus constituted as an object of interest and preoccupation, in which the child is increasingly implicated and which constitutes the paradigm and also the principle of investment in the social game. How does the transition, described by Freud, occur, leading from a narcissistic organization of the libido, in which the child takes himself (or his own body) as an object of desire, to another state in which he orients himself towards another person, thus entering the world of 'object relations', in the form of the original social microcosm and the protagonists of the drama that is played out there?

One may suppose that, to obtain the sacrifice of 'self-love' in favour of a quite other object of investment and so to inculcate the durable disposition to invest in the social game which is one of the prerequisites of all learning, pedagogic work in its elementary form relies on one of the motors which will be at the origin of all subsequent investments: the search for recognition. Happy immersion, without distance or divided loyalties, in the family field may be described either as an extreme form of fulfillment or as an absolute form of alienation. Absorbed in the love of others, the child can only discover others as such on condition that he discovers himself as a 'subject' for whom there are 'objects' whose particularity is that they can take him as their 'object'. In fact, he is continuously led to take the point of view of others on himself, to adopt their point of view so as to discover and evaluate in advance how he will be seen and defined by them. His being is a being-perceived, condemned to be defined as it 'really' is by the perception of others.

Such might be the anthropological root of the ambiguity of symbolic capital – glory, honour, credit, reputation, fame – the principle of an egoistic quest for satisfactions of *amour propre* which is, at the same time, a fascinated pursuit of the approval of others: 'The greatest baseness of man is the pursuit of glory. But that is the greatest mark of his excellence; for whatever possessions he may have on earth, whatever health and essential comfort, he is not satisfied if he has not the esteem of men.' 12 Symbolic capital enables forms of domination which imply dependence on those who can be dominated by it, since it only exists through the esteem, recognition, belief, credit, confidence of others, and can only be perpetuated so long as it succeeds in obtaining belief in its existence.

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1. Pascal, Pensées, 151.
3. Francine Patiente, oral communication.
Bodily constraint

Analysis of the learning and acquisition of dispositions leads to the specifically historical principle of the political order. From the discovery that at the origin of law there is nothing other than arbitrariness and usurpation, that it is impossible to found law in reason and right, and that the Constitution — no doubt what most resembles, in the political order, a Cartesian primary foundation — is merely a founding fiction designed to disguise the act of lawless violence which is the basis of the establishment of law, Pascal draws a typically Machiavellian conclusion: since the people cannot be made to understand the liberatory truth about the social order (\textit{veritatem qua libertet}), because that truth could only threaten or ruin that order, the people must be ‘deceived’, not allowed to see the ‘fact of usurpation’, the inaugural violence in which law is rooted, by ‘making it appear as authoritative, eternal’.

In fact there is no need for such intentional mystification, as is still believed by those who attribute submission to law and the maintenance of the symbolic order to a deliberately organized action of propaganda or to the (no doubt significant) efficacy of the ‘ideological State apparatuses’ working for the dominant class. Indeed, Pascal himself also notes that ‘custom makes all authority’ and constantly reminds us that the social order is merely the order of bodies: the habituation to custom and law that law and custom produce by their very existence and persistence is largely sufficient, without any deliberate intervention, to impose a recognition of the law based on misrecognition of the arbitrariness which underlies it. The authority that the State is able to exercise no doubt derives reinforcement from the ‘august apparel’ that it deploys, especially through the judicial apparatus; but the obedience it obtains results for the most part from the docile dispositions that it inculcates through the very order that it establishes (and also, more specifically, through schooling). It follows that the most fundamental problems of political philosophy can only be posed and truly resolved by means of a return to the mundane observations of the sociology of learning and upbringing.

In contrast to a command, an action on a machine or a robot, which acts in mechanical ways, amenable to physical analysis, an order takes effect only through the person who executes it; which does not mean that it necessarily presupposes a conscious and deliberate choice on the part of the executant, implying for example the possibility of disobedience. Most of the time, it can rely on what Pascal calls ‘the automaton’ within us, in other words dispositions prepared to recognize it practically — which gives it its ‘automatic’ appearance and can incline one to interpret it in mechanistic terms. Symbolic force, that of a performative utterance, and especially of an order, is a form of power which is exercised on bodies, directly, and as if by magic, without any physical constraint; but the magic works only on the basis of previously constituted dispositions, which it ‘triggers’ like springs. It is therefore only an apparent exception to the law of the conservation of energy (or capital): it has its conditions of possibility, and its (in an expanded sense of the term) economic equivalent in the immense preparatory work that is needed to bring about a durable transformation of bodies and to produce the permanent dispositions that symbolic action reawakens and reactivates. (This transformative action is all the more powerful because it is, for the most part, exercised invisibly and insidiously through familiarization with a symbolically structured physical world and through early and prolonged experience of interactions informed by the structures of domination.)

Produced by the incorporation of a social structure in the form of a quasi-natural disposition that often has all the appearances of innateness, habitus is the \textit{vis insita}, the potential energy, the dormant force, from which symbolic violence, and especially that exercised through performatives, derives its mysterious efficacy. It is also the origin of that particular form of symbolic efficacy, ‘influence’ (that of a person — ‘a bad influence’ — a thought, an author, etc.), which is often invoked as a tautological explanation and which loses all its mystery as soon as its quasi-magical effects are related to the conditions of production of the dispositions which predisposed certain agents to undergo it.

In a general way, the efficacy of external necessities depends upon the efficacy of an internal necessity. Thus, being the result of the inscription of a relation of domination into the body, dispositions are the true principle of the acts of practical knowledge and recognition of the magical frontier between the dominant and the dominated, which the magic of symbolic power only serves to trigger off. The practical recognition through which the dominated, often unwittingly, contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting, in advance, the limits imposed on them, often takes the form of \textit{bodily emotion} (shame, timidity, anxiety, guilt), often associated with the impression of \textit{regressing} towards archaic relationships, those of childhood and the family. It is betrayed in visible manifestations, such as blushing, inarticulacy, clumsiness, trembling, all ways of submitting, however reluctantly, to the dominant judgement, sometimes in internal conflict.

\footnote{Pascal, \textit{Pensées}, 294.}
and ‘self-division’, the subterranean complicity that a body slipping away from the directives of consciousness and will maintains with the violence of the censures inherent in the social structures.

All this appears with particular clarity in this description, taken from James Baldwin, of the mediations through which a black child learns and understands the difference between whites and blacks and the limits assigned to the latter: ‘Long before the black child perceives this difference, and even longer before he understands it, he has begun to react to it, he has begun to be controlled by it. Every effort made by the child’s elders to prepare him for a fate from which they cannot protect him causes him secretly, in terror, to begin to wait, without knowing that he is doing so, his mysterious and inexorable punishment. He must be “good”, not only to please his parents and not only to avoid being punished by them; behind their authority stands another, nameless and impersonal, infinitely harder to please, and bottomlessly cruel. And this filters into the child’s consciousness through his parents’ tone of voice as he is being exhorted, punished, or loved; in the sudden, uncontrollable note of fear heard in his mother’s or his father’s voice when he has strayed beyond some particular boundary. He does not know what the boundary is, and he can get no explanation of it, which is terrifying enough, but the fear he hears in the voices of his elders is more frightening still.9

Symbolic violence is the coercion which is set up only through the consent that the dominated cannot fail to give to the dominator (and therefore to the domination) when their understanding of the situation and relation can only use instruments of knowledge that they have in common with the dominator, which, being merely the incorporated form of the structure of the relation of domination, make this relation appear as natural; or, in other words, when the schemes they implement in order to perceive and evaluate themselves or to perceive and evaluate the dominators (high/low, male/female, white/black, etc.) are the product of the incorporation of the (thus naturalized) classifications of which their social being is the product.

To understand this particular form of domination one has to move beyond the false choice between constraint through forces and consent to reasons, between mechanical coercion and voluntary, free, deliberate submission. The effect of symbolic domination (sexual, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, etc.) is exerted not in the pure logic of knowing consciousnesses but in the obscurity of the dispositions of habits, in which are embedded the schemes of perception and appreciation which, below the level of the decisions of the conscious

mind and the controls of the will, are the basis of a relationship of practical knowledge and recognition that is profoundly obscure to itself. And so, for example, the paradoxical logic of male domination, the form par excellence of symbolic domination, and of female submission, of which it can be said, without contradiction, that it is both spontaneous and extorted, can only be understood if one takes note of the durable effects that the social order exerts on women, in other words of the dispositions spontaneously attuned to that order which it imposes on them.

Symbolic power is exerted only with the collaboration of those who undergo it because they help to construct it as such. But nothing would be more dangerous than to stop short at this observation (as idealist constructivism, in its ethnomethodological or other forms, does). This submission is in no way a ‘voluntary servitude’ and this complicity is not granted by a conscious, deliberate act; it is itself the effect of a power, which is durably inscribed in the bodies of the dominated, in the form of schemes of perception and dispositions (to respect, admire, love, etc.), in other words, beliefs which make one sensitive to certain public manifestations, such as public representations of power. It is these dispositions, in other words more or less what Pascal puts under the heading of ‘imagination’, which, he goes on to say, dispense ‘reputation’ and ‘glory’, give ‘respect and veneration to persons, works, laws, and the great’. They are what gives the ‘red robes’, ‘ermines’, ‘palaces’ and ‘fleurs-de-lis’ of magistrates, the ‘cassocks’ and the ‘mules’ of physicians, the ‘square caps’ and ‘too wide robes’ of doctors the authority they exert on us;10 but producing them required the prolonged action of countless powers which still govern us through them. And Pascal points out clearly, to invite us to neutralize them, that the effects of ‘imagination’ produced by the ‘august apparel’ and ‘such authentic show’ that necessarily accompanies the exercise of these powers (the examples he gives are all of ‘charges or offices’ held by the nobility of University or State) refer back to custom, in other words to education and the training of the body.

We are very far from the language of the ‘imaginary’ which is sometimes used nowadays, somewhat recklessly,11 and which has nothing in common, despite the verbal coincidence, with what Pascal puts under the heading of ‘imagination’ (or ‘opinion’), that is to say, both the support and the effect in bodies of symbolic violence. This submission, which the body can moreover reproduce by miming it,

10 Pascal, Pensées, 82.
11 By Cornelius Castoriadis, for example. Trans.
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is not an act of consciousness aiming at a mental correlate, a simple mental representation (the ideas that one ‘forms’) capable of being combatted by the sheer ‘intrinsic force’ of true ideas, or even what is ordinarily put under the heading of ‘ideology’, but a tacit and practical belief made possible by the habituation which arises from the training of the body. And another effect of the scholastic illusion is seen when people describe resistance to domination in the language of consciousness – as does the whole Marxist tradition and also the feminist theorists who, giving way to habits of thought, expect political liberation to come from the ‘raising of consciousness’ – ignoring the extraordinary inertia which results from the inscription of social structures in bodies, for lack of a dispositional theory of practices. While making things explicit can help, only a thoroughgoing process of countertraining, involving repeated exercises, can, like an athlete’s training, durably transform habitus.

Symbolic power

Domination, even when based on naked force, that of arms or money, always has a symbolic dimension, and acts of submission, of obedience, are acts of knowledge and recognition which, as such, implement cognitive structures capable of being applied to all things of the world, and in particular to social structures. These structuring structures are historically constituted forms, arbitrary in Saussure’s and Mauss’s sense, and it is possible to retrace their social genesis. Generalizing Durkheim’s hypothesis that the ‘primitive forms of classification’ correspond to the structures of groups, one can seek their principle in the effect of the ‘automatic’ incorporation of social structures, reinforced by the action of the State, which, in differentiated societies, is able to inculcate universally, over its whole territory, a common principle of vision and division, identical or similar cognitive and evaluative structures. The State is consequently the foundation of a ‘logical conformism’ and a ‘moral conformism’ (the phrases are Durkheim’s), an immediate, prereflexive consensus on the meaning of the world, which is the basis of the experience of the world as the ‘common-sense world’. It follows that the theory of knowledge of the social world is a fundamental dimension of political theory; and that, on condition that one ‘suspects’ the ‘suspension’ of the political dimension which the claim to perceive the universal essence of the ‘original experience of the social’ leads them to perform, one can make use of phenomenological analyses of the ‘natural attitude’, that is, of the primary experience of the social world as self-evident, natural, taken for granted, to emphasize the extraordinary acceptance that the established order manages to obtain, no doubt to varying degrees depending on the social formation and on the phase (organic or critical) it is in, with different political effects depending on the foundations of that order and the principles of its perpetuation. This reminder is all the more necessary because the methodological voluntarism and optimism which define the populist vision of the ‘people’ as a site of subversion or, at least, of ‘resistance’ concur in setting aside realistic observations with the sometimes apocalyptic pessimism of the conservative vision of the ‘masses’ as a blind, brute force of subversion.

Phenomenological analysis, so perfectly ‘neutralized’ politically that one can read it without drawing any political conclusions, has the virtue of making visible all that is still granted to the established order by the most para-doxal, the seemingly most critical political experience, the one most resolved to perform the ‘epokhê of the natural attitude’, as Schutz put it (in other words to suspend the suspension of doubt as to the possibility that the social world could be other than it is which is implied in the experience of the world as ‘taken for granted’). Because dispositions are the product of the incorporation of objective structures and because expectations always tend to adjust themselves to chances, the instituted order always tends to appear, even to the most disadvantaged, if not as self-evident, natural, at least as more necessary, more self-evident than might be thought from the standpoint of those who, not having been brought up in such pitiless conditions, can only find them spontaneously unbearable and revolting. Phenomenological analysis, reread in this way (like, in a quite different register, Spinoza’s analysis of obsequium, that ‘constant will’ produced by ‘the conditioning through which the State shapes us for its use and which enables it to be conserved’), has the virtue of recalling what is most particularly ignored or repressed, especially in universes in which people tend to think of themselves as free of conformisms and beliefs, namely the relation of often insurmountable submission which binds all social agents, whether they like it or not, to the social world of which they are, for better or worse, the products. And if one needs to emphasize this truth very strongly, albeit with the exaggeration needed to awake people from their doxic slumber by ‘twisting the stick in the opposite direction’, this is not done, of course, in order to deny the existence of strategies of resistance, individual or collective, ordinary or extraordinary, or to exclude the possibility of a differential sociological analysis of relations to the social world, or, more precisely of variations in the extent of the realm of doxa – relative to the realm of orthodox or heterodox opinions, expressed, constituted and articulated – depending on the
society (and especially its degree of homogeneity and their organic or critical state) and depending on the position occupied in that society.

But, even in the most differentiated societies and those most subject to change, the presuppositions of doxa -- those, for example, which underlie the choice of formulae of politeness -- cannot be reduced to a set of formal, universal 'theses' like those set out by Schutz: 'In the natural attitude, I take for granted that fellow-men exist, that they act on me as I upon them, that -- at least to a certain extent -- communication and mutual understanding among us can be established, and that this is done with the help of some system of signs and symbols within the frame of some social organization and some social institutions -- none of them of my own making.' It would not be difficult to show that what is tacitly imposed on recognition by the 'inert violence' of the social order goes far beyond these few general, ahistorical anthropological propositions -- as is shown by the countless manifestations (unease or silent shame) of submission before the legitimate culture and language. The primordial political belief is a particular viewpoint, that of the dominant, which presents and imposes itself as a universal viewpoint. It is the viewpoint of those who directly or indirectly dominate the State and who, through the State, have established their viewpoint as the universal viewpoint, after struggles against rival views. What today presents itself as self-evident, established, settled once and for all, beyond discussion, has not always been so and only gradually imposed itself as such. It is historical evolution which tends to abolish history, in particular by retreating to the past, to the unconscious, all the 'lateral possibles' which have been excluded; it thus comes to be forgotten that the 'natural attitude' that the phenomenologists refer to, is, the primary experience of the world as self-evident, a socially constructed relationship, as are the perceptual schemes that make it possible.

The phenomenologists, who have made this primary experience explicit, and the ethnomethodologists, who have set out to describe it, do not give themselves the means of accounting for it. While they are right to recall, in opposition to the mechanist vision, that social agents construct social reality, they fail to address the question of the social construction of the principles of construction of that reality which agents implement in the individual and also collective work of construction, and to consider the contribution of the State to that construction. In relatively undifferentiated societies, it is through the whole spatial and temporal organization of social life, and also through

rites of institution establishing definitive differences between those who have undergone the rite (for example, circumcision) and those who have not (for example, women) that the common principles of vision and division (the paradigm of which is the male-female opposition) are instituted in bodies. In modern societies, the State makes a decisive contribution towards the production and reproduction of the instruments of construction of social reality. As an organizational structure and as an authority regulating practices, it exerts a permanent action of formation of durable dispositions, through all the constraints and disciplines that it imposes uniformly on all agents. In particular, in reality and in people's minds it imposes all the fundamental principles of classification -- sex, age, 'competence', etc. -- through the imposition of divisions into social categories -- such as active/inactive -- which are the product of the application of cognitive 'categories', which are thus reified and naturalized. It is the source of the symbolic efficacy of all the rites of institution, those which are at the basis of the family, for example, and also those which are performed through the functioning of the educational system, which, between those it selects and those it eliminates, sets up durable and often definitive symbolic differences, universally recognized within the area of its authority.

The construction of the State is thus accompanied by the construction of a kind of common historical transcendental which, after a long process of incorporation, becomes immanent to all its 'subjects'. Through the structuring it imposes on practices, the State institutes and inculcates common symbolic forms of thought, social frames of perception, understanding or memory, State forms of classification or, more precisely, practical schemes of perception, appreciation and action. (When, as here and elsewhere in this text, I give numerous equivalent formulations, I am trying to help to demolish the false frontiers between artificially separated theoretical universes, for example, the neo-Kantian philosophy of symbolic forms proposed by Cassirer and the Durkheimian sociology of the primitive forms of classification -- and to secure the means of cumulating the insights of each while increasing the chances of being understood.)

The State thereby creates the conditions for an immediate orchestration of habitus which is itself the foundation for a consensus on this set of shared self-evidences which constitute common sense. For example, the major rhythms of the social calendar, especially that of school holidays, which determines the great 'seasonal migrations' of contemporary societies, guarantee both common objective referents and harmonized subjective principles of division, thereby ensuring, beyond the irreducibility of lived experience of time, 'internal

experiences of time' that are sufficiently concordant to make social life possible. Another example: the division of the academic world into disciplines is embedded in the form of disciplinary habitus generating an agreement between specialists which is responsible even for their disagreements and the form in which they express them and which also leads to all kinds of limitations and blindspots in practices and representations, and distortions in relations with the representatives of other disciplines.

But fully to understand the immediate submission secured by the State order, one has to break with the intellectualism of the Kantian tradition and see that cognitive structures are not forms of consciousness but dispositions of the body, practical schemes, and that the obedience we give to State injunctions cannot be understood either as mechanical submission to force or as conscious consent to an order. The social world is full of calls to order which function as such only for individuals who are predisposed to notice them, and which, as a red light causes braking, trigger deep-rooted bodily dispositions without passing through consciousness and calculation. Submission to the established order is the product of the agreement between the cognitive structures that collective history (phylogenesis) and individual history (ontogenesis) has inscribed in bodies and the subjective structures of the world to which they are applied. The self-evidence of the injunctions of the State imposes itself so powerfully because the State has imposed the cognitive structures through which it is perceived.

But we have to move beyond the neo-Kantian tradition, even in its Durkheimian form, on another point. Symbolic structuralism, by privileging the opus operatum (like Lévi-Strauss or Foucault in The Order of Things), no doubt-condemns itself to ignore the active dimension of symbolic production, especially in the field of myth, that is, the question of the modus operandi, the 'generative grammar' in Chomsky's terms, and above all of its genesis, and therefore its relationship with particular social conditions of production. But it has the immense merit of seeking to extract the coherence of symbolic systems, considered as such. This coherence is one of the major principles of their specific efficacy, as is clearly seen in the case of law, where it is deliberately sought, but also in the case of myth or religion. The symbolic order is based on the imposition on all agents of structuring structures which derive part of their consistency and resistance to the fact that they are, in appearance at least, coherent and systematic, and that they are adjusted to the objective structures of the social world (this is true, for example, of the opposition between the male and the female, which is bound up with the tight network of all the oppositions of the mythico-ritual system, itself inscribed in bodies and in things). This immediate, tacit agreement (quite different from an explicit contract) is the basis of the relation of doxic submission which binds us to the established order with all the bonds of the unconscious, that is, of a history that is unaware of itself as such. Recognition of legitimacy is not, as Weber supposed, a free act of lucid consciousness: it is rooted in the immediate agreement between the incorporated structures, turned into practical schemes, such as those which organize temporal rhythms (for example the quite arbitrary division into hours of the school timetable), and the objective structures.

The doxic submission of the dominated to the objective structures of a social order of which their cognitive structures are the product — a real mystery so long as one remains enclosed in the intellectualist tradition of philosophies of mind — is thus clarified. In the notion of 'false consciousness' which some Marxists invoke to explain the effect of symbolic domination, it is the word 'consciousness' which is excessive; and to speak of ideology is to place in the order of representations, capable of being transformed by the intellectual conversion that is called the 'awakening of consciousness', what belongs to the order of beliefs, that is, at the deepest level of bodily dispositions. (When one is trying to account for symbolic power and the specifically symbolic dimension of State power, Marxists thought is more of a hindrance than a help. One can, by contrast, make use of the decisive contribution which Max Weber made in his writings on religion to the theory of symbolic systems, by reintroducing specialized agents and their specific interests. While, like Marx, Weber is less interested in the structure of symbolic systems (which he does not, moreover, call by this name) than in their function, he has the merit of drawing attention to the producers of these special products (religious agents, in the case which concerns him) and to their interactions (conflict, competition, etc.). Unlike the Marxists who, even if one can point to a text by Engels about the corps of jurists, tend to ignore the existence of specialized agents of production, he points out that to understand religion it is not sufficient to study religious symbolic forms, like Cassirer or Durkheim, or even the immanent structure of the religious message or the mythological corpus, like the structuralists: he focuses on the producers of the religious message, the specific interests which motivate them, and the strategies they use in their struggles, such as excommunication.

Applying, by a new break, the structuralist mode of thought (which is quite alien to Max Weber) not only to works and the relations between works (like symbolic structuralism) but also to the relations
between the producers of symbolic goods, one can then construct as such not only the structure of symbolic productions, or, more precisely, the *space of symbolic position-taking* in a given area of practice (for example, religious messages), but also the structure of the system of the agents who produce them (for example, priests, prophets and sorcerers), or, more precisely, the *space of the positions* that they occupy (what I call the religious field, for example) in the competition among them. One then has the means of understanding these symbolic productions, as regards their function, their structure and their genesis, on the basis of the – empirically confirmed – homology between these two spaces.

It is the prerelative agreement between the objective structures and the incorporated structures, and not the efficacy of the deliberate propaganda of apparatuses or the free recognition of legitimacy by the citizens, which explains the – ultimately astonishing – ease with which, throughout history and apart from a few crisis situations, the dominant impose their domination: ‘Nothing appears more surprising to those who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few and the implicit submission with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we inquire by what means this wonder is effected, we shall find that, as force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is, therefore, on opinion only that government is founded, and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments as well as to the most free and most popular.’

Hume’s astonishment brings up the fundamental question of all political philosophy, a question that is paradoxically masked when people pose a scholastic problem that is never really posed as such in ordinary existence, that of legitimacy. For the problem is that, for the most part, the established order is not a problem; outside crisis situations, the question of the legitimacy of the State does not arise. The State does not necessarily need to give orders and to exert physical coercion, or disciplinary constraint, to produce an ordered social world, so long as it is able to produce incorporated cognitive structures attuned to the objective structures and so secure doxic submission to the established order.

(Faced with this so typically Pascalian reversal of the vision of the half-learned, who misplace their astonishments, how can one not quote Pascal? ‘The people have very sound opinions... The half-learned laugh at it, and glory in showing thereby the folly of the world; but, for a reason these men cannot grasp, the people are right.’ And true philosophy makes light of the philosophy of ‘those who stand halfway’, who ‘pretend to be wise’ by mocking the people on the grounds that they are not sufficiently astonished at so many things so worthy of astonishment. Failing to consider the ‘reason of the effects’ which provoke their astonishment, they help to divert attention from realities more worthy of astonishment, such as the ‘implicit submission with which men revoke their feelings and passions in favour of their leaders’ (or, in the language of 1968, the docility with which they sacrifice their ‘desires’ to the ‘repressive’ demands of the ‘dominant’ order). A number of seemingly radical reflections on politics and power are indeed rooted in the revolts of aesthete adolescents, who sow their wild oats by denouncing the constraints of the social order, most often identified with the family – Gide’s ‘Families, I hate you’ – or with the State – with the ‘leftist’ themes of ‘repression’ which ‘self-evidently’ inspired French philosophers post-1968. They are only one manifestation among others of that ‘impatience with limits’ that Claudel referred to, which does not predispose one to enter into a realistic and attentive (which does not mean resigned) understanding of social constraints. And one might read as a programme of scientific and political work Pascal’s celebrated text on the ‘reason of effects’: ‘Continual alternation of pro and con. We have, then, shown that man is foolish, by the estimation he makes of things which are not essential; and all these opinions are destroyed. We have next shown that all these opinions are very sound and that thus, since all these vanities are well founded [we are here very close to Durkheim’s definition of religion as “well-founded delirium”], the people are not so foolish as is said. And so we have destroyed the opinion which destroyed that of the people. But we must now destroy this last proposition and show that it remains always true that the people are foolish, though their opinions are sound: because they do not perceive the truth where it is, and, as they place it where it is not, their opinions are always very false and very unsound.’

Twofold naturalization and its effects

The passions of the dominated habitus (whether dominated in terms of sex, culture or language), a somatized social relationship, the law of the social body converted into the law of the body, are not of a

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kind that can be suspended by a simple effort of will, founded on a liberatory awakening of consciousness. A person who fights his timidity feels betrayed by his body, which recognizes paralyzing taboos or calls to order, where someone else, the product of different conditions, would see stimulating incitements or injunctions. It is quite illusory to think that symbolic violence can be overcome solely with the weapons of consciousness and will. The conditions of its efficacy are durably inscribed in bodies in the form of dispositions which, especially in the case of kinship relations and social relations conceived on this model, are expressed and experienced in the logic of feeling or duty, often merged in the experience of respect, affective devotion or love, and which can survive long after the disappearance of their social conditions of production.

Hence also the ‘foolishness’ of all religious, ethical or political stances consisting in expecting a genuine transformation of relations of domination (or of the dispositions which are, partly at least, a product of them) from a simple ‘conversion of minds’ (of the dominant or the dominated), produced by rational preaching and education, or, as maîtres à penser sometimes like to think, from a vast collective logotherapy which it falls to the intellectuals to organize. We know the futility of all actions which seek to use only the weapons of logical or empirical refutation in combatting this or that form of racism – whether of ethnicity, class or sex – which in fact thrives on discourses capable of flattering the associated dispositions and beliefs (often relatively indeterminate, amenable to multiple verbal formulations, and obscure to themselves) by giving the sense or the illusion of expressing them. Habitus is not destiny; but symbolic action cannot, on its own, without transformation of the conditions of the production and transformation of dispositions, extirpate bodily beliefs, which are passions and drives that remain totally indifferent to the injunctions or condemnations of humanistic universalism (itself, moreover, rooted in dispositions and beliefs).

Consider, for example, nationalist passion, which can be found in different forms in the occupants of the two opposing positions of a relation of domination: Irish Protestants and Catholics, English-speaking or French-speaking Canadians, etc. The ‘primary truth’ to which the protagonists cling, and which it would be too easy to see as a ‘primary error’, a mere illusion of passion and blindness, is that nation, ‘race’, or ‘identity’, in the current phrase, is inscribed in things – in the form of objective structures, de facto separation, economic or spatial, etc. – and in bodies – in the form of tastes and distastes, likes and dislikes, which are sometimes called visceral. Objective (and objectivist) critique can easily denounce the naturalized vision of the region or nation, with its ‘natural’ frontiers and its ‘linguistic’ or other units, and show that all these substantial entities are merely social constructs, historical artefacts, often resulting from historical struggles similar to those they are supposed to have settled, not perceived as such but rather, and wrongly, as natural data.

But the critique of essentialist nationalism (the limiting case of which is racism), as well as often being an easy way of asserting one’s distance from common passions, remains perfectly ineffective (and therefore likely to be legitimately suspected of having other motivations). Though denounced, condemned and stigmatized, the deadly passions of all racisms (of ethnicity, sex or class) perpetuate themselves because they are bound to the body in the form of dispositions and also because the relation of domination of which they are the product perpetuates itself in objectivity, continuously reinforcing the propensity to accept it, which, except in the case of a critical break (that performed by the ‘reactive’ nationalism of dominated peoples, for example), is no less strong among the dominated than the dominant.

If I have little by little come to shun the use of the word ‘ideology’, this is not only because of its polysemy and the resulting ambiguities. It is above all because, by evoking the order of ideas, and of action by ideas and on ideas, it inclines one to forget one of the most powerful mechanisms of the maintenance of the symbolic order, the two-fold naturalization which results from the inscription of the social in things and in bodies (as much those of the dominant as of the dominated – whether in terms of sex, ethnicity, social position or any other discriminating factor), with the resulting effects of symbolic violence. As is underlined by ordinary-language notions such as ‘natural distinction’ or ‘gift’, the work of legitimation of the established order is extraordinarily facilitated by the fact that it goes on almost automatically in the reality of the social world.

The processes which produce and reproduce the social order, both in things, museums for example, or in objective mechanisms such as those which tend to reserve access to those most endowed with inherited cultural capital, and in bodies, through the mechanisms which ensure the hereditary transmission of dispositions and the forgetting of it, offer to perception an abundance of tangible self-evidences, indisputable at first sight, which strongly tend to give to an illusory representation all the appearances of being grounded in reality. In short, the social order itself largely produces its own sociodicy. It follows that one only has to let the objective mechanisms do their work, which may be work upon oneself, in order; unwittingly, to grant the social order its ratification. And those who rush to the aid of the symbolic order threatened by crisis or critique need only point to the self-evidences of common sense, in other words the vision of
itself that, except in extraordinary circumstances, the social world manages to impose. As a half-wise epigrammatist might put it, the established order is so well defended because one only has to be stupid in order to defend it. (This is, for example, what provides the almost insurmountable social strength of the doxophobes and their opinion polls, based on a not-even-conscious decision to let themselves be guided, in choosing and formulating their questions, in drawing up their categories or in interpreting their findings, by the mental habits and self-evidences of 'common sense').

Social science, which is obliged to make a critical break with primary self-evidences, has no better weapon for doing so than historicization, which, at least in the order of theory, makes it possible to neutralize the effects of naturalization, and in particular amnesia of the individual and collective genesis of a 'given' that gives itself with all the appearance of nature and asks to be taken at face value, taken for granted. But - and this makes anthropological inquiry so difficult - the effect of naturalization also applies to thought itself: the incorporation of the scholastic order can, as has been seen, impose presuppositions and limitations on thought which, being embedded in the body, are beyond the reach of consciousness.

In ordinary existence, the classifying operations through which agents construct the social world tend to be forgotten as such as they realize themselves in the social units which they produce - family, tribe, nation, etc. - and which have all the appearances of things (such as transcendence and resistance). In the same way, in the fields of cultural production, the concepts that we use - power, prestige, work, society - and the classifications that we engage explicitly (in definitions or notions) or implicitly (in particular through divisions into disciplines or specialities) use us as much as we use them, and 'automation' is a specific form of repression that consigns the very instruments of thought to the unconscious. Only historical critique, the major weapon of reflexiveness, can free thought from the constraints exerted on it when, surrendering to the routines of the automation, it treats reified historical constructs as things. It is clear how damaging it is to reject historicization, a rejection which, for many thinkers, is constitutive of philosophy itself and which gives free rein to the historical mechanisms that it claims to ignore.

**Practical sense and political labour**

Thus, one cannot really describe the relationship between agents and the world except by placing at the centre the body and the process of incorporation, which both physicalist objectivism and marginalist subjectivism ignore. The structures of the social space (or of fields) shape bodies by inculcating in them, through the conditioning associated with a position in that space, the cognitive structures that these conditionings apply to them. More precisely, the social world, because it is an object of knowledge for those who are included in it, is, in part, the reified or incorporated product of all the different (and rival) acts of knowledge of which it is the object. But these position-takings on the world depend for their content and their symbolic force on the position that their producers occupy within it, and only an analysis situs can make it possible to construct these points of view as such, that is, as partial views each from a point (situs) in social space. Moreover, these determinate points of view are themselves determinant: to varying degrees, they play a part in making, unmaking and remaking the space, in the struggle of points of view, perspectives, classifications (consider, for example, the struggle over distributions, or, more precisely, over 'equality in distributions', *en tais diatonomais*, in the phrase Aristotle used to define distributive justice).

So the social space cannot be reduced to a simple 'awareness context' in the interactionist sense, a universe of points of view reflecting each other *ad infinitum*. It is the relatively stable site of the coexistence of points of view, in the dual sense of positions in the distribution of capital (economic, informational, social, etc.) and of the corresponding powers, but also of practical reactions to or representations of that space, produced from these points through habits that are structured, and doubly informed, by the structure of the space and by the structure of the schemes of perception that are applied to it.

Points of view, in the sense of structured and structuring position-takings on the social space or on a particular field, are by definition different and competing. To explain why all fields are the site of competitions and conflicts, there is no need to invoke a selfish or aggressive 'human nature' or a 'will to power'. As well as the investment in the stakes that defines participation in the game and which, being common to all the players, sets them against and in competition with each other, it is the very structure of the field, that is, the structure of the (unequal) distribution of the various kinds of capital, which, by generating the rarity of certain positions and the corresponding profits, favours strategies aimed at destroying or reducing that rarity, through

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the appropriation of rare positions, or conserving it, through the defence of those positions.

The social space, that is, the structure of distributions, is both the basis of antagonistic position-takings on that space, which means, in particular, on the distribution, and a stake in struggles and confrontation between the points of view (which, one must endlessly repeat in order to escape from the scholastic illusion, are not necessarily representations, explicit, verbal position-takings). These struggles to impose the legitimate vision and representation of the space, the ortho-doxy, which in the political field often resort to prophecy or forecasting (prévision), aim to impose principles of vision and division – ethnic group, region, nation, class, etc. – which, through the effect of self-fulfilling prophecy, can help to make groups exist. They have the inevitable effect, especially when they are instituted in a political field (in contrast, for example, to the hidden struggles between the sexes in archaic societies), of bringing a more or less extensive part of the doxa to the level of explicit statement, that is, of constituted opinion – without ever, even in the most critical situations of the most critical social universes, reaching the total uncovering that is pursued by social science, that is, the complete suspension of doxic submission to the established order.

Each agent has a practical, bodily knowledge of her present and potential position in the social space, a ‘sense of one’s place’ as Goffman puts it, converted into a sense of placement which governs her experience of the place occupied, defined absolutely and above all relationally as a rank, and the way to behave in order to keep it (‘pulling rank’) and to keep within it (‘knowing one’s place’, etc.). The practical knowledge conferred by this sense of position takes the form of emotion (the unease of someone who is out of place, or the ease that comes from being in one’s place), and it is expressed in behaviours such as avoidance or unconscious adjustments such as the correction of one’s accent (in the presence of a person of higher rank) or, in situations of bilingualism, the choice of the language appropriate to the situation. It is this practical knowledge that orients interventions in the symbolic struggles of everyday life which contribute to the construction of the social world, less visibly but just as effectively as the theoretical struggles that take place within the specialized fields, especially the political, bureaucratic, juridical and scientific ones, that is, in the order of symbolic, mostly discursive, representations.

But, as a practical sense, this sense of present and potential placement is, as has been seen, capable of being made explicit in several ways. Hence the relative independence, with respect to position, of explicit position-taking, verbally stated opinion, opening the way for the specifically political action of representation – the work of the spokesperson who brings the supposed existence of a group to the level of verbal or indeed theatrical representation and who can help to make it exist by making it appear as the person who speaks (with a single voice) in its name, or even by making it visible as such by calling upon it to manifest itself in a public exhibition, a march or procession, or, in modern times, a demonstration, and so to declare its existence, its strength (linked to number) and its will, before the eyes of all.16

The sense of one’s place is a practical sense (having nothing in common with what is generally referred to as ‘class consciousness’), a practical knowledge that does not know itself, a ‘learned ignorance’ (docta ignorantia) which, as such, may be the victim of that particular form of misrecognition, alldoxia, consisting in mistakenly recognizing oneself in a particular form of representation and public enunciation of the doxa. The knowledge supplied by incorporation of the necessity of the social world, especially in the form of the sense of limits, is quite real, like the submission which it implies and which is sometimes expressed in the imperative statements of resignation: ‘That’s not for us’ (or ‘not for the likes of us’) or, more simply, ‘It’s too expensive’ (for us). It even contains (as I tried to show when questioning Algerian workers about the causes of unemployment) the rudiments of explicit statement or even explanation.17 And it does not exclude – why would one suppose the contrary? – forms of resistance, either passive and internal, or active and sometimes collective, with, in particular, all the strategies aimed at escaping the most unpleasant forms of labour and exploitation (going slow, working to rule, sabotage). But it remains open to symbolic hijacking, forced as it is to entrust itself to spokespersons, the exclusive agents of the ontological leap presupposed by the move from praxis to logos, from practical sense to discourse, from practical vision to representation, that is, access to the order of specifically political opinion.

Political struggle is a (practical and theoretical) cognitive struggle for the power to impose the legitimate vision of the social world, or, more precisely, for the recognition, accumulated in the form of a symbolic capital of notoriety and respectability, which gives the authority to impose the legitimate knowledge of the sense of the social world, its present meaning and the direction in which it is going and should go. The work of ‘worldmaking’, which, as Nelson Goodman

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observes, consists in ‘setting apart and putting together, often at the same time,’ tends, when the social world is involved, to construct and impose the principles of division likely to conserve or transform this world by transforming the vision of its divisions and therefore of the groups which compose it and of their relations. It is in a sense a politics of perception aimed at maintaining or subverting the order of things by transforming or conserving the categories through which it is perceived, the words in which it is expressed. The effort to inform and orient the perception and the effort to make explicit the practical experience of the world go hand in hand, since one of the stakes in the symbolic struggle is the power of knowledge, that is, power over the incorporated instruments of knowledge, the schemes of perception and appreciation of the social world, the principles of division, which, at a given moment, determine the vision of the world (rich/poor, white/black, national/foreign, etc.), and the power to make see and make believe that this power implies.

By its very existence, the institution of the State as the holder of the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence sets a limit on the symbolic struggle of all against all for this monopoly (that is, for the right to impose one’s own principle of vision), thereby removing a certain number of divisions and principles of division from this struggle. But, at the same time, it makes the State itself one of the major stakes in the struggle for symbolic power. The State is the site par excellence of the imposition of the nomos, the official and effective principle of construction of the world, with, for example, all the acts of consecration and accreditation which ratify, legalize, legitimize, ‘regularize’ situations or acts of union (marriage, various contracts, etc.) or separation (divorce, breach of contract), which are thus raised from the status of pure contingent fact, unofficial or even disguised (a ‘relationship’), to the status of official fact, known and recognized by all, published and public.

The form par excellence of the socially instituted and officially recognized symbolic power of construction is the legal authority, law being the objectification of the dominant vision recognized as legitimate, or, to put it another way, of the legitimate vision of the world, the orthodoxy, guaranteed by the State. An exemplary manifestation of this State power of consecration of the established order is the verdict, a legitimate exercise of the power to say what is and to make exist what it states, in a performative utterance that is universally recognized (as opposed to an insult, for example); or again, the birth certificate, another creative statement, analogous to that performed by a divine intuitus originarius, which, like Mallarmé’s poet, fixes names, puts an end to argument about the way of naming by assigning an ‘identity’ (the identity card) or sometimes even a title, the principle of the constitution of a corporate body.

But while the State reserves for its directly mandated agents this power of legitimate distribution and redistribution of identities through the consecration of persons or things (with deeds of ownership, for example), it may delegate derived forms of it, such as the certificate, academic or medical, of aptitude, incapacity, invalidity, etc., a recognized social power giving legitimate access, entitlement, to advantages or privileges, or the diagnosis, a clinical act of scientific identification which may be endowed with legal efficacy through the prescription and play a part in the social distribution of privileges, by establishing a social frontier, the one which distinguishes a category of beneficiaries. (Here one should pause to reflect on the sociological observation – for example, the one I am transcribing here – which, though it claims the status of an experimental procedure, is liable to be seen as a ratification, an approbation, in other words a surreptitiously performative statement which, under the appearance of simply saying what is, tends additionally and tacitly to say what ought to be. This ambiguity is particularly clear in statistical observations: these record – using State categories, in the case of official statistics – distributions which themselves merely register the result of struggles for the determination of the legitimate distribution: where Social Security is concerned, for example, for the definition or redefinition of legitimate disability.)

Thus the social world is both the product and the stake of inseparably cognitive and political symbolic struggles over knowledge and recognition, in which each pursues not only the imposition of an advantageous representation of himself or herself, with the strategies of ‘presentation of self’ so admirably analysed by Goffman, but also the power to impose as legitimate the principles of construction of social reality most favourable to his or her social being (individual and collective, with, for example, struggles over the boundaries of groups) and to the accumulation of a symbolic capital of recognition. These struggles take place both in the order of everyday existence and within the fields of cultural production, which, even if they are not oriented towards this sole end, like the political field, contribute to the production and imposition of principles of construction and evaluation of social reality.

The specifically political action of legitimation is always carried out on the basis of the fundamental given of original acceptance of the world as it is, and the work of the guardians of the symbolic

order, whose interests are bound up with common sense, consists in trying to restore the initial self-evidences of doxa. By contrast, the political action of subversion aims to liberate the potential capacity for refusal which is neutralized by misrecognition, by performing, aided by a crisis, a critical unveiling of the founding violence that is masked by the adjustment between the order of things and the order of bodies.

The symbolic work needed in order to break out of the silent self-evidence of doxa and to state and denounce the arbitrariness that it conceals presupposes instruments of expression and criticism which, like the other forms of capital, are unequally distributed. As a consequence, there is every reason to think that it would not be possible without the intervention of professional practitioners of the work of making explicit, who, in certain historical conjunctures, may make themselves the spokespersons of the dominated on the base of partial solidarities and de facto alliances springing from the homology between a dominated position in this or that field of cultural production and the position of the dominated in the social space. A solidarity of this kind, which is not without ambiguity, can bring about – with, for example, the defrocked priests of the millenarian movements of the Middle Ages, or the intellectuals (‘proletariad’, as Weber calls them, or others) of the revolutionary movements of modern times – the transfer of cultural capital which enables the dominated to achieve a collective mobilization and subversive action against the established order; with, in return, the risk of hijacking which is contained in the imperfect correspondence between the interests of the dominated and those of the dominated-dominant who make themselves the spokespersons of their demands or their revolts, on the basis of a partial analogy between different experiences of domination.

The twofold truth

One cannot remain satisfied with the objectivist vision, which leads to physicalism, and for which there is a social world in itself, to be treated as a thing, with the scientist being able to treat the necessarily partial (in both senses) points of the view of the agents as simple illusions. Nor can one be satisfied with the subjectivist or marginalist vision, for which the social world is merely the product of the aggregation of all representations and all wills. Social science cannot be reduced to an objectification incapable of giving its due place to the effort of agents to construct their subjective representation of themselves and the world, sometimes against all the objective data; and it cannot be reduced to a recording of spontaneous sociologies and folk theories – which are already too present in scientific discourse, smuggling themselves in.

In fact, the social world is an object of knowledge for those who belong to it and who, comprehended within it, comprehend it, and produce it, but from the point of view they occupy within it. One therefore cannot exclude the percipere and the percipi, the knowing and the being-known, the recognizing and the being-recognized, which are the source of the struggles for recognition, and for symbolic power, that is, the power to impose the principles of division, knowledge and recognition. But nor can one ignore the fact that, in these truly political struggles to modify the world by modifying the representations of the world, the agents take up positions which, far from being interchangeable, as phenomenist perspectivism would have it, always depend, in reality, on their position in the social world of which they are the product but which they help to produce.

Since one cannot be content either with the primary vision or with the vision to which the work of objectification gives access, one can only strive to hold together, so as to integrate them, both the point of view of the agents who are caught up in the object and the point of view on this point of view which the work of analysis enables one to reach by relating position-takings to the positions from which they are taken. No doubt because the epistemological break always presupposes a social separation which, especially when it is ignored, can inspire a form of initiate’s contempt for common knowledge, treated as an obstacle to be destroyed and not as an object to be understood, there is a strong temptation – and many social scientists fall into it – to stop short at the objectivist phase and the partial view of the ‘half-learned’, who, carried away by the wicked pleasure of disenchanting, fail to bring into their analysis the primary vision, Pascal’s ‘sound truth of the people’, against which their constructions are built. The result is that the resistances that scientific objectification often provokes, which are felt and expressed with particular intensity in academic worlds, anxious to defend the monopoly of their own understanding, are not all or always entirely unjustified.

Social games are in any case very difficult to describe in their twofold truth. Those who are caught up in them have little interest in seeing the game objectified, and those who are not are often ill-placed to experience and feel everything that can only be learned and understood when one takes part in the game – so that their descriptions, which fail to evoke the enchanted experience of the believer, are likely to strike the participants as both trivial and sacrilegious. The ‘half-learned’, eager to demystify and denounce, do not realize
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that those they seek to disabuse, or unmask, both know and resist the truth they claim to reveal. They cannot understand, or take into account, the games of self-deception which make it possible to perpetuate an illusion for oneself and to safeguard a bearable form of 'subjective truth' in the face of calls to reality and to realism, and often with the complicity of the institution (the latter – the university, for example, for all its love of classifications and hierarchies – always offers compensatory satisfactions and consolation prizes that tend to blur the perception and evaluation of self and others).

But the defences that individuals put up against the discovery of their truth are as nothing beside the collective systems of defence used to mask the most fundamental mechanisms of the social order, those that govern the economy of symbolic exchanges. Thus the most indisputable discoveries, such as the existence of a strong correlation between social origin and academic success or between level of education and visits to museums, or between gender and the probability of access to the most prestigious positions in the scientific and artistic universes, may be rejected as scandalous untruths to be countered with examples presented as irrefutable ('my concierge's son is at university', or 'I know children of polytechniciens who are total failures') or denies which surface, like Freudian slips, in distinguished conversations or in essays aspiring to some seriousness, and the canonical form of which was supplied by a senior member of the most distinguished bourgeoisie: 'Education, sir, is innate.' In as much as his work of objectifying and unveiling often leads him to produce the negation of a denegation, the sociologist must expect to see his discoveries both swept aside as trivial observations that have been known for all eternity, and violently contested, by the same people, as notorious errors with no other basis than polemical malevolence or envious resentment.

When this has been said, he must not use these resistances, which are very similar to those encountered in psychoanalysis, though more powerful because they are supported by collective mechanisms, as a reason for forgetting that the work of repression and the more or less fantastical constructions that it produces are part of the truth, with the same status as what they seek to disguise. If one recalls, as Husserl does, that 'the arche-original earth does not move', this is not an invitation to repudiate the work of Copernicus in order simply to replace it with the directly experienced truth (as is done by some ethnomethodologists and other constructivist advocates of 'sociologies of freedom', immediately applauded by all those who pine for the 'return of the subject' and the eagerly awaited end of the 'social' and the social sciences). It is simply an invitation to hold together the findings of objectification and the equally clear fact of primary experience, which, by definition, excludes objectification. More precisely, it is a question of accepting the permanent obligation of doing what is necessary in order to objectify the scholastic point of view, which enables the objectifying subject to take a point of view on the point of view of the agents engaged in practice, and to adopt a strange point of view, absolutely inaccessible within practice: the dual, bifocal point of view which, having reappropriated its experience as an empirical 'subject', comprehended in the world and also capable of comprehending the fact of impaction and all that is implicit within it, endeavours to include in the (inevitably scholastic) theoretical reconstruction the truth of those who have neither the interest, nor the leisure, nor the necessary instruments to reappropriate the objective and subjective truth of what they are and what they do.

Case study 1: The twofold truth of the gift

This dual view is never, perhaps, more necessary than in the case of the experience of the gift, which cannot fail to strike one by its ambiguity. On the one hand, it is experienced (or intended) as a refusal of self-interest and egoistic calculation, and an exaltation of gratuitous, unrequited generosity. On the other hand, it never entirely excludes awareness of the logic of exchange or even confession of the repressed impulses and, intermittently, the denunciation of another, denied, truth of generous exchange – its constraining and costly character. This leads to the question of the dual truth of the gift and of the social conditions that make possible what can be described (somewhat inadequately) as an individual and collective self-deception.

The model I put forward in Outline of a Theory of Practice and The Logic of Practice takes note of and accounts for the gap between the two truths and, in parallel with this, between the vision that Lévi-Strauss, thinking of Mauss, calls 'phenomenological' (in a rather peculiar sense) and the structural or structuralist approach. It is the lapse of time between the gift and the countergift that makes it possible to mask the contradiction between the experienced (or desired) truth of the gift as a generous, gratuitous, unrequited act, and the truth that emerges from the model, which makes it a stage in

a relationship of exchange that transcends singular acts of exchange. In other words, the interval that makes it possible to experience the objective exchange as a discontinuous series of free and generous acts is what makes gift exchange viable and acceptable by facilitating and favouring self-deception, a lie told to oneself, as the condition of the coexistence of recognition and misrecognition of the logic of the exchange.

But it is clear that individual self-deception is only possible because it is supported by a collective self-deception. The gift is one of those social acts whose social logic cannot become ‘common knowledge’, as economists put it (information is called ‘common knowledge’ when everyone knows that everyone else knows . . . that everyone has it). More precisely, it cannot be made public and become ‘public knowledge’, an official truth, publicly proclaimed (like the great mottoes of the Republic, for example). This collective self-deception is only possible because the repression from which it is arises (whose practical condition of possibility is indeed the lapse of time) is inscribed, as an illusio, at the foundation of the economy of symbolic goods. This anti-economic economy (using the restricted modern sense of ‘economic’) is based on the denial (Verneinung) of interest and calculation, or, more precisely, on a collective labour devoted to maintaining misrecognition with a view to perpetuating a collective faith in the value of the universal, which is simply a form of individual and collective bad faith (in the Sartrian sense of lying to oneself). In other words, it is based on a permanent investment in institutions that, like gift exchange, produce and reproduce trust; and, more profoundly, trust in the fact that trust, that is, generosity, private or civic virtue, will be rewarded. No one is really unaware of the logic of exchange (it constantly surfaces in explicit form, when for example someone wonders whether a present will be judged sufficient), but no one fails to comply with the rule of the game, which is to act as if one did not know the rule. We might coin the term common misconceptions to designate this game in which everyone knows – and does not want to know that everyone knows – and does not want to know – the true nature of the exchange.

If social agents can appear as both deceiving and deceived, if they can appear to deceive others and deceive themselves about their (generous) ‘intentions’, this is because their deception (which can also be said, in a sense, to deceive no one) is sure to encounter the complicity both of the direct addressees of their act and of third parties who observe it. This is because all of them have always been immersed in a social universe in which gift exchange is institutional in the form of an economy of symbolic goods. This quite distinctive economy is based both on specific objective structures and on internalized, embodied structures, dispositions, which the objective structures presuppose and which they produce by providing the conditions for their realization. Concretely, this means that the gift as a generous act is only possible for social agents who have acquired – in social universes in which they are expected, recognized and rewarded – generous dispositions adjusted to the objective structures of an economy capable of providing rewards (not only in the form of countergifts) and recognition, in other words a market, if such an apparently reductive term is permitted.

This market in symbolic goods presents itself in the form of a system of objective probabilities of profit (positive or negative), or, to use Marcel Mauss’s phrase, a set of ‘collective expectations’ that can be counted on and that have to be reckoned with. In such a social universe, the giver knows that his generous act has every chance of being recognized as such (rather than being seen as a naivety or an absurdity, a ‘folly’) and of obtaining the recognition (in the form of a countergift or gratitude) from the beneficiary – in particular because all the other agents operating in that world and shaped by its necessity also expect things to be so.

In other words, at the basis of generous action, of the (apparent) inaugural gift in a series of exchanges, there is not the conscious intention (calculating or not) of an isolated individual, but that disposition of habitus which is generosity, and which tends, without explicit and express intention, towards the conservation and increase of symbolic capital. Like the sense of honour (which can be the starting point for a series of murders obeying the same logic as gift exchange), this disposition is acquired either by being deliberately taught (as in the case of the young nobleman cited by Norbert Elias: when the son brings back, unspent, the purse of gold coins his father had given him, the father throws it out of the window before his eyes), or through early and prolonged exposure to social worlds in which it is the undisputed law of behaviour. For someone endowed with dispositions attuned to the logic of the economy of symbolic goods, generous conduct is not the product of a choice made by free will and virtue, a free decision made at the end of a deliberation that allows for the possibility of behaving differently; it presents itself as ‘the only thing to do’.

21 Cf. M. Mauss, *Essais* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1974), vol. 2, p. 117: ‘We are together in society in order to expect, together, this or that result.’
Only if one brackets off the institution — and the labour, especially the pedagogic labour, of which it is the product — and forgets that both the giver and the receiver are prepared, by the whole labour of socialization, to enter into generous exchange without intention or calculation of profit, to know and recognize the gift for what it is, in its twofold truth, can one bring up the subtle and insoluble paradoxes of an ethical casuistics. If one adopts the standpoint of a philosophy of mind, asking about the intentional meaning of the gift, and performs a kind of ‘examination of conscience’, seeking to know whether the gift, conceived as the free decision of an isolated individual, is a real gift, is really a gift, or (which amounts to the same thing) whether it conforms to the essence of a gift, to what a gift has to be — then this is indeed sufficient to raise insurmoutable antinomies that force one to conclude that a gratuitous gift is impossible.

But if some writers can go so far as to say that the intention of giving destroys the gift, cancelling it out as a gift, that is, as a disinterested act, this is because, succumbing to a particularly acute form of the scholastic bias, and the intellectualist error that accompanies it, they are seeing the two agents involved in the gift as calculators who assign themselves the subjective project of doing what they are objectively doing (according to Lévi-Strauss’s model), that is, an exchange obeying the logic of reciprocity. To put it another way, such an analysis puts into the minds of the agents the model that science has had to construct in order to account for their practice (here, the model of gift exchange). This amounts to producing a kind of theoretical monster, impossible in practice: the self-destructive experience of a generous, gratuitous gift that contains the conscious aim of obtaining the counter-gift, which is posited as a possible end.22

22 Through the question of the true gift, the gift that is truly a gift (like, elsewhere, the question of the true observance of the rule, which requires one to go beyond the rule), Jacques Derrida formulates in new terms the old Kantian question of duty and the possibility of detecting some ‘secret impulse of amour-propre’ behind the greatest sacrifice, the one that is supposed to be performed out of pure duty when it is only performed in a way that ‘conforms to duty’. (Such questionings are historically attested in the Byzantine salos where lived in the fear that his most saintly actions might be inspired by the symbolic profites associated with saintliness, cf. G. Dagon, ‘L’homme sans honneur ou le saint scandalis’, Annales ESC (July–Aug. 1900), pp. 929–39.) As soon as every generous action that springs from a generous disposition is rejected as merely “conforming to generosity”, inevitably one denies the possibility of disinterested action, just as Kant, in the name of a similar philosophy of mind or intention, cannot conceive of a single action conforming to duty that cannot be suspected of obeying ‘pathological’ determinations (cf. J. Derrida, Passions (Paris: Galliée, 1993), pp. 87–9; on the – true – gift as ‘duty beyond duty’, ‘law’ and ‘necessity without duty’, see J. Derrida, Donner le temps, vol. 1: La fausse monnaie (Paris Galliée, 1991), p. 197).

Thus, it is not possible to reach an adequate understanding of the gift without leaving behind both the philosophy of mind which makes a conscious intention the principle of every action, and the economism which knows no other economy than that of rational calculation and interest reduced to economic interest. Among the consequences of the process through which the economic field was constituted as such, one of the most pernicious, from the point of view of knowledge, is the tacit acceptance of a certain number of principles of division, the emergence of which is correlative with the social construction of the economic field as a separate universe (on the basis of the axiom ‘business is business’), as the opposition between passions and interests – principles which, because they impose themselves unexamined, on all those who are immersed, from birth, in the ‘icy waters’ of the economic economy, tend to govern the science of economics, which itself sprang from that separation.23 (It is probably because they – sometimes unwittingly – accept this historically founded opposition, which is explicitly stated in Pareto’s founding distinction between logical actions and non-logical actions, ‘residues’ or ‘derivations’, that economists tend to specialize in analysis of behaviour motivated by interest alone: ‘Many economists…’ wrote P. A. Samuelson, ‘would separate economics from sociology upon the basis of rational or irrational behavior.’)24

The gift economy, in contrast to the economy in which equivalent values are exchanged, is based on a denial of the economic (in the narrow sense), on a refusal of the logic of the maximization of economic profit, that is to say, of the spirit of calculation and the exclusive pursuit of material (as opposed to symbolic) interest, a refusal that is inscribed in the objectivity of institutions and in dispositions. It is organized with a view to the accumulation of symbolic capital (a capital of recognition, honour, nobility, etc.) which is brought about in particular through the transmutation of economic capital achieved through the alchemy of symbolic exchanges (exchange of gifts, words, challenges and ripostes, murders, etc.) and only available to agents endowed with dispositions adjusted to the logic of ‘disinterestedness’.

The economy of fair exchange is the product of a symbolic revolution that took place progressively, in European societies, with, for example, all the imperceptible processes of unveiling and ‘disambiguation’ of

which the ‘vocabulary of Indo-European institutions’, analysed by Benveniste, conserves the trace, and which led from ransom (of a prisoner) to purchase, from the prize (for a notable action) to the wage, from moral recognition (gratitude) to recognizance, from belief to credit, from moral obligation to legally enforceable agreement. This ‘great and venerable revolution’, as Marcel Mauss called it, was able to break away from the gift economy, which, he observes, was ultimately, at the time, anti-economic, only by progressively suspending the collective denial of the economic foundations of human existence (except in certain reserved sectors: religion, art, the family), so making possible the emergence of pure interest and the generalization of calculation and the spirit of calculation (assisted by the invention of wage labour and the use of money).

The possibility that then opens up of subjecting every kind of activity to the logic of calculation (‘in business there’s no room for sentiment’) tends to legitimate this, so to speak, official cynicism which is particularly flaunted in law (with, for example, contracts providing for the most pessimistic and disreputable eventualities) and in economic theory (which, at the beginning, helped to create this economy, just as jurists’ treatises on the State, which are often read as treatises of political philosophy, helped to create the State they seemingly describe). This economy, which turns out to be remarkably economical since, in particular, it makes it possible to dispense with the effects of the ambiguity of practices and the ‘transaction costs’ that weigh so heavily on the economy of symbolic goods (one only has to think of the difference between a personalized gift, which becomes a personal message, and a cheque for the equivalent amount), leads to the legitimation of the use of calculation even in the most sacred areas (purchase of indulgences, or the prayer wheel . . .) and the generalization of the calculating disposition, the perfect antithesis of the generous disposition, which comes hand in hand with the development of an economic and social order characterized, as Weber puts it, by calculability and predictability.

The particular difficulty we have in thinking about gifts is due to the fact that as the gift economy has tended to shrink to an island in the ocean of the fair-exchange economy, its meaning has changed (the tendency of some colonial ethnography to see it as more than a form of credit being simply the limiting case of the propensity to ethnocentric reduction, the effects of which are still to be seen in the most reflexive-seeming analyses). Within an economic universe based

on the opposition between passion and interest (or amour fou and the marriage of convenience), between things that are free and things that have a price-tag, the gift loses its real meaning as an act situated beyond the opposition between constraint and freedom, individual choice and collective pressure, disinterestedness and self-interest, and becomes a simple rational investment strategy directed towards the accumulation of social capital, with institutions such as public relations and company gifts, or a kind of ethical feat that is impossible to achieve because it is measured against the ideal of the true gift, understood as a perfectly gratuitous and gracious act performed without obligation or expectation, without reason or goal, for nothing.

If one is really to break away from the ethnocentric vision that underlies the questions of economicism, and of scholastic philosophy, one would have to examine how the logic of gift exchange leads to the establishment of durable relationships that economic theories based on an ahistorical anthropology cannot comprehend. It is remarkable that economists who rediscover the gift forget, as ever, to pose the question of the economic conditions of these ‘anti-economic’ acts (in the narrow sense of ‘economic’) and ignore the specific logic of the economy of symbolic exchanges that makes them possible. Thus, to explain ‘how cooperation can arise’ between individuals who are presumed to be (by nature) egoistic, ‘how reciprocity gives rise to cooperation’ between individuals who are held ex hypothesi to be ‘motivated by their self-interest alone’, the ‘economics of conventions’, an empty intersection between economics and sociology, can only invoke ‘convention’, a conceptual artefact that no doubt owes its success among economists to the fact that, like Tycho Brahe’s attempt to salvage the Ptolemaic model of the universe with conceptual patchwork, it avoids a radical change of paradigm (‘a regularity is a convention if everyone complies with it and if everyone expects others to do the same’; ‘a convention is the result of an inner deliberation, balancing rules of moral action against instrumental rules of action’). This ad hoc invention cannot really account for social cohesion, either in gift economies – where it is never based entirely upon the orchestration of habitus but always makes room for elementary forms of contract – or in equal-exchange economies, where, although it depends heavily on the constraints of contract, it is also based to a large extent on the orchestration of habitus and on an adjustment.


between the objective structures and the cognitive structures (or dispositions) that ensures the concordance of individual anticipations and 'collective expectations'.

The ambiguity of an economy oriented towards the accumulation of symbolic capital lies in the fact that communication, unduly privileged by the structuralist approach, is one of the channels of domination. The gift is expressed in the language of obligation. It is obligatory, it creates obligations, it obliges; it sets up a legitimate domination. Among other reasons, this is because it brings in the factor of time, by constituting the interval between gift and countergift (or murder and revenge) as a collective expectation of the countergift or gratitude or, more clearly, as recognized, legitimate domination, as submission that is accepted or loved. This is put well by La Rochefoucauld, whose position on the-cusp between the equal-exchange economy and the gift economy gives him (like Pascal) an extreme lucidity about the subtleties of symbolic exchange, which structuralist ethnology is unaware of: 'Overmuch eagerness to discharge an obligation is a kind of ingratitude.'

Eagerness, normally a sign of submission, is here a sign of impatience with dependence, and therefore virtually an ingratitude, because of the haste it expresses, a haste to acquire a debt, to be quits, to be free to quit (without being forced, like some khammès – sharecroppers – in Kabyle society, into shameful flight), to shed an obligation, a recognition of debt. It is a haste to reduce the gap of time which distinguishes the generous exchange of gifts from the harsh exchange of equivalents and which means that one is bound so long as one feels bound to respond; a haste to cancel out the obligation that takes effect with the initial act of generosity and can only grow as recognition of debt, which can always be acquitted, turns into internalized gratitude, incorporated recognition, inscribed in the body itself in the form of passion, love, submission, respect, an unrepayable and, as people often say, everlasting debt.

Symbolic power relations are power relations that are set up and perpetuated through knowledge and recognition, which does not mean through intentional acts of consciousness. In order for symbolic domination to be set up, the dominated have to share with the dominant the schemes of perception and appreciation through which they are perceived by them and through which they perceive them; they have to see themselves as they are seen. In other words, their knowledge and recognition have to be rooted in practical dispositions of acceptance and submission, which, because they do not pass through deliberation and decision, escape the dilemma of consent or constraint.

Here we are at the heart of the transmutation that is the basis of symbolic power, a power that is created, accumulated and perpetuated through communication, through symbolic exchange. Because it brings matters to the level of knowledge and recognition (which implies that it can only occur between agents capable of communicating and understanding each other, therefore endowed with the same cognitive schemes and inclined to communicate and consequently to recognize each other as legitimate interlocutors, equal in honour, to agree to talk, to be 'on speaking terms'), communication converts brute power relations, which are always uncertain and liable to be suspended, into durable relations of symbolic power through which a person is bound and feels bound. It transfigures economic capital into symbolic capital, economic domination into personal dependence (in paternalism, etc.), even into devotion, (filial) piety or love. Generosity is possessive, and perhaps all the more so when, as in affective exchanges (between parents and children, or even between lovers) it is and appears most sincerely generous. 'It is unjust that men should attach themselves to me, even though they do it with pleasure and voluntarily. I should deceive those in whom I had created this desire; for I am not the end of any, and I have not the wherewithal to satisfy them. Am I not about to die? And thus the object of their attachment will die. Therefore, as I would be blamable in causing a falsehood to be believed, though I should employ gentle persuasion, though it should be believed with pleasure, and though it should give me pleasure; even so I am blamable in making myself loved.' (The crises of the gift economy, which are always particularly tragic, coincide with the breaking of enchantment that reduces the logic of symbolic exchange to the order of economic exchange: 'After all we've done for you...')

Here too, time plays a decisive role. The inaugural act that institutes communication (by addressing words, offering a gift, issuing an invitation or a challenge, etc.) always entails a kind of intrusion or even a calling into question (hence the interrogative precautions that tend to accompany it, as Bally observed: 'May I ask you the time?'). In addition, it always inevitably contains the potentiality of a bond, a bond. It is true that, contrary to what the structuralists' mechanical model would suggest, it implies uncertainty and therefore a temporal opening; one can always choose not to reply to the interpellation, invitation or challenge or not to reply immediately, to defer and to leave the other party in expectation. But non-response is still a response and it is not so easy to shrug off the initial calling into question,
which acts as a kind of _fatum_, a destiny. The meaning of a positive response (repartee, countertip, riposte) is no doubt unequivocal as an affirmation and recognition of equality in honour that can be taken as the starting point for a long series of exchanges; by contrast, absence of response is essentially ambiguous and can always be interpreted, by the initiator or by others, either as a refusal to respond and a kind of snub or as an evasion attributable to impotence or cowardice, entailing dishonour.

The exotic or extra-ordinary character of the objects to which analyses of exchange have been applied, such as potlatch, has indeed caused it to be forgotten that the seemingly most gratuitous and least costly relations of exchange, such as expressions of concern, kindness, consideration or advice, not to mention acts of generosity that cannot be repaid, such as charity, when they are set up in conditions of lasting asymmetry (in particular because they link people separated by an unbridgeable economic or social gulf) and when they exclude the possibility of an equivalent in return, the very hope of an active reciprocity, which is the condition of possibility of genuine autonomy, are likely to create lasting relations of dependence, euphemized variants of enslavement for debt in archaic societies. For they tend to become inscribed in the body itself in the form of belief, trust, affection and passion, and any attempt to transform them through consciousness and will comes up against the stubborn resistance of affects and the tenacious injunctions of guilt.

Although there is apparently every difference in the world between them, the structuralist ethnologist who makes exchange the creative principle of the social bond and the neo-marginalist economist who desperately seeks the specifically economic principles of cooperation between agents reduced to the state of isolated atoms are united in ignoring the economic and social conditions in which historical agents are produced and reproduced, endowed (by their upbringing) with durable dispositions that make them able and inclined to enter into exchanges, equal or unequal, that give rise to durable relations of dependence. Whether it is the _philia_ which, in the ideal vision at least, governs domestic relations, or the trust accorded to a person or an institution (a well-reputed trademark, for example), these relations of ‘trust’ or ‘credit’ are not necessarily grounded in and set up by rational economic calculation (as is sometimes supposed by those who seek to explain the trust placed in long-established companies by the length of the critical tests they have had to overcome), and they can always be ascribed to the durable domination that symbolic violence secures.

One would need to analyse here all the forms of necessarily ostentatious _redistribution_ through which individuals (almost always the richest ones, naturally, as with the Greek munificence (‘evergetism’) analysed by Paul Veyne, or royal or princely largesse) or institutions, companies (with their great foundations) or the State itself tend to set up asymmetrical relations of dependence of recognition-gratitude based on the credit granted to beneficence. One would also need to analyse the long process through which symbolic power, the accumulation of which initially benefited one individual, as in potlatch, gradually ceases to be the basis of personal power (through the personal appropriation of a clientele, distribution of gifts, livings, honours, grace and favours, as in the period of absolute monarchy) and becomes the basis of an impersonal State authority, through the bureaucratic redistribution which, although in principle it obeys the rule ‘the State makes no presents’ (to private individuals), never completely excludes with corruption – forms of personal appropriation and patronage. Thus, through redistribution, taxation enters into a cycle of symbolic production in which economic capital is transformed into symbolic capital. As in potlatch, redistribution is necessary in order to secure the recognition of the distribution. While, as the official reading insists, it obviously tends to correct the inequalities of the distribution, it also and more importantly tends to produce recognition of the legitimacy of the State – one of the many things the opponents of the Welfare State forget in their short-term calculations.

What is underlined through gift exchange, a collective hypocrisy in and through which society pays homage to its dream of virtue and disinterestedness, is the fact that virtue is a political matter, that it is not and cannot be abandoned, with no other resource than a vague ‘deontology’, to the singular, isolated efforts of individual minds and wills or the examinations of conscience of a confessor’s casuistics. The cult of individual success, preferably economic, that has accompanied the expansion of neoliberalism has tended – in a period where, to make it easier to ‘blame the victims’, there is a greater tendency than ever to pose political problems in moral terms – to obscure the need for collective investment in the institutions that produce the economic and social conditions for virtue, or, to put it another way, that cause the civic virtues of disinterestedness and devotion – a gift to the group – to be encouraged and rewarded by the group. The purely speculative and typically scholastic question of whether generosity and disinterestedness are possible should give way to the political question of the means that have to be implemented in order to create universes in which, as in gift economies, agents and groups would

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have an interest in disinterestedness and generosity, or, rather, could acquire a durable disposition to respect these universally respected forms of respect for the universal.

Case study 2: The twofold truth of labour

Like the gift, labour can be understood in its objectively twofold truth only if one performs the second reversal needed in order to break with the scholastic error of failing to include in the theory the 'subjective' truth with which it was necessary to break, in a first para-doXal reversal, in order to construct the object of analysis. The objectification that was necessary to constitute wage labour in its objective truth has masked the fact which, as Marx himself indicates, only becomes the objective truth in certain exceptional labour situations: the investment in labour, and therefore misconception of the objective truth of labour as exploitation, which leads people to find an intrinsic profit in labour, irreducible to simple monetary income, is part of the real conditions of the performance of labour, and of exploitation.

The logic of the (theoretical) move to the limiting case disguises the fact that these conditions are very rarely realized and that the situation in which the worker expects only his wage from his labour is often experienced, at least in some historical contexts (for example, in Algeria in the 1960s), as profoundly abnormal. The experience of labour lies between two extremes, forced labour, which is determined only by external constraint, and scholastic labour, the limiting case which is the quasi-ludic activity of the artist or writer. The further someone moves from the former, the less they work directly for money and the more the 'interest' of work, the inherent gratification of the fact of performing the work, increases — as does the interest linked to the symbolic profits associated with the name of the occupation or the occupational status and the quality of the working relations which often go hand in hand with the intrinsic interest of the labour. (It is because work in itself provides a profit that the loss of employment entails a symbolic mutilation which can be attributed as much to the loss of the raisons d'etre associated with work and the world of work as to the loss of the wage.) Workers may contribute to their own exploitation through the very effort they make to appropriate their work, which binds them to it through the freedoms — often minute and almost always 'functional' — that are left to them, and under the effect of the competition born of the differences — relative to unskilled workers, immigrants, the young, women — that are constitutive of the occupational space functioning as a field. This is especially true when the disposals that Marx calls 'vocational prejudices' ('professional conscience', 'respect for the tools of production', etc), which are acquired in certain conditions (occupational heredity, in particular) find the conditions for their actualization in certain characteristics of the work itself, such as competition in the occupational space, with, for example, bonuses or symbolic privileges, or the granting of some room for manoeuvre in the organization of tasks, which enables the worker to create areas of freedom and to invest in his labour all the additional commitment not provided for in the employment contract and which the 'work to rule' precisely aims to refuse and withdraw.

It can be assumed that the subjective truth is that much further removed from the objective truth when the worker has greater control over his own labour (thus, in the case of subcontracting craftsmen or small farmers supplying agribusiness, it may take the form of self-exploitation); and also when the place of work (office, department or company) functions more as a competitive space generating stakes irreducible to their strictly economic dimension and capable of producing investments that bear no relation to the economic profits received in return (with for example the new forms of exploitation of the holders of cultural capital in industrial research, advertising, the media, etc., along with all the forms of payment in symbolic profits, at little economic cost, since a productivity bonus can act as much by its distinctive effect as by its economic value).

Finally, the effect of these structural factors obviously depends on the workers' dispositions: the propensity to invest in work and to misrecognize its objective truth no doubt rises with the degree to which collective expectations inscribed in the job description correspond more fully to the dispositions of its occupant (for example, in the case of junior civil servants with supervisory functions, commitment to the institution, rigour, etc.). Thus, what is apparently most 'subjective' and 'personal' is an integral part of the reality that analysis

29 The equalization of differences in rates of profit presupposes the mobility of the labour force which itself presupposes, among other things: 'indifference of the labourer to the nature [Inhalt] of his labour; the greatest possible reduction of labour in all spheres of production to simple labour; the elimination of all vocational prejudices among labourers' (K. Marx, Capital, vol. 3, part 2, ch. 10 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1974), p. 196).

30 A contrario, the consequences of the absence of all the social conditions of the experience of work as valorized and valorizing can also be observed (cf. L. Duruy, 'Embauché dans une usine', Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales, 113 (Dec. 1996), pp. 38–47).
has to account for in each case in models capable of integrating the representations of the agents, which, sometimes realistic, often fictitious, sometimes fantastical, but always partial, are always partially effective.

In the most constraining work situations, such as production-line work, investment in labour tends to vary inversely with the external constraint in the labour. It follows that, in many work situations, the margin of freedom left to the worker (the degree of vagueness in the job description which gives some scope for manoeuvre) is a central stake: it introduces the risk of non-work or even sabotage, going slow, etc., but it opens the possibility of investment in work or self-exploitation. This depends, to a large extent, on how it is perceived, appreciated and understood (and therefore on schemes of perception, and in particular on occupational, and trade union, traditions, and also on memory of the conditions in which it was acquired or won, and on the previous situation). Paradoxically, it is because it is perceived as a conquest (for example, the freedom to smoke a cigarette, to move around, etc.) or even a privilege (granted to the longest serving or the most skilled) that it can help to mask the overall constraint which gives it its whole value. The minor privilege that people cling to makes them forget all the rest (thus, in asylums, the small perks of the oldest inmates make them forget the asylum and join in the process of ‘asylumization’, as described by Goffman, a role similar to that of small individual or collective conquests in the process of ‘factory-ization’). The strategies of the dominant can rely on what might be called the principle of Socrates’ shackles, which consists in alternating the hardening of constraint and tension and partial relaxation, which makes the return to the previous state appear as a privilege, the lesser evil as a good (and which places the old-timers, and union officials, the guardians of the memory of these alternations and their effects, in a difficult position, generating position-takings which may sometimes appear conservative).31

Thus the scope for manoeuvre that agents win for themselves (and which theories of ‘resistance’ are quick to celebrate, in their concern to rehabilitate, as proof of inventiveness) may be the condition of their contribution to their own exploitation. It is on this principle that modern management theory, while taking care to keep control of the instruments of profit, leaves workers the freedom to organize their own work, thus helping to increase their well-being but also to displace their interest from the external profit of labour (the wage) to the intrinsic profit. The new techniques of company management, and especially what is known as ‘participatory management’, can be understood as an effort to make methodical and systematic use of all the possibilities that the ambiguity of labour objectively offers to employers’ strategies. Unlike, for example, the bureaucratic charisma which enables an administrative manager to obtain a form of excess work and self-exploitation, the new strategies of manipulation – ‘job enrichment’, encouragement of innovation and communication of innovation, ‘quality circles’, permanent evaluation, self-evaluation – which aim to encourage investment in work are consciously devised and explicitly set out on the basis of scientific studies, either general or applied to the particular company.

But the illusion that one might sometimes have of the realization, at least in some places, of the utopia of total control by the worker over his own work should not lead one to forget the hidden conditions of the symbolic violence exerted by the new forms of management. While it may exclude recourse to the most brutal and most visible constraints of the old modes of control, this gentle violence continues to be based on a power relation which resurfaces in the threat of redundancy and in fear, more or less deliberately maintained, linked to the precariousness of the position occupied. Hence a contradiction, with whose effects managerial staff have long been familiar, between the imperatives of symbolic violence, which require a whole effort to disguise and transfigure the objective truth of the labour of domination, and the structural conditions of its exercise. This contradiction is all the greater when the recourse to redundancies as a technique of commercial and financial adjustment tends to expose the structural violence of the situation.

31 The same principle applies at the level of the collective of the employees of a company, with threats of redundancies (30,000 jobs have to go) which make the real lay-offs (perhaps 5,000 jobs) seem like a favour or a victory.