

④ Bourdieu Pierre. Hill. Language & Symbolic Power. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press (163-228)

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## On Symbolic Power

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This text, which was written as part of an attempt to present an assessment of a number of investigations of symbolism in an academic situation of a particular type – that of the lecture in a foreign university (Chicago, April 1973) – must not be read as a history, even an academic history, of theories of symbolism, and especially not as a sort of pseudo-Hegelian reconstruction of a procedure which would have led, by successive acts of dialectical transcendence, to the ‘final theory’.

If the ‘immigration of ideas’, as Marx puts it, rarely happens without these ideas incurring some damage in the process, this is because such immigration separates cultural productions from the system of theoretical reference points in relation to which they are consciously or unconsciously defined, in other words, from the field of production, sign-posted by proper names or concepts ending in ‘-ism’, a field which always defines them far more than they contribute to defining it. That is why ‘immigration’ situations make it particularly necessary to bring to light the horizon of reference which, in ordinary situations, may remain implicit. But it is self-evident that the fact of *repatriating* this exported produce involves great dangers of naivety and simplification – and also great risks, since it provides us with an instrument of objectification.

None the less, in a state of the field in which power is visible everywhere, while in previous ages people refused to recognize it even where it was staring them in the face, it is perhaps useful to remember that, without turning power into a ‘circle whose centre is everywhere and nowhere’, which could be to dissolve it in yet another way, we have to be able to discover it in places where it is least visible, where it is most completely unrecognized – and thus, in

fact, recognized. For symbolic power is that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it.

#### 'SYMBOLIC SYSTEMS' (ART, RELIGION, LANGUAGE) AS STRUCTURING STRUCTURES

The neo-Kantian tradition (Humboldt-Cassirer or, in its American variant, Sapir-Whorf, as far as language is concerned) treats the different symbolic universes (myth, language, art and science) as instruments for knowing and constructing the world of objects, as 'symbolic forms', thus recognizing, as Marx notes in his *Theses on Feuerbach*, the 'active aspect' of cognition. In the same tradition, but with a more properly historical intent, Panofsky treats perspective as a *historical form*, without however going so far as to reconstruct systematically its *social conditions* of production.

Durkheim explicitly includes himself in the Kantian tradition. None the less, by virtue of the fact that he endeavours to give a 'positive' and 'empirical' answer to the problem of knowledge by avoiding the alternative of apriorism and empiricism, he lays the foundations of a *sociology of symbolic forms* (Cassirer was to say expressly that he uses the concept of 'symbolic form' as an equivalent of form of classification).<sup>1</sup> With Durkheim, the forms of classification cease to be universal (transcendental) forms and become (as is implicitly the case in Panofsky) *social forms*, that is, forms that are arbitrary (relative to a particular group) and socially determined.<sup>2</sup>

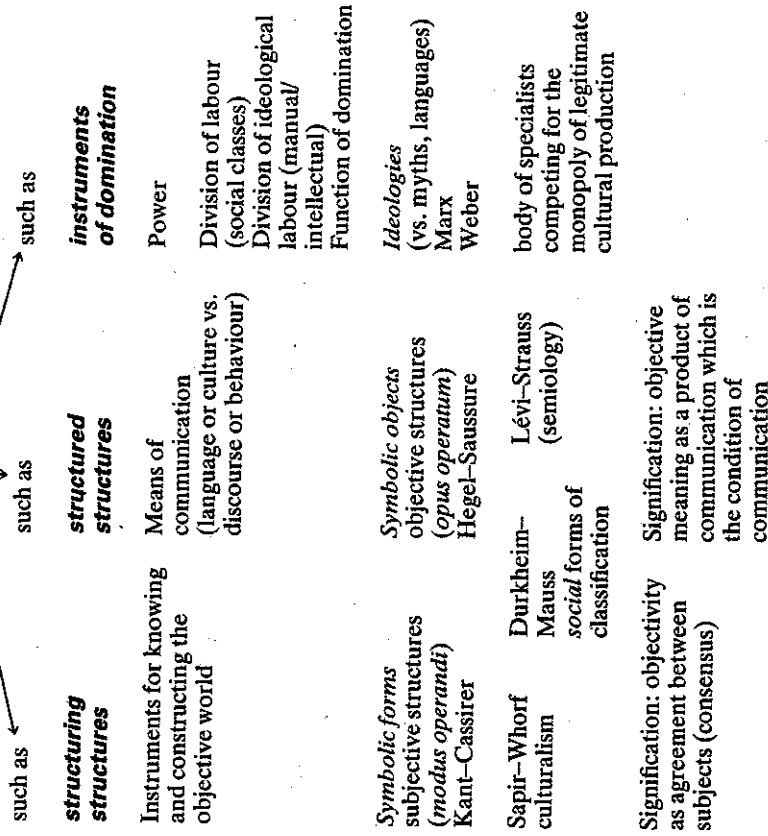
In this idealist tradition, the objectivity of the meaning or sense of the world is defined by the consent or agreement of the structuring subjectivities (sensus = consensus).

#### 'SYMBOLIC SYSTEMS' AS STRUCTURED STRUCTURES (SUSCEPTIBLE TO STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS)

Structural analysis constitutes the methodological instrument which enables the neo-Kantian ambition of grasping the specific logic of each of the 'symbolic forms' to be realized. Proceeding, in accordance with Schelling's wish, to a properly *tautological* (in opposition to *allegorical*) reading which refers the myth to nothing outside itself, structural analysis aims at laying bare the structure immanent in each symbolic production. But, unlike the neo-Kantian tradition,

Figure 1

### SYMBOLIC INSTRUMENTS



sociology of symbolic forms:  
contribution of symbolic power to  
the gnoseological order:  
sense = consensus, i.e. *doxa*

Ideological power as specific contribution  
of symbolic violence (orthodoxy) to  
political violence (domination)

*Division of the labour of domination*

which emphasized the *modus operandi* or productive activity of consciousness, the structuralist tradition emphasizes the *opus operatum* or structured structures. This is evident in the way Saussure, the founder of this tradition, views language: as a structured system, language (*langue*) is fundamentally treated as the condition of intelligibility of speech (*parole*), as the structured medium which has to be reconstructed in order to account for the constant relation between sound and meaning. (In the opposition he establishes between iconology and iconography, and which is the exact equivalent of the opposition between phonology and phonetics, Panofsky – and that entire aspect of his work which aims at laying bare the deep structures of works of art – is part of this tradition.)

#### First synthesis

As instruments of knowledge and communication, 'symbolic structures' can exercise a structuring power only because they themselves are structured. Symbolic power is a power of constructing reality, and one which tends to establish a *gnoseological* order: the immediate meaning of the world (and in particular of the social world) depends on what Durkheim calls *logical conformism*, that is, 'a homogeneous conception of time, space, number and cause, one which makes it possible for different intellects to reach agreement'. Durkheim – and, after him, Radcliffe-Brown, who makes 'social solidarity' dependent on the sharing of a symbolic system – has the merit of designating the *social function* (in the sense of structural-functionalism) of symbolism in an explicit way: it is an authentic political function which cannot be reduced to the structuralists' function of communication. Symbols are the instruments *par excellence* of 'social integration': as instruments of knowledge and communication (cf. Durkheim's analysis of the festivity), they make it possible for there to be a *consensus* on the meaning of the social world, a consensus which contributes fundamentally to the reproduction of the social order. 'Logical' integration is the precondition of 'moral' integration.<sup>3</sup>

#### SYMBOLIC PRODUCTIONS AS INSTRUMENTS OF DOMINATION

The Marxist tradition lays great emphasis on the *political functions* of 'symbolic systems', to the detriment of their logical structure andgnoseological function (although Engels talks of 'systematic express-

ion' in relation to law). This functionalism (which has nothing in common with the structural-functionalism of Durkheim or Radcliffe-Brown) explains symbolic productions by relating them to the interests of the dominant class. Unlike myth, which is a collective and collectively appropriated product, ideologies serve particular interests which they tend to present as universal interests, shared by the group as a whole. The dominant culture contributes to the real integration of the dominant class (by facilitating the communication between all its members and by distinguishing them from other classes); it also contributes to the fictitious integration of society as a whole, and thus to the apathy (false consciousness) of the dominated classes; and finally, it contributes to the legitimation of the established order by establishing distinctions (hierarchies) and legitimating these distinctions. The dominant culture produces this ideological effect by concealing the function of division beneath the function of communication: the culture which unifies (the medium of communication) is also the culture which separates (the instrument of distinction) and which legitimates distinctions by forcing all other cultures (designated as sub-cultures) to define themselves by their distance from the dominant culture.

#### Second synthesis

In criticizing all forms of the 'interactionist' error which consists in reducing relations of power to relations of communication, it is not enough to note that relations of communication are always, inseparably, power relations which, in form and content, depend on the material or symbolic power accumulated by the agents (or institutions) involved in these relations and which, like the gift or the potlatch, can enable symbolic power to be accumulated. It is as structured and structuring instruments of communication and knowledge that 'symbolic systems' fulfil their political function, as instruments which help to ensure that one class dominates another (symbolic violence) by bringing their own distinctive power to bear on the relations of power which underlie them and thus by contributing, in Weber's terms, to the 'domestication of the dominated'.

The different classes and class fractions are engaged in a symbolic struggle properly speaking, one aimed at imposing the definition of the social world that is best suited to their interests. The field of ideological stances thus reproduces in transfigured form the field of social positions.<sup>4</sup> These classes can engage in this struggle either directly, in the symbolic conflicts of everyday life, or else by proxy,

via the struggle between the different specialists in symbolic production (full-time producers), a struggle over the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence (cf. Weber), that is, of the power to impose (or even to inculcate) the arbitrary instruments of knowledge and expression (taxonomies) of social reality – but instruments whose arbitrary nature is not realized as such. The field of symbolic production is a microcosm of the symbolic struggle between classes; it is by serving their own interests in the struggle within the field of production (and only to this extent) that producers serve the interests of groups outside the field of production.

The dominant class is the site of a struggle over the hierarchy of the principles of hierarchization. Dominant class fractions, whose power rests on economic capital, aim to impose the legitimacy of their domination either through their own symbolic production, or through the intermediary of conservative ideologues, who never really serve the interests of the dominant class except as a *side-effect* and who always threaten to appropriate for their own benefit the power to define the social world that they hold by delegation. The dominated fraction (clerics or 'intellectuals' and 'artists', depending on the period) always tends to set the specific capital, to which it owes its position, at the top of the hierarchy of the principles of hierarchization.

#### SOURCES AND EFFECTS OF SYMBOLIC POWER

As instruments of domination that are structuring because they are structured, the ideological systems that specialists produce in and for the struggle over the monopoly of legitimate ideological production reproduce in a misrecognizable form, through the intermediary of the homology between the field of ideological production and the field of social classes, the structure of the field of social classes.

'Symbolic systems' are fundamentally distinguishable according to whether they are produced and thereby appropriated by the group as a whole or, on the contrary, produced by a body of *specialists* and, more precisely, by a relatively autonomous field of production and circulation. The history of the transformation of myth into religion (ideology) cannot be separated from the history of the constitution of a body of specialized producers of religious rites and discourse, i.e. from the development of the *division of religious labour*, which is itself a dimension of the development of the division of social labour, and thus of the division into classes. This religious division leads,

among other consequences, to members of the laity being *dispossessed* of the instruments of symbolic production.<sup>5</sup>

Ideologies owe their structure and their most specific functions to the social conditions of their production and circulation, that is, first, to the functions they perform for specialists competing for a monopoly over the competence under consideration (religious, artistic, etc.); and second, and as a by-product of this, to the functions they perform for non-specialists. We must remember that ideologies are always *doubly determined*, that they owe their most specific characteristics not only to the interests of the classes or class fractions they express (the function of sociodicy), but also to the specific interests of those who produce them and to the specific logic of the field of production (commonly transfigured into the form of an ideology of 'creation' and of the 'creative artist'). This provides us with a means of avoiding the brutal reduction of ideological products to the interests of the classes which they serve (this 'short-circuit' effect is common in Marxist criticism) without succumbing to the idealist illusion which consists in treating ideological productions as self-sufficient, self-created totalities amenable to a pure and purely internal analysis (semiology).<sup>6</sup>

The properly ideological function of the field of ideological production is performed almost automatically on the basis of the structural homology between the field of ideological production and the field of class struggle. The homology between the two fields means that struggles over the specific objects of the autonomous field automatically produce *euphemized* forms of the economic and political struggles between classes: it is in the correspondence of structure to structure that the properly ideological function of the dominant discourse is performed. This discourse is a structured and structuring medium tending to impose an apprehension of the established order as natural (orthodoxy) through the disguised (and thus misrecognized) imposition of systems of classification and of mental structures that are objectively adjusted to social structures. The fact that the correspondence can be effected only from system to system conceals, both from the eyes of the producers themselves and from the eyes of non-professionals, the fact that internal systems of classification reproduce overt political taxonomies in misrecognizable form, as well as the fact that the specific axiomatics of each specialized field is the transformed form (in conformity with the laws specific to the field) of the fundamental principles of the division of labour. (For example, the university system of classification, which mobilizes in misrecognizable form the objective divisions of the

social structure and especially the division of labour, in both theory and practice, converts social properties into natural properties.) The truly ideological effect consists precisely in the imposition of political systems of classification beneath the legitimate appearance of philosophical, religious, legal (etc.) taxonomies. Symbolic systems owe their distinctive power to the fact that the relations of power expressed through them are manifested only in the misrecognizable form of relations of meaning (displacement).

Symbolic power – as a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic), by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization – is a power that can be exercised only if it is recognized that is, misrecognized as arbitrary. This means that symbolic power does not reside in 'symbolic systems' in the form of an 'illocutionary force' but that it is defined in and through a given relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it, i.e. in the very structure of the field in which *belief* is produced and reproduced. What creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. And words alone cannot create this belief.

Symbolic power, a subordinate power, is a transformed, i.e. misrecognizable, transfigured and legitimated form of the other forms of power. One can transcend the alternative of energetic models, which describe social relations as relations of force, and cybernetic models, which turn them into relations of communication, only by describing the laws of transformation which govern the transmutation of the different kinds of capital into symbolic capital, and in particular the labour of dissimulation and transfiguration (in a word, of *euphemization*) which secures a real transubstantiation of the relations of power by rendering recognizable and misrecognizable the violence they objectively contain and thus by transforming them into symbolic power, capable of producing real effects without any apparent expenditure of energy.<sup>8</sup>

## Political Representation

### *Elements for a Theory of the Political Field*

To the Memory of Georges Haupt

The silence that weighs on the conditions which force citizens, all the more brutally the more economically and culturally deprived they are, to face the alternative of having to abdicate their rights by abstaining from voting or being dispossessed by the fact that they delegate their power, bears the same relation to 'political science' as the silence that weighs on the economic and cultural conditions of 'rational' economic behaviour bears to economics. If it is going to avoid *naturalizing* the social mechanisms which produce and reproduce the gap between politically 'active' agents and politically 'passive' agents<sup>1</sup> and setting up as eternal laws historical regularities that are valid within the limits of a given state of the structure of the distribution of capital, and cultural capital in particular, any analysis of the political struggle must be based on the social and economic determinants of the division of political labour.<sup>2</sup>

The political field, understood both as a field of forces and as a field of struggles aimed at transforming the relation of forces which confers on this field its structure at any given moment, is not an *imperium in imperio*: the effects of external necessity make their presence felt in it by virtue, above all, of the relation which those who are represented, through their differential distance from the instruments of political production, have with those who represent them, and of the relation that the latter, through their own dispositions, have with their organizations. The unequal distribution of the instruments of production of an explicitly formulated representation of the social world means that political life can be described in terms

of the logic of supply and demand: the political field is the site in which, through the competition between the agents involved in it, political products, issues, programmes, analyses, commentaries, concepts and events are created – products between which ordinary citizens, reduced to the status of ‘consumers’, have to choose, thereby running a risk of misunderstanding that is all the greater the further they are from the place of production.

#### THE MONOPOLY OF THE PROFESSIONALS

Without repeating here the analysis of the social conditions constitutive of the social and technical competence demanded by active participation in ‘politics’,<sup>3</sup> we must at least remember that the effects created by the morphological obstacles that the size of political units and the number of citizens put in the way of any form of direct government are, so to speak, reinforced by the effects of economic and cultural dispossession: the concentration of political capital in the hands of a small number of people is something that is prevented with greater difficulty – and thus all the more likely to happen – the more completely ordinary individuals are divested of the material and cultural instruments necessary for them to participate actively in politics, that is, above all, *leisure time* and *cultural capital*.<sup>4</sup>

Because the products offered by the political field are instruments for perceiving and expressing the social world (or, if you like, principles of di-vision), the distribution of opinions in a given population depends on the state of the instruments of perception and expression available and on the access that different groups have to these instruments. This means that the political field in fact produces an effect of censorship by limiting the universe of political discourse, and thereby the universe of what is politically thinkable, to the finite space of discourses capable of being produced or reproduced within the limits of the political *problematic*, understood as a space of stances effectively adopted within the field – i.e. stances that are socio-logically possible given the laws that determine entry into the field. The boundary between what is politically sayable or unsayable, thinkable or unthinkable, for a class of non-professionals is determined by the relation between the expressive interests of that class and the capacity to express these interests, a capacity which is secured by its position in the relations of cultural and thus political production. ‘An intention’, observes Wittgenstein, ‘is embedded in its situation, in human customs and institutions. If the technique of

the game of chess did not exist, I could not intend to play a game of chess. In so far as I do intend the construction of a sentence in advance, that is made possible by the fact that I can speak the language in question.<sup>5</sup> A political intention can be constituted only in one’s relation to a given state of the political game and, more precisely, of the universe of the techniques of action and expression it offers at any given moment. In this and other cases, moving from the implicit to the explicit, from one’s subjective impression to objective expression, to public manifestation in the form of a discourse or public act, constitutes in itself an act of *institution* and thereby represents a form of officialization and legitimation: it is no coincidence that, as Benveniste observes, all the words relating to the law have an etymological root meaning *to say*. And the institution, understood as that which is already instituted, already made explicit, creates at one and the same time an effect of public care and lawfulness and an effect of closure and dispossession.

Given the fact that, at least outside periods of crisis, the production of politically effective and legitimate forms of perception and expression is the monopoly of professionals, and is thus subjected to the constraints and limitations inherent in the functioning of the political field, it is evident that the effects of the kind of property-based electoral logic (which in fact controls access to the choice between the political products on offer) are intensified by the effects of the oligopolistic logic which governs the supply of products. This monopoly of production is left in the hands of a body of professionals, in other words, of a small number of units of production, themselves supervised by professionals; these constraints weigh heavily on the choices made by consumers, who are all the more dedicated to an unquestioned *loyalty* to recognized brands and to an unconditional delegating of power to their representatives the more they lack any *social competence* for politics and any of their own instruments of production of political discourse or acts. The market of politics is doubtless one of the least free markets that exist.

The constraints of the market weigh first and foremost on those members of the dominated classes who have no choice but to abdicate or hand over their power to the party, a permanent organization which has to produce the *representation* of the continuity of the class, which always risks lapsing into the discontinuity of atomized existence (falling back into private life and the quest for individual paths to salvation) or into the particularity of strictly protest struggles.<sup>6</sup> This means that, more than the members of the dominant classes, who can satisfy themselves with associations,

pressure groups or party associations,<sup>7</sup> they need parties understood as *permanent* organizations whose aim is to win power, and offering their militants and their electors not only a doctrine but a *programme* of thought and action, and thereby demanding in advance total support. As Marx notes in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, one can date the birth of a social group from the moment the members of its representative organizations do not struggle merely for the defence of the economic interests of their supporters and members but for the defence and development of the organization itself. But how can one fail to see that, if the existence of a permanent organization, relatively independent of corporate and conjunctural interests, is a precondition of the permanent and properly political *representation* of the class, it also carries the threat that the 'ordinary' members of the class will be dispossessed? The antinomy of the 'established revolutionary power', as Bakunin calls it, is quite similar to that of the reformed church as described by Troeltsch. The *fides implicita*, a total and comprehensive delegating of power through which the most deprived people grant, *en bloc*, a sort of unlimited credit to the party of their choice, gives free rein to the mechanisms which tend to divest them of any control over the apparatus. This means that, by a strange irony, the concentration of political capital is at its greatest – in the absence of a deliberate (and improbable) intervention against this trend – in parties whose aim is to struggle against the concentration of economic capital.

Gramsci often referred to the tendency observable in communist parties to treat the party and its bosses with a kind of millenarian fideism, as if they were to be as revered as providence itself: 'In our party, we have had another aspect of the danger to lament: the withering of all individual activity; the passivity of the mass of members; the stupid confidence that there is always somebody else who is thinking of everything and taking care of everything.' 'Disturbed by their condition of absolute inferiority, lacking any constitutional education, the masses abdicated completely all sovereignty and all power. The organization became identified for them with the organizer as an individual, just as for an army in the field the individual commander becomes the protector of the safety of all, the guarantor of success and victory.'<sup>8</sup> And one could also quote, *a contrario*, Rosa Luxemburg, when she describes (with a good deal of wishful thinking) a party which itself limits its own power by the conscious and constant effort of its bosses to strip themselves of power so as to act as the executors of the will of the masses. 'The only role of the so-called "leaders" of social-democracy consists in enlightening the masses concerning their historic mission. The authority and

influence of the "bosses" in a democracy increase only in proportion to the educative activity they perform towards this end. In other words, their prestige and their influence increase only in so far as the bosses destroy what was hitherto the function of the leaders, the blindness of the masses, in so far as they strip themselves of their status as bosses, and in so far as they turn the masses themselves into the leaders and turn themselves into the *executive* organs of the conscious action of the masses.'<sup>9</sup> It would be interesting to determine what, in the positions on this problem adopted by the different 'theoreticians' (who, like Gramsci, can swing from the spontaneism of *Ordine Nuovo* to the centralism of his article on the Communist Party)<sup>10</sup> stems from objective factors (such as the level of the general and political education of the masses), in particular from the direct experience of the attitudes of the masses in a given set of historical circumstances, and what stems from effects of the field and from the logic of internal opposition.

Those who dominate the party, and who have a close interest in the existence and persistence of this institution and in the specific profits it secures for them, find, in the freedom they gain through their monopoly of the production and imposition of *instituted political interests*, the possibility of imposing their own interests as the interests of those whom they represent. And yet nothing demonstrates unambiguously that the interests of the representatives, thus universalized and ratified by plebiscite, do not coincide with the unexpressed interests of the individuals represented, since the former hold a monopoly of the instruments of production of the political (that is, politically expressed and recognized) interests of the latter – nothing except that form of active abstention that is rooted in revolt against a twofold impotence: an impotence with regard to politics and all the purely serial actions it proposes, and an impotence with regard to the political apparatuses. Apoliticism, which sometimes takes the form of anti-parliamentarism and which can be channelled into various forms of Bonapartism, Boulangerism and Gaullism, is fundamentally a protest against the monopoly of the politicians, and represents the political equivalent of what was in previous periods the religious revolt against the monopoly of the clerics.

#### COMPETENCE, STAKES AND SPECIFIC INTERESTS

In politics as in art, the dispossession of the majority of the people is a correlate, or even a consequence, of the concentration of the

specifically political means of production in the hands of professionals, who can enter into the distinctive political game with some chance of success only on condition that they possess a specific competence. Indeed, nothing is less natural than the mode of thought and action demanded by participation in the political field: like the religious, artistic or scientific habitus, the habitus of the politician depends on a special training. This includes in the first instance, of course, the entire apprenticeship necessary to acquire the corpus of specific kinds of knowledge (theories, problematics, concepts, historical traditions, economic data, etc.) produced and accumulated by the political work of the professionals of the present or the past, or to acquire the more general skills such as the mastery of a certain kind of language and of a certain political rhetoric — that of the *popular orator*, indispensable when it comes to cultivating one's relations with non-professionals, or that of the *debater*, which is necessary in relations between fellow professionals. But it is also and above all that sort of *initiation*, with its ordeals and its rites of passage, which tends to inculcate the *practical mastery* of the immanent logic of the political field and to impose a *de facto submission* to the values, hierarchies and censorship mechanisms inherent in this field, or in the specific form that the constraints and control mechanisms of the field assume within each political party. This means that, to gain a complete understanding of the political discourses that are on offer in the market at a given moment and which, when considered together, define the universe of what can be said and thought politically, as opposed to what is rejected as unsayable and unthinkable, we would have to analyse the entire process of production of the professionals of ideological production, starting with the way they are marked out, according to the frequently implicit definition of the desired competence, which designates them for these functions, then considering the general or specific education which prepares them to assume these functions, and finally examining the action of continuous normalization imposed on them, with their own complicity, by the older members of their group, in particular when, newly elected, they gain access to a political organization into which they might bring a certain outspokenness and an independence of manners which might be prejudicial to the rules of the game.

The dispossession that goes together with the concentration of the means of production of the instruments of production of discourse or actions socially recognized as political has continued to increase as the field of ideological production has increased its autonomy with

the appearance of the great political bureaucracies of full-time professionals and with the appearance of institutions (such as, in France, the *Institut des sciences politiques* and the *Ecole nationale d'administration*) whose function is to select and educate the professional producers of the schemes of thought and expression of the social world — politicians, political journalists, high-ranking civil servants, etc. — at the same time as they codify the *rules* according to which the field of ideological production functions and the corpus of knowledge and practical skills indispensable for them to conform to these rules. The 'political science' taught in the institutions specially designed to fulfil this purpose is the *rationalization* of the competence demanded by the universe of politics and possessed in a practical form by professionals: it aims at increasing the efficiency of this practical mastery by putting at its service rational techniques, such as opinion polls, public relations and political marketing, at the same time as it tends to legitimate it by giving it the appearance of scientificity and by treating political questions as matters for specialists which it is the specialists' responsibility to answer in the name of knowledge and not of class interests.<sup>11</sup>

The process whereby the field of ideological production becomes more autonomous is doubtless accompanied by an increase in the standards expected of anyone seeking right of entry to the field and, in particular, by a reinforcement of the demands on their general or even specific competence. (This helps to explain the increase in the influence of professionals educated in the universities and even the specialized higher-education institutions — the *Institut des sciences politiques* and the *Ecole nationale d'administration* — to the detriment of ordinary militants.)<sup>12</sup> It is also doubtless accompanied by a strengthening of the effect of the internal laws of the political field — and in particular of competition between professionals — when compared with the effect of direct or indirect transactions between professionals and non-professionals.<sup>13</sup> This means that, in order to understand a political stance, programme, intervention, electioneering speech, etc., it is at least as important to know the universe of stances currently offered by the field as it is to know the demands made by non-professionals of whom the leaders, in adopting these stances, are the declared representatives (the 'base'): adopting a stance, a *prise de position*, is, as the phrase clearly suggests, an act which has meaning only relationally, in and through difference, the *distinctive deviation*. The well informed politician is the one who manages to master practically the objective meaning and social effect of his stances by virtue of having mastered the space of actual and



## A SELF-INTERESTED BLUNDER

Coluche's decision to stand for President in France was immediately condemned by almost all political professionals, who called it *Poujadism*. However, you would seek in vain among the themes proposed by the Paris comedian the most typical topics of the bookseller from Saint-Céré, Poujade, as the classic study by Stanley Hoffman has listed them: nationalism, anti-intellectualism, anti-Parisianism, racist and quasi-fascist xenophobia, exaltation of the middle classes, moralism, and so on. And it is difficult to understand how 'well-informed observers' were able to confuse the 'candidate of all minorities', of all those 'who are never represented by political parties', 'gays, apprentices, Blacks, Arabs, etc.', with the defender of small shopkeepers struggling against 'wogs' and 'the stateless mafia of drug-traffickers and queers'.

Although the social bases of the Poujadist movement are poorly understood, it is clear that it found its first troops and its most faithful supporters in the petite bourgeoisie of provincial craftsmen and small traders, most of them getting on in years and threatened by economic and social transformations. Two inquiries, by the two French opinion poll organizations IFRES and IFOP, produced similar results, showing that those who sympathized with Coluche's *candidature* displayed completely different characteristics. The tendency to approve of Coluche's candidature varied in inverse proportion to age: it reached its maximum among the youngest (and among these, especially the men), and only a fraction (about a third) of people aged over 65 found it scandalous. In the same way, support tended to increase with the size of the town where one lived: it was very small in rural districts and small towns, and reached a maximum in cities and in Paris and its suburbs. Although the categories employed in the two polling institutes are both imprecise and difficult to compare directly, everything seems to suggest that it was workers and employees, and also intellectuals and artists, who declared themselves most clearly in favour of this anomic candidate, whereas he was most vigorously rejected by captains of industry and commerce. This is easily understood if we realize that the votes thus diverted came principally from the left (more from the Socialist Party than from the Communist Party) and also from ecologists and abstainers. The proportion of people questioned who, had Coluche not been standing, would have voted for right-wing parties was small, and

these votes would have tended to go back to the Socialist Party in particular (the proportion of those who would have chosen abstention is of course very high in all categories). The fact that the proportion of Coluche supporters was clearly higher among men than among women allows us to suppose that this choice was the expression of an active abstentionism, something very different from the simple indifference linked to the incompetence due to low status.

Thus the professionals, politicians and journalists, tried to refuse to this 'troublemaker' a right of entry which the non-professionals granted him overwhelmingly (two thirds of them were favourable to the *principle* of his standing). This is doubtless because, by entering the game without taking it seriously and without taking himself seriously, this extra-ordinary player threatened the very foundation of the game, in other words, both the belief and the credibility of the ordinary players. The authorized representatives of power were caught in the very act of abusing power: whereas, in the normal course of events, they present themselves as spokespersons of 'public opinion', and as guarantors of all authorized words, they give us, not the truth about the social world, but the truth about their relation to that world, forcing us to ask whether the same is not equally the case on other occasions.

\* S. Hoffman, *Le mouvement Poujade*, Cahiers de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques (Paris: A. Colin, 1956), pp. 209-60, 246.

especially potential stances or, better, of the principle underlying these stances, namely, the space of objective positions in the field and the dispositions of those who occupy them. This 'practical sense' of the possible and impossible, probable and improbable stances for the different occupants of different positions is what enables the politician to 'choose' suitable and agreed stances, and to avoid 'compromising' stances, which would mean being of the same mind as the occupants of opposite positions in the space of the political field. This feel for the political game, which enables politicians to predict the stances of other politicians, is also what makes them predictable for other politicians: predictable and thus responsible, in other words, competent, serious, trustworthy - in short, ready to play, with consistency and without arousing surprise or disappointing people's expectations, the role assigned to them by the structure of the space of the game.

Nothing is demanded more absolutely by the political game than

this fundamental adherence to the game itself, *illusio*, *involvement*, *commitment*, investment in the game which is the product of the game at the same time as it is the condition of the game being played. So as to avoid excluding themselves from the game and the profits that can be derived from it, whether we are talking about the simple *pleasure* of playing, or of all the material and symbolic advantages associated with the possession of symbolic capital, all those who have the *privilege* of investing in the game (instead of being reduced to the indifference and apathy of apoliticism) accept the tacit contract, implied in the fact of participating in the game, of recognizing thereby that it is indeed *worth playing*. This contract unites them to all the other participants by a sort of *initial collusion*, one far more powerful than all open or secret agreements. This solidarity between all the initiates, linked together by the same fundamental commitment to the game and its stakes, by the same respect (*obsequium*) for the game itself and the unwritten laws which define it, by the same fundamental investment in the game of which they have a monopoly and which they have to perpetuate in order that their own investments are profitable, is never demonstrated so clearly as when the game itself is threatened.

For groups united by some form of collusion (such as sets of *colleagues*), it is a fundamental imperative to maintain *discretion* about, to keep *secret*, everything which concerns the intimate beliefs of the group. They fiercely condemn manifestations of cynicism displayed to the outside world, even though such manifestations are quite acceptable among *initiates* because they cannot by definition affect the fundamental belief in the value of the group – a certain free-and-easy attitude to values is often experienced as a supplementary proof of their value. (It is well known that politicians and political journalists, normally so zealous to peddle world-weary rumours and anecdotes about politicians, are particularly indignant about those who, even for a single moment, make a show of 'wrecking the game' by bringing into political existence the apoliticism of the working class and petite bourgeoisie which is at once the condition and the product of the monopoly of the politicians.) But groups are hardly less mistrustful of those who, taking proclaimed values too seriously, refuse the compromises and shady deals which are the condition of the real existence of the group.

#### THE DOUBLE GAME

The struggle which sets professionals against each other is no doubt

the form *par excellence* of the symbolic struggle for the conservation or transformation of the social world through the conservation or transformation of the vision of the social world and of the principles of di-vision of this world; or, more precisely, for the conservation or transformation of the divisions established between classes by the conservation or transformation of the systems of classification which are its incorporated form and of the institutions which contribute to perpetuating the current classification by legitimating it.<sup>14</sup> The social conditions of possibility of this struggle may be found in the specific logic by which, in each social formation, the distinctively political game is organized. What is at stake in this game is, on the one hand, the monopoly of the elaboration and diffusion of the legitimate principle of di-vision of the social world and, thereby, of the mobilization of groups, and, on the other hand, the monopoly of the use of objectified instruments of power (objectified political capital). It thus takes the form of a struggle over the specifically symbolic power of making people see and believe, of predicting and prescribing, of making known and recognized, which is at the same time a struggle for power over the 'public powers' (state administrations). In parliamentary democracies, the struggle to win the support of the citizens (their votes, their party subscriptions, etc.) is also a struggle to maintain or subvert *the distribution of power over public powers* (or, in other words, a struggle for the monopoly of the legitimate use of objectified political resources – law, the army, police, public finances, etc.). The most important agents of this struggle are the political parties, combative organizations specially adapted so as to engage in this *sublimated form of civil war by mobilizing in an enduring way*, through prescriptive predictions, the greatest possible number of agents endowed with the same vision of the social world and its future. So as to ensure that this enduring mobilization comes about, political parties must on the one hand develop and impose a representation of the social world capable of obtaining the support of the greatest possible number of citizens, and on the other hand win positions (whether of power or not) capable of ensuring that they can wield power over those who grant that power to them.

Thus, the production of ideas about the social world is always in fact subordinated to the logic of the conquest of power, which is the logic of the mobilization of the greatest number. This explains, no doubt, the privilege granted, in the way the legitimate representation is built up, to the *ecclesial* mode of production, in which the proposals (motions, platforms, programmes, etc.) are immediately subjected to the approval of a group and thus can be imposed only by

professionals capable of manipulating ideas and groups at one and the same time, of producing ideas capable of producing groups by manipulating ideas in such a way as to ensure that they gain the support of a group (through, for example, the rhetoric of the political meeting or the mastery of the whole set of techniques of public speaking, of wording one's proposals or of manipulating the gathering, techniques which allow you to 'get your motion carried', not to mention the mastery of the procedures and tactics which, like the manipulation of the number of *mandates*, directly control the very production of the group).

It would be wrong to underestimate the autonomy and the specific effectiveness of all that happens in the political field and to reduce political history properly speaking to a sort of epiphenomenal manifestation of economic and social forces of which political actors would be, so to speak, the puppets. This would mean not only ignoring the specifically symbolic effectiveness of representation, and of the mobilizing belief that it elicits by virtue of objectification; it would also mean forgetting the proper political power of *government* which, however dependent it may be on economic and social forces, can have a real impact on these forces via its control over the instruments of the administration of things and persons.

We can compare political life to a theatre only on the condition that we envisage the relation between party and class, between the struggle of political organizations and class struggle, as a truly symbolic relation between a signifier and a signified, or, better, between *representatives* providing a *representation* and the agents, actions and situations that are represented. The congruence between signifier and signified, between the representative and the represented, doubtless results less from the conscious quest to meet the demands of the clientele, or from the mechanical constraint exerted by external pressures, than from the homology between the structure of the political field and the structure of the world represented, between the class struggle and the sublimated form of this struggle which is played out in the political field.<sup>15</sup> It is this homology which means that, by pursuing the satisfaction of the specific interests imposed on them by competition within the field, professionals satisfy in addition the interests of those who delegate them: the struggles of the representatives can be described as a political *mimesis* of the struggles of the groups or classes whose champions they claim to be. But, on the other hand, this homology also means that, in adopting stances that are most in conformity with the interests of those whom they represent, the professionals are still

pursuing – without necessarily admitting it to themselves – the satisfaction of their own interests, as these are assigned to them by the structure of positions and oppositions constitutive of the internal space of the political field.

The obligatory devotion to the interests of those who are represented leads one to forget about the interests of the representatives. In other words, the (apparent) relation between representatives and represented, the latter being imagined as a determining cause ('pressure groups', etc.) or final cause ('causes' to be defended, interests to be 'served', etc.), conceals the relation of competition between the representatives and, thereby, the relation of orchestration (or of pre-established harmony) between the representatives and the represented. Max Weber is doubtless right to note, with a healthy materialist bluntness, that there are two kinds of professional politicians, those who live 'off' politics and those who live 'for' politics.<sup>16</sup> To be competently rigorous, we would have to say, rather, that one can live off politics only by living for politics. For it is the relation between professionals which defines the particular kind of interest in politics that determines each category of representatives to devote themselves to politics and, thereby, to those they represent. More precisely, the relation that the professional sellers of political services (politicians, political journalists, etc.) maintain with their clients is always mediated, and more or less completely determined, by the relation they maintain with their competitors.<sup>17</sup> They serve the interests of their clients in so far (and only in so far) as they *also* serve themselves while serving others, that is, *all the more precisely when their position in the structure of the political field coincides more precisely with the position of those they represent in the structure of the social field*. (The closeness of the correspondence between the two spaces doubtless depends to a great extent on the intensity of the competition, that is, first and foremost on the *number* of parties or tendencies, a number which determines the diversity and renewal of products on offer by forcing, for instance, the different political parties to modify their programmes to win new clientele.) As a consequence, the political discourses produced by professionals are always doubly determined, and affected by a duplicity which is not in the least intentional since it results from the duality of fields of reference and from the necessity of serving at one and the same time the esoteric aims of internal struggles and the exoteric aims of external struggles.<sup>18</sup>

## A SYSTEM OF DEVIATIONS

Thus, it is the structure of the political field which, being subjectively inseparable from the direct – and always declared – relation to those who are represented, determines the stances taken, through the intermediary of the constraints and interests associated with a given position in this field. In concrete terms, the production of stances adopted depends on the system of stances that are conjointly proposed by the set of antagonistic political parties, in other words on the *political problematic* as a field of strategic possibilities objectively offered to the choice of agents in the form of positions that are actually occupied and stances that are actually proposed in the field. Political parties, like tendencies within these parties, have only a relational existence and it would be futile to try to define what they are and what they profess independently of what their competitors in the same field are and profess.<sup>19</sup>

There is no clearer demonstration of this effect of the field than that sort of *esoteric culture*, comprised of problems that are completely alien or inaccessible to ordinary people, of concepts and discourses that are without referents in the experience of ordinary citizens and, especially, of distinctions, nuances, subtleties and niceties that pass unnoticed by the uninitiated and which have no *raison d'être* other than the relations of conflict or competition between the different organizations or between the 'tendencies' and 'trends' of one and the same organization. We can here cite, once again, the testimony of Gramsci: 'We are becoming separated from the masses. Between us and these masses a cloud of ambiguity, misunderstanding and obscure squabbles is being formed. At a certain point, we will appear like men who want to hold their positions at any price.'<sup>20</sup> In reality, the fact that this properly political culture remains inaccessible to the majority of people is no doubt due less to the complexity of the language in which it is expressed than to the complexity of the social relations that are constitutive of the political field and expressed within it. This artificial creation of Byzantine power struggles appears less as something unintelligible than as something which appears pointless in the eyes of those who, not being players in the game, 'can't see the interest in it' and who cannot understand how this or that distinction between two words or two turns of phrase in a crucial debate, programme, platform, motion or resolution can have given rise to such arguments, because they do not adhere to the principle of the

oppositions which produced the arguments that generated these distinctions.<sup>21</sup>

The fact that every political field tends to be organized around the opposition between two poles (which, like political parties in the American system, may themselves be constituted by real fields, organized in accordance with analogous distinctions) should not lead us to forget that the recurrent properties of doctrines or groups situated in positions that are polar opposites, 'the party in favour of change' and the 'party of law and order', 'progressives' and 'conservatives', 'left' and 'right', are *invariants* which can be realized only in and through the relation to a given field. In this way the properties of political parties recorded by realist typologies can be immediately understood if they are related to the relative power of the two poles, to the distance which separates them and which determines the properties of their occupants, parties or politicians (and, in particular, their tendency to diverge towards the extremes or converge on the centre), and which therefore also determines the probability of the central, intermediary position – the neutral zone – being occupied. The field as a whole is defined as a system of deviations on different levels and nothing, either in the institutions or in the agents, the acts or the discourses they produce, has meaning except relationally, by virtue of the interplay of oppositions and distinctions. It is in this way, for instance, that the opposition between the 'right' and the 'left' can be maintained in a structure transformed at the cost of a partial exchange of roles between those who occupy those positions at two different moments (or in two different places): rationalism and the belief in progress and science which, between the wars, in France as well as in Germany, were a characteristic of the left (whereas the nationalist and conservative right succumbed instead to irrationalism and to the cult of nature), have become today, in these two countries, the heart of the new conservative creed, based on confidence in progress, technical knowledge and technocracy, while the left finds itself falling back on ideological themes or on practices which used to belong to the opposite pole, such as the (ecological) cult of nature, regionalism and a certain nationalism, the denunciation of the myth of absolute progress, the defence of the 'person', all of which are steeped in irrationalism.

The acts of theatricalization through which groups exhibit themselves (and, above all, to themselves) in ceremonies, festivals (like the Panathenaea), processions, parades, etc. constitute the elementary form of

objectification and, at the same time, the conscious realization of the principles of division according to which these groups are objectively organized and through which the perception that they have of themselves is organized.

It is in this respect that representative institutions (parliaments, general assemblies, councils, *cortes*, etc.) no doubt underlie the most fundamental representations, mental or objective, of the nation and its structure. As a ceremonial which makes *visible* the *ranks* and *numbers* (and which can, for this reason, become a topic of discussion, as was the case with the opening of the General Assembly in France), the spatial projection realized by the two-dimensional schema highlights the *hierarchy* of the groups represented (expressed by their ranking from the top down, or from right to left) and, in some cases, their numerical weight; and, more importantly, it highlights the very *existence* of the groups that are represented and *named*. (In fact, it seems that the idea of representing the *numerical weight* of groups – as exemplified by some engravings representing the ‘election table’ for the General Assembly, with double representation accorded to the Third Estate, on 27 December 1788 – presupposes that the idea of number and numerical *representativeness* (cf. head counts) has begun to compete with the idea of rank.)

Representative assemblies are a kind of spatial projection of the political field and, through this, of the field of class relations of which the political scene is a theatricalized representation. In other words, the structure according to which these assemblies are organized – and, in particular, the opposition between *left* and *right* – tends to impose itself as a paradigmatic manifestation of the social structure and to function in people’s heads as a principle of *di-vision* of the social world and, in particular, of the division into classes. (The tradition in France which prescribes that, in all parliaments, the conservatives sit on the right and the liberals on the left of the President goes back to the Constituent Assembly: after the reunion of the three orders, one began to distinguish the members of the assembly who, having abandoned distinction by dress, grouped themselves according to their ideas, with the partisans of the monarchy on the right and the partisans of the Revolution on the left or, more simply, on the *right-side* and the *left-side*, then *right* and *left*.)

The same dyadic or triadic structure which organizes the field as a whole can be reproduced in each of its points – that is, within the political party or splinter group – according to the same double logic, both internal and external, which relates the specific interests of professionals to the real or presumed interests of their real or presumed supporters. It is probably within the political parties whose supporters are the most deprived, and thus most inclined to depend on the party, that the logic of internal oppositions can most

clearly be demonstrated. Hence nothing can explain better the stances adopted than a *topology* of the positions from which they are expressed. ‘So far as Russia is concerned, I have always known that in the *topography* of the factions and tendencies, Radek, Trotsky and Bukharin occupied a left position, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin a right position, while Lenin was in the *centre* and acted as *arbiter* in the whole situation. This, of course, in current political language. The so-called Leninist nucleus, as is well known, maintains that these “topographic” positions are absolutely illusory and fallacious.’<sup>22</sup> It is just as if the distribution of positions in the field implied a distribution of roles; as if each of the protagonists were brought to or forced to assume his position as much through *competition* with the occupants of both the most distant and the closest positions, which threaten his existence in very different ways, as through the *logical contradiction* between the stances adopted.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, certain recurrent oppositions, such as the one established between the libertarian tradition and the authoritarian tradition, are merely the transcription, on the level of ideological struggles, of the fundamental contradiction within the revolutionary movement, which is forced to resort to discipline and authority, even violence, in order to combat authority and violence. As a heretical protest against the heretical church, as a revolution against ‘established revolutionary power’, the ‘leftist’ critique in its ‘spontaneist’ form seeks to exploit, against those who dominate the party, the contradiction between ‘authoritarian’ strategies within the party and the ‘anti-authoritarian’ strategies of the party within the political field as a whole. And even within the anarchist movement, which reproaches Marxism with being too authoritarian,<sup>24</sup> one finds a similar opposition between, on the one hand, the kind of demagoguery associated with the political platform which, aiming above all at laying the foundations for a powerful anarchist organization, treats as secondary the demands made by individuals and small groups for unlimited freedom and, on the other hand, a more ‘synthesizing’ tendency which aims at ensuring that individuals maintain their full independence.<sup>25</sup>

But even in this case, internal conflicts are superimposed on external conflicts. It is thus in so far as (and only in so far as) each tendency is inclined to appeal to the corresponding fraction of its clientele, thanks to the homologies between the positions occupied by the leaders in the political field and the positions occupied in the field of the lower classes by their real or presumed supporters, that the real divisions and contradictions of the working class can find a

corresponding expression in the contradictions and divisions of the working-class parties. The interests of the unorganized proletariat have no chance of gaining access to political representation (especially when that sub-proletariat is made up of foreigners without the right to vote or of stigmatized racial minorities) unless those interests become a weapon and a stake in the struggle which, in certain states of the political field, sets two things against each other: on the one hand, spontaneism or, up to a point, ultra-revolutionary voluntarism, both of which are always inclined to favour the least organized fractions of the proletariat, whose spontaneous action precedes or goes beyond the organization; and, on the other hand, centralism (which its adversaries label 'bureaucratic-mechanistic'), for which the organization, that is, the party, precedes and conditions the class and its struggle.<sup>26</sup>

#### SLOGANS AND MOBILIZING IDEAS

The tendency towards greater autonomy and towards the indefinite partition into minuscule antagonistic sects which is, as an objective potentiality, built into the constitution of a body of specialists possessing specific interests and set up against each other in competition for power in the political field (or in one or other sector of this field – for instance, a party apparatus) is counterbalanced to varying degrees by the fact that the outcome of internal struggles depends on the power that the agents and institutions involved in this struggle can mobilize from outside the field. In other words, the tendency towards fission is limited by the fact that the power of a discourse depends less on its intrinsic properties than on the mobilizing power it exercises – that is, at least to some extent, on the degree to which it is *recognized* by a numerous and powerful group that can recognize itself in it and whose interests it expresses (in a more or less signified and unrecognizable form).

A mere 'current of ideas' becomes a political movement only when the ideas being put forward are recognized outside the circle of professionals. The strategies which the logic of the internal struggle imposes on professionals, and whose objective foundation may be, over and above the differences explicitly professed, differences of habitus and interests (or, more precisely, of economic and educational capital, and of social trajectory), differences which are associated with different positions in the field, can succeed only if they converge with the (sometimes unconscious) strategies of groups

outside the field. (The entire difference between utopianism and realism is to be found here.) In this way, the tendencies to sectarian splits are continually being counterbalanced by the necessities of competition which mean that, in order to triumph in their internal struggles, professionals have to appeal to forces which are not all, and not totally, internal (unlike the situation in the scientific or artistic field, in which appealing to non-professionals discredits you). Avant-garde splinter groups can bring into the political field the logic characteristic of the intellectual field only because they have no base; they thus have no constraints upon them, but they also have no real power. Functioning as sects that have come into being as breakaway groups, they are dedicated to scissiparity and founded on a renunciation of any claim to universality; a loss of power and effectiveness is the price they have to pay for being able to affirm the full technical and ethical qualification that defines the *ecclesia pura* (the Puritans), the universe of the 'pure' and the 'purists', capable of demonstrating their excellence as political virtuosi in their adherence to the purest and most radical traditions ('permanent revolution', 'the dictatorship of the proletariat', etc.). However, if the party is to avoid the risk of excluding itself from the political game and from the ambition of participating, if not in power, at least in the power of influencing the way power is distributed, it cannot sacrifice itself to such exclusive virtues; and, just as the Church takes on as its mission the diffusion of its institutional grace to all the faithful, be they just or unjust, and the submission of sinners without distinction to the discipline of God's commands, the party aims at winning over to its cause the greatest number of those who resist it (this is the case when the Communist Party addresses itself, in an electoral period, to 'all progressive republicans'). And the party does not hesitate, so as to broaden its base and attract the clientele of the competing parties, to compromise with the 'purity' of its party line and to play more or less consciously on the ambiguities of its programme. A result of this is that, among the struggles which beset every party, one of the most constant is that between two groups of people: on the one hand, those who denounce the compromises necessary to increase the *strength* of the party (and thus of those who dominate it), but to the detriment of its *originality*, in other words, at the cost of abandoning its distinctive and original (in both senses of the word: new and fundamental) positions – those people, that is, who thus advocate a return to basics, to a restoration of the original purity; and, on the other hand, those people who are inclined to seek a strengthening of the party, in other words, a broadening of its clientele, even if this is

at the cost of compromises and concessions or even of a methodical interference with everything that is too 'exclusive' in the original stances adopted by the party. The former group draws the party towards the logic of the intellectual field which, when pushed to the limit, can deprive it of all temporal power; the latter group has on its side the logic of *Realpolitik* which is the condition of entry to political reality.<sup>27</sup>

The political field is thus the site of a competition for power which is carried out by means of a competition for the control of non-professionals or, more precisely, for the monopoly of the right to speak and act in the name of some or all of the non-professionals. The spokesperson appropriates not only the words of the group of non-professionals, that is, most of the time, its silence, but also the very power of that group, which he helps to produce by lending it a voice recognized as legitimate in the political field. The power of the ideas that he proposes is measured not, as in the domain of science, by their truth-value (even if they owe part of their power to his capacity to convince people that he is in possession of the truth), but by the power of mobilization that they contain, in other words, by the power of the group that recognizes them, even if only by its silence or the absence of any refutation – a power that the group can demonstrate by registering its different voices or assembling them all together in the same space. It is for this reason that the field of politics – in which one would seek in vain for any authority capable of legitimating the chances of legitimacy and any basis of competence other than class interests, properly understood – always swings between two criteria of validation: science and the plebiscite.<sup>28</sup>

In politics, 'to say is to do', that is, it is to get people to believe that you can do what you say and, in particular, to get them to know and recognize the principles of di-vision of the social world, the *slogans*, which produce their own verification by producing groups and, thereby, a social order. Political speech – and this is what defines its specificity – commits its author completely because it constitutes a commitment to action which is truly political only if it is the commitment of an agent or group of agents who are *politically responsible*, that is, capable of committing a group, and a group, moreover, capable of carrying out the action: it is only on this condition that it is equivalent to an act. The truth of a promise or a prognosis depends not only on the truthfulness but also on the authority of the person who utters it – that is, on his capacity to make people believe in his truthfulness and his authority. When it is acknowledged that the future under discussion depends on collective

will and action, the mobilizing ideas of the spokesperson who is capable of giving rise to this action are unfalsifiable because they have the power to ensure that the future they are announcing will come about. (This is probably what lies behind the fact that, for the entire revolutionary tradition, the question of truth is inseparable from the question of freedom or historical necessity. If it is acknowledged that the future, that is, political truth, depends on the action of political leaders and the masses – though we would have to specify to what degree –, Rosa Luxemburg was right in her quarrel with Kautsky, who contributed to bringing about what was probable, and which he predicted, by not doing what, according to Rosa Luxemburg, needed to be done; in the opposite case, Rosa Luxemburg was wrong because she did not foretell the most probable future.)

What would be an 'irresponsible discourse' in the mouth of one person is a reasonable forecast when made by someone else. Political propositions, programmes, promises, predictions or prognostications ('We will win the elections') are never logically verifiable or falsifiable. They are true only in so far as the person who utters them (on his own behalf or in the name of a group) is capable of making them historically true, by making them come about in history; and this is inextricably bound up with his aptitude for judging realistically the chances of success of the action whose aim it is to make them come about in reality, and with his capacities for mobilizing the forces necessary to achieve that end, by managing to inspire confidence in his own truthfulness, and thus in his chances of success. In other words, the speech of the *spokesperson* owes part of its 'illocutionary force' to the force (the number) of the group that he helps to produce as such by the act of symbolization or representation; it is based on the metaphorical *coup d'état* by which the speaker invests his utterance with all the power his utterance helps to produce by mobilizing the group to which it is addressed. This can be clearly seen in the logic, so typically political, of the promise or, even better, of the prediction: a veritable self-fulfilling prophecy, the words through which the spokesperson endows a group with a will, a plan, a hope or, quite simply, a future, *does what it says* in so far as the addressees recognize themselves in it, conferring on it the symbolic and also material power (in the form of votes, but also of subsidies, subscriptions, or the power of their labour or their capacity to struggle, etc.) which enables the words to come true. It is because it is enough for ideas to be professed by *political leaders* in order to become mobilizing ideas capable of making themselves believed, or even slogans capable of mobilizing or demobilizing, that

mistakes are *misdeeds* or, in the native language of politics, 'betrayals'.<sup>29</sup>

#### CREDIT AND CREDESCENCE

Political capital is a form of symbolic capital, *credit* founded on *credence* or belief and *recognition* or, more precisely, on the innumerable operations of credit by which agents confer on a person (or on an object) the very powers that they recognize in him (or it). This is the ambiguity of the *fides*, analysed by Benveniste:<sup>30</sup> an objective power which can be objectified in things (and in particular in everything that constitutes the symbolic nature of power — thrones, sceptres and crowns), it is the product of subjective acts of recognition and, in so far as it is credit and credibility, exists only in and through representation, in and through trust, belief and obedience. Symbolic power is a power which the person submitting to *grants* to the person who exercises it, a credit with which he credits him, a *fides*, an *autoritas*, with which he entrusts him by placing his trust in him. It is a power which exists because the person who submits to it believes that it exists. *Credo*, says Benveniste, 'is literally "to place one's *kred*", that is "magical powers", in a person from whom one expects protection thanks to "believing" in him'.<sup>31</sup> The *kred*, the credit, the charisma, that '*je ne sais quoi*' with which one keeps hold over those from whom one holds it, is this product of the *credo*, of belief, of obedience, which seems to produce the *credo*, the belief, the obedience.

Like the divine or human champion who, according to Benveniste, 'needs people to believe in him, to entrust their *kred* to him, on condition that he lavishes his benefits on those who have thus supported him',<sup>32</sup> the politician derives his political power from the trust that a group places in him. He derives his truly magical power over the group from faith in the representation that he gives to the group and which is a representation of the group itself and of its relation to other groups. As a representative linked to those he represents by a sort of rational contract (the programme), he is also a champion, united by a magical relation of identification with those who, as the saying goes, 'pin all their hopes on him'. And it is because his specific capital is a pure *fiduciary value* which depends on representation, opinion, belief, *fides*, that the man of politics, like the man of honour, is especially vulnerable to suspicions, malicious misrepresentations and scandal, in short, to everything that

threatens belief and trust, by bringing to light the hidden and secret acts and remarks of the present or the past which can undermine present acts and remarks and discredit their author (and this takes place all the more completely, as we shall see, the less his capital depends on delegation).<sup>33</sup> This supremely *free-flowing* capital can be conserved only at the cost of unceasing work which is necessary both to accumulate credit and to avoid discredit: hence all the precautions, the silences and the disguises, imposed on public personalities, who are forever forced to stand before the tribunal of public opinion, their constant need to ensure that they neither say nor do anything which might contradict their present or past professions of faith, or might show up their inconsistency over the course of time. And the special attention that politicians must give to everything which helps to produce the representation of their *sincerity* or of their disinterestedness can be explained by remembering that these dispositions appear to be the final guarantor of the representation of the social world that they are seeking to impose, of the 'ideals' and 'ideas' which they are striving to get people to accept.<sup>34</sup>

'In Homer this *skeptron* is the attribute of the king, of heralds, messengers, judges, and all persons who, whether of their own nature or because of a particular occasion, are invested with authority. The *skeptron* is passed to the orator before he begins his speech so that he may speak with authority.'<sup>35</sup> The abundance of microphones, cameras, journalists and photographers, is, like the Homeric *skeptron* described by Benveniste, the visible manifestation of the hearing granted to the orator, of his credit, of the social importance of his acts and his words. Photography — which, by recording, eternalizes — has the effect, here as elsewhere, of *solemnizing* the exemplary acts of the political ritual. It follows that the intervention of this instrument of perception and objectification *designates* the situations (official openings, laying the first stone, processions, etc.) in which politicians are *being represented*, are acting in order to be *seen* acting, and are representing themselves as good representatives. Thus a number of actions which seem to be an end in themselves and whose voluntarist gratuity might seem out of place on the political terrain (as with so many demonstrations or petitions that have no effect) do not, for all that, lack all function: by demonstrating the demonstrators and, above all, the leaders of the demonstration, the demonstration demonstrates the existence of the group capable of demonstrating its existence and of leaders who can demonstrate its existence — thereby justifying *their* existence.



## THE KINDS OF POLITICAL CAPITAL

'A banker of men in a monopoly system',<sup>36</sup> as Gramsci says of trade union officials, the politician owes his specific authority in the political field – what ordinary language calls his 'political clout' – to the power of mobilization that he has at his disposal, either personally or else by delegation, as the representative of an organization (a party or trade union) which itself holds political capital accumulated in the course of previous struggles, first and foremost in the form of jobs – inside or outside the apparatus – and of militants attached to those jobs.<sup>37</sup> The personal capital of 'fame' and 'popularity' based on the fact of *being known and recognized* in person (of having a 'name', 'renown', etc.), and also on the possession of a certain number of specific qualifications which are the condition of the acquisition and conservation of a 'good reputation', is often the product of the reconversion of the capital of fame accumulated in other domains: in particular, in professions which, like the liberal professions, ensure that you have some free time and which presuppose a certain cultural capital and, in the case of lawyers, a professional mastery of eloquence. While the professional capital of the *notable* is the product of a slow and continuous accumulation which in general takes a whole life time, the personal capital which can be called heroic or prophetic, and which Max Weber has in mind when he talks of 'charisma', is the product of an inaugural action, performed in a crisis situation, in the vacuum and silence left by institutions and apparatuses: the prophetic action of giving meaning, which founds and legitimates itself, retrospectively, by the confirmation that its own success confers on the language of crisis and on the initial accumulation of the power of mobilization which its success has brought about.<sup>38</sup>

At the other end of the scale from the personal capital which disappears with the person of its bearer (although it may give rise to quarrels over the inheritance), the delegated capital of political authority is, like that of the priest, the teacher and, more generally, the *official*, the product of a limited and provisional transfer (but one that is renewable, sometimes for life) of a capital held and controlled by the institution and by it alone.<sup>39</sup> It is the party which, through the action of its officers and its militants, has, in the course of history, accumulated a symbolic capital of *recognition* and *loyalties* and which has given itself, for and through political struggle, a permanent organization of party officials (*permanents*) capable of mobilizing

militants, supporters and sympathizers, and of organizing the work of propaganda necessary to obtain votes and thus jobs, enabling party officials to be maintained and retained on a long-term basis. This apparatus of mobilization, which distinguishes the party or the trade union both from the aristocratic club and from the intellectual group, depends *at one and the same time* on two things: first, on objective structures such as the bureaucracy of the organization properly speaking, the jobs it offers, with all the correlative profits, in itself or in the different branches of public administration, the traditions of recruitment, education and selection which characterize it, etc.; and second, on dispositions, whether this is a matter of loyalty to the party or of the incorporated principles of di-vision of the social world which the leaders, party officials or militants implement in their daily practice and in their properly political action.

The acquisition of a delegated capital obeys a very specific logic: *investiture*, the veritably magical act of *institution* by which the party officially *consecrates* the official candidate at an election and which marks the transmission of political capital, just as the medieval investiture solemnized the transfer of a fief or of a piece of landed property, can only be the counterpart of a long *investment* of time, work, dedication and devotion to the institution. It is no coincidence that churches, like political parties, so often appoint oblates to lead them.<sup>40</sup> The law which governs the exchanges between agents and institutions can be expressed in this way: the institution gives everything, starting with power over the institution, to those who have given everything to the institution, but this is because they were nothing outside the institution or without the institution and because they cannot deny the institution without purely and simply denying themselves by depriving themselves of everything that they have become through and for the institution to which they owe everything.<sup>41</sup> In short, the institution invests those who have *invested* in the institution: investment consists not only in services rendered, which are frequently more rare and precious when they are more costly psychologically (such as all initiatory 'ordeals'), or even in obedience to orders or in conformity to the demands of the institution, but also in psychological investments, which mean that exclusion, as a withdrawal of the capital of institutional authority, so often takes the form of financial *failure*, of *bankruptcy*, both social and psychological. (This is all the truer when, as in the case of excommunication and exclusion from the divine sacrifice, it is accompanied by 'the strictest social boycott' which takes the form of

a refusal to have anything to do with the excluded person.)<sup>42</sup> The person invested with a *functional capital*, equivalent to the 'institutional grace' or the 'functional charisma' of the priest, may possess no other 'qualification' than that granted to him by the institution in the act of investiture. And it is still the institution which controls access to *personal fame* by controlling, for example, access to the most *conspicuous* positions (that of general secretary or spokesperson) or to the places of publicity (such as, today, television and press conferences) — though the person endowed with delegated capital can still obtain personal capital through a subtle strategy consisting of distancing himself from the institution as far as is compatible with still belonging to it and keeping the correlative advantages.

It follows that the elected member of a party apparatus depends at least as much on the apparatus as on his electors — whom he owes to the apparatus and whom he loses if he breaks away from the apparatus. It also follows that, as politics becomes more professionalized and parties more bureaucratic, the struggle for the political power of mobilization tends to become more and more a two-stage competition: the choice of those who will be able to enter the struggle for the conquest of the non-professionals depends on the outcome of the competition for power over the apparatus that takes place, within the apparatus, *between professionals alone*. What this means, in short, is that the struggle for the monopoly of the development and circulation of the principles of di-vision of the social world is more and more strictly reserved for professionals and for the large units of production and circulation, thus excluding *de facto* the small independent producers (starting with the 'free intellectuals').

#### THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF POLITICAL CAPITAL

The delegation of political capital presupposes the objectification of this kind of capital in permanent institutions, its materialization in political 'machines', in jobs and instruments of mobilization, and its continual reproduction by mechanisms and strategies. It is thus the result of already established political enterprises which have accumulated a significant amount of objectified political capital, in the form of jobs within the party itself, in all the organizations that are more or less subordinate to the party, and also in the organs of local or central power and in the whole network of industrial or commercial enterprises which live in a state of symbiosis with these

organs. The objectification of political capital secures a relative independence from the electoral sanction by replacing the direct domination of people and personal investment strategies ('self-sacrifice') by the mediated domination which enables one to keep a lasting hold over those who hold jobs by holding those jobs open for them in the first place.<sup>43</sup> And it is easy to see that this new definition of positions brings with it new characteristics in the dispositions of those who occupy them: political capital is increasingly institutionalized in the form of available jobs, and it becomes more profitable to enter the apparatus — quite the opposite of what happens in the initial phases or in times of crisis (in a revolutionary period, for example) when the risks are great and profits reduced.

The process often designated by the vague word 'bureaucratization' can be understood if one sees that, as one advances in the life cycle of the political enterprise, the effects on recruitment produced by the supply of stable party jobs begin to exacerbate the frequently observed effects<sup>44</sup> produced by access to such jobs (and to the relative — privileges that they make available to militants from the working class). The more advanced the process of institutionalization of political capital is, the more the winning of 'hearts and minds' tends to become subordinated to the winning of jobs; and the more militants, linked by their 'devotion' to the 'cause' and by nothing else, have to make way for the 'prebendaries', as Weber calls them, lastingly linked to the apparatus by the benefits and advantages that it grants them, and holding on to the apparatus as long as the apparatus keeps them in its grasp by redistributing to them part of the material or symbolic booty that it wins with their help (as in the case of the spoils of American parties).<sup>45</sup> In other words, as the process of institutionalization advances and as the apparatus of mobilization grows, so the weight of the imperatives linked to the reproduction of the apparatus and the jobs it offers, tying to itself those who fill those jobs by all sorts of material or symbolic interests, continues to grow, both in reality and in people's heads; and this grows faster than the weight of imperatives that would be imposed by the realization of the declared aims of the apparatus. It is thus easy to understand how political parties can be brought in this way to sacrifice their programmes so as to keep themselves in power or simply in existence.

'AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, YOU'RE EITHER A COMMUNIST OR YOU'RE NOT.'

'When someone says to me: "We can't understand you communists: you don't have different tendencies - there aren't any right-wing communists, there aren't any left-wing communists, there aren't any moderates. So there's no freedom!", I reply: "What do you call a right-wing communist, what do you call a left-wing communist, what do you call a moderate? As far as I'm concerned, you're either a communist or you're not, and in the communist organization, when we're discussing things, everyone gives his point of view about the day's agenda, and when it's something important, we take a vote. It's the majority that decides." What do you call democracy? In my view, democracy is 50% of the vote plus one - that's easy to understand! It's the majority that decides. If you join the communist party in order to combat the directives that have been freely discussed and debated in a session of congress, in order to have your point of view carried - reformist without reforms, since that's what naturally suits your state of mind (you have a sensitive backside, you need a nicely-padded armchair so as not to get it overheated) - well, then you'll sit back in your armchair and say: "Aha! I don't agree with the party leadership - I'm a right-wing communist, I'm . . . a moderate." If you're an electioneer sort, I'll tell you right away: "Go somewhere else; we don't need you here, because you may perhaps have brains, you may perhaps be very clever, but your arguments are very poor and above all your facts are all wrong. So despite all your cleverness and your gift of the gab, workers in your section may well never choose you to carry the flag of the organization. They naturally prefer a worker who has proved himself and they prefer a communist, even if he is an intellectual, since there are good ones and bad ones . . . just as there are good ones and bad ones in the working class - that's a fact!"'

(Blacksmith's mate, miner, then chainmaker, born in 1892 in Saint-Amand-des-Eaux; he was secretary of the Saint-Nazaire section of the French Communist Party in 1928, and the CGTU union representative for the Saint-Nazaire region.)

Source: 'Autobiographies de militants CGTU-CGT', edited and introduced by Jean Peneff, *Les Cahiers du LERSCO*, 1 (December 1979), pp. 28-9.

## FIELD AND APPARATUS

While it is true to say that there is no political enterprise which, however monolithic it may appear, is not the site of confrontation between divergent tendencies and interests,<sup>46</sup> the fact remains that parties are more likely to function in accordance with the logic of the apparatus capable of responding instantaneously to the strategic demands that are part and parcel of the logic of the political field when the people they represent are more deprived culturally and more attached to the values of loyalty, and thus more inclined to unconditional and lasting delegation. The same is true when the parties are older and richer in objectified political capital, and thus more powerfully determined, in their strategies, by the need to 'defend their gains'; when, likewise, they are more deliberately arranged for the purposes of the struggle, and thus organized in accordance with the military model of the apparatus of mobilization; and when their officers and party officials are more deprived of economic and cultural capital, and thus more totally dependent on the party.

The combination of inter- and intragenerational loyalty, which ensures that parties will always have a relatively stable clientele, thus depriving the electoral sanction of a large part of its effectiveness, with the *fides implicita*, which shelters political leaders from the control of non-professionals, implies that, paradoxically, there are no political enterprises more independent of the constraints and controls of demand and freer to obey exclusively the logic of competition between professionals (sometimes at the cost of the most sudden and paradoxical U-turns) than the parties that most loudly claim to be defending the working masses.<sup>47</sup> This is all the more true when they tend to accept the Bolshevik dogma according to which the fact of bringing non-professionals into the internal struggles of the party, and of appealing to them or, quite simply, of allowing internal disagreements to filter through to the outside world, is perceived as verging on the illegitimate.

In the same way, the party officials never depend on the party so much as when their profession allows them to participate in political life only at the cost of sacrificing time and money. They can then expect to receive only from the party the *free time* that notables owe to their revenue or to the manner in which they acquire it, that is, without working or by working only intermittently.<sup>48</sup> And their dependence is all the more total if the economic and cultural capital

that they possessed before joining the party was slight. This explains the fact that party officials from the working class feel that they owe the party everything – not just their position, which frees them from the servitudes of their former condition, but also their culture, in short, everything that constitutes their present way of life: 'The fact is that the person who lives the life of a party like ours can only rise in status. I started out with the baggage of a primary-school pupil and the party forced me to educate myself. You have to work, slave over your books, you have to read, you have to put yourself in the picture . . . It's a real obligation! If not . . . I'd have stayed the same donkey as I was fifty years ago! What I say is: "a militant owes his party everything."'<sup>49</sup> It also explains the fact that, as Denis Lacorne has demonstrated, 'the party spirit' and 'partisan pride' are significantly clearer among the party officials of the Communist Party than among those of the Socialist Party, since the latter are more frequently from the middle and upper classes, especially from the teaching profession, and thus depend far less completely on the party.

Discipline and training, so often overestimated by analysts, would remain completely powerless without the complicity that they find in the dispositions to forced or chosen submission which agents bring to the apparatus, and which are themselves continually reinforced by the confrontation with similar dispositions and by the interests that are part and parcel of the jobs in the party apparatus. One can thus say both that certain kinds of habitus find the conditions of their realization, indeed of their blossoming, in the logic of the apparatus; and, conversely, that the logic of the apparatus 'exploits' for its own profit tendencies that are inscribed in the different kinds of habitus. One could mention, on the one hand, all the procedures, common to all total institutions, by which the apparatus, or those who dominate it, impose discipline and bring into line heretics and dissidents, or the mechanisms which, with the complicity of those whose interests they serve, tend to ensure the reproduction of institutions and of their hierarchies. On the other hand, there would be no end to an enumeration and analysis of the dispositions which provide militant mechanization with its cogs and wheels: this is true whether we are talking about the dominated relation to culture which inclines party officials from the working class to a form of anti-intellectualism which is bound to serve as a justification or alibi for a sort of spontaneous Zhdanovism and workerist corporatism; or about the resentment which draws on the Stalinist (in the historical sense of the word) vision of 'fractions' – in other words, the policeman's vision –

and on the propensity to think of history as ruled by the logic of the conspiracy; or even about the sense of guilt which, as an essential part of the precarious position of the intellectual, reaches its maximum intensity in the intellectual from the dominated classes, a renegade and often the son of a renegade, as Sartre has magnificently shown in his preface to *Aden Arabie*. And it would be impossible to understand certain extreme 'successes' in the way the apparatus can be manipulated if one did not take into account the extent to which these dispositions are objectively orchestrated, the different forms of preoccupation with the poor and sordid, which predispose intellectuals to *ouvriérisme*, adjusting themselves for instance to spontaneous Zhdanovism in order to favour the establishment of social relations in which the persecuted makes himself the accomplice of the persecutor.

The fact remains that the Bolshevik-type organizational model that was imposed on most communist parties enables the tendencies inscribed in the relation between the working classes and the parties to be taken to their ultimate consequences. As an apparatus (or total institution) designed for the purpose of the (real or represented) struggle, and based on the *discipline* which allows a group of agents (in this case, militants) to act 'as one man' for a common cause, the communist party finds the conditions of its functioning in the permanent struggle that takes place in the political field and that can be re-activated or intensified at will. Indeed, since discipline, which, as Weber observes, ensures 'that the obedience of a plurality of men is rationally uniform',<sup>50</sup> finds its justification, if not its basis, in struggle, one need only mention the real or potential struggle, or even re-ignite it more or less artificially, in order to restore the legitimacy of discipline.<sup>51</sup> It follows that, more or less as Weber says, the situation of struggle reinforces the position occupied by the dominant members within the apparatus of struggle and relegates militants from the role of popular orators responsible for expressing the will of the base (a role that they can sometimes claim by virtue of the official definition of their function) to the function of mere 'executives' responsible for *executing* the orders and commands coming from the central leadership and forced by 'competent comrades' to devote their energies to a 'democracy of ratification'.<sup>52</sup> And there is no better expression of the logic of this organization designed for combat than the 'who is against?' procedure as described by Bukharin; and as they are all more or less afraid of being against, the individual designated is appointed secretary, the resolution proposed is adopted, and always unanimously.<sup>53</sup> The process

called 'militarization' consists in assuming authority on the basis of the 'war' situation which confronts the organization – a situation which can be produced by working on the way the situation is represented, so as to produce and reproduce, continuously, the fear of being against, the ultimate basis of all militant or military disciplines. If anti-communism did not exist, 'war communism' would not fail to invent it. Since all opposition from within is bound to appear as collusion with the enemy, it reinforces the militarization it combats by reinforcing the unanimity of the besieged 'us' which predisposes people to military obedience. The historical dynamic of the field of struggles between the orthodox and heretics, those for and those against, gives way to the mechanism of the apparatus which annuls all practical possibility of being against, by a semi-rational exploitation of the psychosomatic effects of the euphoria caused by the unanimity of adherence and aversion, or, on the contrary, of the anguish caused by exclusion and excommunication, turning the 'party spirit' into a real *esprit de corps*.

In this way, the very ambiguity of the political struggle, this combat for 'ideas' and 'ideals' which is inseparably a combat for powers and, whether one likes it or not, for privileges, is the source of the contradiction which haunts all political organizations designed to subvert the established order: all the necessities which weigh down on the social world work together to ensure that the function of mobilization, which calls for the mechanical logic of the apparatus, tends to supplant the function of expression and representation claimed by all the professional ideologies of those who occupy the apparatus (the ideology of the 'organic intellectual' as much as that of the party which 'acts as midwife' to the class) and which cannot be really ensured other than by the dialectical logic of the field. 'Revolution from above', a plan hatched by the apparatus, and one which presupposes and produces the apparatus, has the effect of interrupting this dialectic, which is history itself: initially in the political field, that field of struggles about a field of struggles and about the legitimate representation of those struggles, and then within the political enterprise, party, trade union or association, which can function as a single individual only by sacrificing the interests of a part, if not all, of those whom it represents.

## Delegation and Political Fetishism

*The aristocrats of intelligence find that there are truths which should not be told to the people. As a revolutionary socialist, and a sworn enemy of all aristocracies and all tutelage, I believe on the contrary that the people must be told everything. There is no other way to restore to them their full liberty.*

Mikhail Bakunin

The delegation through which one person gives power, as the saying goes, to another, the transference of power through which a mandator authorizes a mandatary to sign on his behalf, to act on his behalf, to speak on his behalf, and gives him the power of a proxy, in other words the *plena potentia agendi*, full power to act for him, is a complex act which deserves some reflection. The plenipotentiary, minister, mandatary, delegate, spokesperson, deputy or member of parliament is a person who has a mandate, a commission or a power of proxy, to represent – an extraordinarily polysemic word – in other words, to show and throw into relief the interests of a person or a group. But if it is true that to delegate is to entrust a function or a mission to someone, by transmitting one's power to him, the question arises as to how the delegate can have power over the person who gives him power. When the act of delegation is performed by a single person in favour of a single person, things are relatively clear. But when a single person is entrusted with the powers of a whole crowd of people, that person can be invested with a power which transcends each of the individuals who delegate him. And, thereby, he can be as it were an incarnation of that sort of transcendence of the social that the Durkheimians have frequently pointed out.

But that is not the whole truth, and the relation of delegation risks concealing the truth of the relation of representation and the paradox of the situations in which a group can exist only by delegation to an individual person – the general secretary, the Pope, etc. – who can act as a moral person, that is, as a substitute for the group. In all these cases (following the formula established by canon lawyers, ‘the Church is the Pope’), *in appearance* the group creates the man who speaks in its place and in its name – to put it that way is to think in terms of delegation – whereas *in reality* it is more or less just as true to say that it is the spokesperson who creates the group. It is because the representative exists, because he *represents* (symbolic action), that the group that is represented and symbolized exists and that in return it gives existence to its representative as the representative of a group. One can see in this circular relation the root of the illusion which results in the fact that, ultimately, the spokesperson may appear, even in his own eyes, as *causa sui*, since he is the cause of that which produces his power, since the group which makes of him someone invested with powers would not exist – or at least, would not exist fully, as a represented group – if he were not there to incarnate it.

This sort of original circle of representation has been concealed: it has been replaced by hundreds of questions, the commonest of them being the question of the ‘awakening of consciousness’. The question of political fetishism has been concealed, as has the process through which individuals constitute themselves (or are constituted) as a group but at the same time lose control over the group in and through which they are constituted. There is a sort of antinomy inherent in the political sphere which stems from the fact that individuals – and this is all the more true the more they are deprived – cannot constitute themselves (or be constituted) as a group, that is, as a force capable of making itself heard, of speaking and being heard, unless they dispossess themselves in favour of a spokesperson. One must always risk political alienation in order to escape from political alienation. (In reality, this antinomy really exists only for the dominated. One might say, for the sake of simplicity, that the dominant always exist, whereas the dominated exist only if they mobilize or avail themselves of instruments of representation. Except perhaps in the times of restoration which follow great crises, it is in the interests of the dominant to leave things alone, to allow agents, who need merely to be responsible in order to be rational and reproduce the established order, to pursue their independent and isolated strategies.)

It is the process of delegation which, because it is forgotten and ignored, becomes the source of political alienation. Delegates and ministers, in the sense of ministers of religion or ministers of state, are, according to Marx’s formula about fetishism, among those ‘products of the human brain [which] appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own’. Political fetishes are people, things, beings, which seem to owe to themselves alone an existence that social agents have given to them; those who create the delegate adore their own creature. Political idolatry consists precisely in the fact that the value which resides in the political personality, that product of men’s brains, appears as a mysterious objective property of the person, a charm, charisma: the *ministerium* appears as a *mysterium*. Here again I could quote Marx, *cum grano salis*, of course, since his analyses of fetishism were clearly – and quite justifiably – not meant to explain political fetishism. Marx said, in the same famous passage: ‘Value does not wear a statement of what it is written on its own brow.’ That is the very definition of charisma, that sort of power which seems to be its own source. Charisma, in Weber’s definition, is that ‘*je ne sais quoi*’ which is its own foundation – gift, grace, mana, etc.

Thus, delegation is the act by which a group undertakes to constitute itself by endowing itself with that set of things which create groups, in other words, a permanent office and party officials, a bureau in all senses of the word, and first of all in the sense of a bureaucratic mode of organization, with its own seal, acronym, signature, delegation of signature, official rubber-stamp, etc. (as in the case of the Politburo). The group exists when it has provided itself with a permanent organ of representation endowed with the *plena potentia agendi* and the *sigillum authenticum*, and is thus capable of *substituting itself* (to speak for somebody is to speak in their place) for the serial group, made up of separated and isolated individuals, in a state of constant renewal, being able to act and speak only for themselves. The second act of delegation, which is far better concealed and to which I will have to return, is the act by which the social reality thus constituted, the Party, the Church, etc., mandates an individual. I use the term ‘bureaucratic mandate’ on purpose, to refer to the secretary (bureau or office goes together well with secretary), the minister, the general secretary, etc. It is no longer the mandator who chooses his delegate, but the bureau which mandates a plenipotentiary. I will be exploring this sort of black box: first, the transition from atomistic subjects to the bureau, and second, the transition from the bureau to the secretary. To analyse

these two mechanisms, we have a paradigm: that of the Church. The Church, and through it each of its members, possesses the 'monopoly of the legitimate manipulation of the goods of salvation'. Delegation in this case is the act by which the Church (and not mere believers) delegates to the minister the power to act in its place.

In what does the mystery of the ministry consist? The delegate becomes, through unconscious delegation (I have been speaking as if it were conscious, for reasons of clarity, by an artefact analogous to the idea of the social contract), capable of acting as a substitute for the group which gives him a mandate. In other words, the delegate is, so to speak, in a *metonymic* relation with the group; he is a part of the group and can function as a sign in place of the totality of the group. He can function as a passive, objective sign, who signifies or manifests the existence of his mandators, as a representative, as a group *in effigy*. (To say that the communist-affiliated CGT trade union was received at the Elysée is equivalent to saying that the sign was received in place of the thing signified.) But in addition, it is a sign which speaks, which, as a spokesperson, can say what he is, what he does, what he represents, what he imagines himself to be representing. And when someone says that 'the CGT was received at the Elysée', they mean that the set of members of the organization were expressed in two ways: in the fact of demonstration, of the presence of the representative, and, possibly, in the discourse of the representative. By this token, it is easy to see how the possibility of a sort of embezzlement is part and parcel of the very act of delegation. To the extent to which, in most cases of delegation, the mandators write a blank cheque for their delegate, if only because they are frequently unaware of the questions to which their delegate will have to respond, they put themselves in his hands. In the medieval tradition, the faith shared by delegates who put themselves in the hands of the institution was called *fides implicita* — a magnificent expression which can easily be transferred to politics. The more people are dispossessed, especially culturally, the more constrained and inclined they are to rely on delegates in order to acquire a political voice. In fact, isolated, silent, voiceless individuals, without either the capacity or the power of making themselves heard and understood, are faced with the alternative of keeping quiet or of being spoken for by someone else.

In the limiting case of dominated groups, the act of symbolization by which the spokesperson is constituted, the constitution of the 'movement', happens at the same time as the constituting of the group; the sign creates the thing signified, the signifier is identified

with the thing signified, which would not exist without it, and which can be reduced to it. The signifier is not only that which expresses and represents the signified group: it is that which *signifies* to it that it exists, that which has the power to call into visible existence, by mobilizing it, the group that it signifies. The signifier is the only one which, under certain conditions, by using the power conferred on it by delegation, can mobilize the group: that is, in a demonstration or display of the group's existence. When the signifier, the representative, says: 'I am going to show you that I am representative, by introducing you to the people that I represent' (here we have the eternal debate over the exact number of demonstrators), the spokesperson demonstrates his legitimacy by demonstrating or displaying those who have delegated him. But he has this power to demonstrate the demonstrators because he is, in a certain sense, the very group whose existence he is demonstrating.

In other words, as can be shown in the case of managers (*cadres*), as Luc Boltanski has done, as well as that of the proletariat, or of teachers, in many cases, in order to escape from the type of existence Sartre called serial, in order to gain access to collective existence, there is no other route than by way of a spokesperson. It is objectification in a 'movement', an 'organization', which by a *factio juris* typical of social magic allows a simple *collectio personarum plurium* to exist as a 'moral person', as a *social agent*.

I am going to take an example from the most humdrum and ordinary sphere of politics, that which we see in front of us every day. I am doing this so as to make myself understood but also at the risk of being understood too easily, with that sort of common half-understanding which is the principal obstacle to true understanding. The difficulty, in sociology, is to manage to think in a completely astonished and disconcerted way about things you thought you had always understood. That is why you sometimes have to begin with the most difficult things in order to understand the easier things properly. That brings me to my example: during the events of May 1968, we saw the emergence of a certain M. Bayet who, throughout those famous 'days', continued to speak on behalf of *agrégés* in his capacity as president of the *Société des agrégés*, a society which, at least at that time, had practically no base. There we have a typical case of usurpation with a person who makes other people believe (but who? the press, at least, which *recognizes* and knows only spokespersons, condemning everyone else to their 'personal opinions') that he has 'behind him' a group by virtue of the fact that he can speak in their name, in his capacity as a 'moral

person', without being contradicted by anyone. (Here we reach the limits: the fewer supporters he has, the more protected he may be from contradiction, the absence of any contradiction demonstrating in fact the absence of supporters.) What can be done against someone like that? You can protest publicly, or you can draw up a petition. When members of the Communist Party want to get rid of their Politburo, they are relegated to the serial, to recurrence, to the status of isolated individuals who have to find a spokesperson for themselves, then an office, then a group in order to get rid of the spokesperson, the office and the group. (This is what most movements, and in particular socialist movements, have always denounced as the capital sin - namely, 'factionalism'.) In other words, what can one do to combat the usurpation of authorized spokespersons? There are, of course, individual solutions against all the ways of being crushed by the collective: 'exit and voice', as Albert Hirschman says, in other words, leaving or protesting. But one may also establish another organization. If you look at newspapers of the period, you will see that, around 20 May 1968, another *Société des agrégés* appeared, with a general secretary, a seal, an office, etc. There's no escaping it.

So delegation - this sort of originary act of constitution in both the philosophical and political senses of the word - is an act of magic which enables what was merely a collection of several persons, a series of juxtaposed individuals, to exist in the form of a fictitious person, a *corporatio*, a body, a mystical body incarnated in a social body, which itself transcends the biological bodies which compose it ('*corpus corporatum in corpore corporato*').

'The only way [for men] to erect such a Common Power . . . is, to conferre all their power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their Wills, by plurality of voices, unto one Will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one man, or Assembly of men, to beare their Person; and every one to owne, and acknowledge himselfe to be Author of whatsoever he that so beareth their Person, shall Act, or cause to be Acted, in those things which concerne the Common Peace and Safetie.'<sup>1</sup> In this passage from *Leviathan*, in which Hobbes describes the 'Generation of a Commonwealth', one can read one of the clearest and most concise formulations of the theory of *unifying representation*: the multitude of isolated individuals accedes to the status of a moral person when it finds, in the unified representation of its diversity given to it by its representative, the constitutive image of its unity; in other words, the multitude constitutes itself as a unity by recognizing itself in its unique representative.<sup>2</sup> Hobbes

is repeating or developing the doctrine of 'corporation' elaborated by thirteenth-century canonists, especially with regard to the Church, insisting only on the unifying effect which results from the uniqueness of the representative, being understood both as a plenipotentiary and as a symbol of the group, *corpus unum* of which he is the visible *incarnation* or, better, the manifestation in effigy.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE SELF-CONSECRATION OF THE DELEGATE

Now that I have shown how usurpation already exists potentially in delegation, and how the fact of speaking for someone, that is, on behalf of and in the name of someone, implies the propensity to speak in that person's place, I would like to discuss the universal strategies through which the delegate tends to concentrate himself. In order to identify himself with the group and say 'I am the group,' 'I am, therefore the group is,' the delegate must, as it were, abolish himself in the group, make a gift of his person to the group, declare and proclaim: 'I exist only through the group.' The usurpation of the delegate is necessarily modest and presupposes a certain modesty. This is no doubt the reason why all apparatuses have a family resemblance. There is a sort of structural bad faith attached to the delegate who, in order to appropriate for himself the authority of the group, must identify himself with the group, reduce himself to the group which authorizes him. But I would like to cite Kant who, in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, notes that a church founded on unconditional faith, and not on rational faith, would not have any 'servants' (*ministri*) but 'commanding high officials' (*officiales*) who give the orders and who, even when they 'do not appear in hierarchical splendour', as in the Protestant Church, and even when they 'protest verbally against all this . . . actually wish to feel themselves regarded as the only chosen interpreters of a Holy Scripture', and thus transform 'the service of the Church [*ministerium*] into a domination of its members [*imperium*] although, in order to conceal this usurpation, they make use of the modest title of the former'.<sup>4</sup> The mystery of ministry works only if the minister conceals his usurpation, and the *imperium* it confers on him, by asserting that he is just an ordinary minister. It is possible for such a person to confiscate the properties associated with his position only in so far as he conceals himself - that is the very definition of symbolic power. A symbolic power is a power which presupposes recognition, that is, misrecognition of the violence that is exercised through it. So the



symbolic violence of the minister can be exercised only with that sort of complicity granted to him, via the effect of misrecognition encouraged by denial, by those on whom that violence is exercised.

Nietzsche puts this very well in *The Antichrist*, which is less a critique of Christianity than a critique of the delegate, since the minister of the Catholic faith is the incarnation of the delegate: that is why in this book he obsessively attacks the priest and priestly hypocrisy and the strategies through which the delegate absolutizes himself and consecrates himself. The first procedure the minister may employ is the one which consists in making himself appear necessary. Kant had already referred to the way exegesis, as a form of legitimate reading, was invoked as necessary. Nietzsche spells it out in full: 'One cannot read these Gospels too warily: there are difficulties behind every word.'<sup>5</sup> What Nietzsche is suggesting is that in order to consecrate himself as a necessary interpreter, the intermediary must produce the need for his own product. And in order to do that, he must produce the difficulty that he alone will be able to solve. The delegate thus performs – to quote Nietzsche again – a 'transformation of himself into something holy'. To enable his necessity to be fully felt, the delegate thus resorts to the strategy of 'impersonal duty'. 'Nothing works more profound ruin than any "impersonal" duty, any sacrifice to the Moloch of abstraction.'<sup>6</sup> The delegate is the one who assigns sacred tasks to himself. 'If one considers that the philosopher is, in virtually all nations, only the further development of the priestly type, one is no longer surprised to discover this heirloom of the priest, *self-deceptive fraudulence*. If one has sacred tasks, for example that of improving, saving, redeeming mankind . . . one is already sanctified by such a task.'<sup>7</sup>

These priestly strategies are all based on bad faith, in the Sartrean sense of the term: lying to oneself, that 'sacred lie' by which the priest decides the value of things by declaring that things are good absolutely when they are good for him: the priest, says Nietzsche, is the one who 'calls his own will God'.<sup>8</sup> (The same could be said of the politician when he calls his own will 'people', 'opinion' or 'nation'.) To quote Nietzsche again: 'The "law", the "will of God", the "sacred book", "inspiration" – all merely words for the conditions under which the priest comes to power, by which he maintains his power – these concepts are to be found at the basis of all priestly organizations, all priestly or priestly-philosophical power-structures.'<sup>9</sup> What Nietzsche means is that delegates *base universal values on themselves*, appropriate values, 'requestion morality', and thus monopolize the notions of God, Truth, Wisdom, People,

Message, Freedom, etc. They make them synonyms. What of? Of themselves. 'I am the Truth.' They turn themselves into the sacred, they consecrate themselves and thereby draw a boundary between themselves and ordinary people. They thus become, as Nietzsche says, 'the measure of all things'.

It is in what I would call the *oracle effect*, thanks to which the spokesperson gives voice to the group in whose name he speaks, thereby speaking with all the authority of that elusive, absent phenomenon, that the function of priestly humility can best be seen: it is in abolishing himself completely in favour of God or the People that the priest turns himself into God or the People. It is when I become Nothing – and because I am capable of becoming Nothing, of abolishing myself, of forgetting myself, of sacrificing myself, of dedicating myself – that I become Everything. I am nothing but the delegate of God or the People, but that in whose name I speak is everything, and on this account I am everything. The oracle effect is a veritable *splitting of personality*: the individual personality, the ego, abolishes itself in favour of a transcendent moral person ('I give myself to France'). The condition of access to the priesthood is a veritable *metanoia*, a conversion. The ordinary individual must die in order for the *moral person* to come into being; die and become an *institution* (that is the effect of the rites of institution). Paradoxically, those who have made themselves nothing in order to become everything can invert the terms of the relation and reproach those who are merely themselves, *who speak only for themselves*, with being nothing either *de facto* or *de jure* (because they are incapable of dedication, etc.). The right of reprimanding other people and making them feel guilty is one of the advantages enjoyed by the militant.

In short, the oracle effect is one of those phenomena that we delude ourselves too quickly into thinking that we have understood (we have all heard of Delphi, of the priests who interpret oracular discourse), and hence we cannot recognize this effect in the set of situations in which someone speaks in the name of something which he brings into existence by his very discourse. A whole series of symbolic effects that are exercised every day in politics rest on this sort of usurpatory ventriloquism, which consists in giving voice to those in whose name one is authorized to speak. It happens very rarely that, when a politician says 'the people, the working classes, the working masses, etc.', he does not thereby produce the oracle effect, in other words, the trick which consists in producing both the message and the interpretation of the message, in creating the belief

that '*je est un autre*', that the spokesperson, a simple symbolic substitute of the people, is really the people in the sense that everything he says is the truth and life of the people.

The usurpation which consists in the fact of asserting that one is capable of speaking *in the name of* is what authorizes a move from the indicative to the imperative. If I, Pierre Bourdieu, a single and isolated individual, speak only for myself, say 'you must do this or that, overthrow the government or refuse Pershing missiles', who will follow me? But if I am placed in statutory conditions such that I may appear as speaking 'in the name of the masses', or, *a fortiori*, 'in the name of the masses and of Science, of scientific socialism', that changes everything. The move from the indicative to the imperative — Durkheim's followers had sensed this very clearly when they tried to ground a morality on the science of mores — presupposes a move from the individual to the collective, the principle of all recognized or recognizable constraint. The oracle effect, a limiting form of performativity, is what enables the authorized spokesperson to take his authority from the group which authorizes him in order to exercise recognized constraint, symbolic violence, on each of the isolated members of the group. If I am an incarnation of the collective, of the group, and if this group is the group to which you belong, which defines you, which gives you an identity, which means you are *really* a teacher, *really* a Protestant, *really* a Catholic, etc., you *really* have no choice but to obey. The oracle effect is the exploitation of the transcendence of the group in relation to the single individual, a transcendence that comes about through an individual who in effect is to some extent the group, if only because nobody can stand up and say 'you are not the group' unless they establish another group and get themselves recognized as delegate of that new group.

This paradox of the monopolization of collective truth is the source of every effect of symbolic imposition: I am the group, in other words, collective constraint, the constraint of the collective over each of its members. I am an incarnation of the collective and, by virtue of that fact, I am the one who manipulates the group in the very name of the group. I take my authority from the group, and that group authorizes me to impose constraints on the group. (The violence that is part and parcel of the oracle effect can never be felt more strongly than in *assembly situations*, typically *ecclesial* situations, in which the normally authorized spokespersons and, in a crisis situation, the professional spokespersons who are authorized, can speak in the name of the entire group assembled. This violence

makes its presence felt in the quasi-physical impossibility of producing a divergent, dissident speech against the *enforced* unanimity which is produced by the monopoly of speech and the techniques for creating unanimity, such as votes taken by a show of hands or by the acclamation of manipulated motions.)

We would have to carry out a linguistic analysis of that double-dealing (or dealing with the ego and its double) and of the rhetorical strategies through which the structural bad faith of the spokesperson is expressed, which includes, for instance, the permanent shift from *I* to *we*. In the symbolic domain, takeovers by force appear as *takeovers of form* — and it is only when this is realized that one can turn linguistic analysis into an instrument of political critique, and rhetoric into a science of symbolic powers. When an apparatusik wants to make a symbolic takeover by force, he shifts from saying 'I' to saying 'we'. He does not say: 'I think that you sociologists should study the workers,' he says: 'We think that you should . . .' or 'the needs of society require that . . .' So the 'I' of the delegate, the particular interest of the delegate, must conceal itself behind the professed interest of the group, and the delegate must 'universalize his particular interest', as Marx said, so as to get it passed off as the interests of the group. More generally, the use of an *abstract* language, of the big abstract words of political rhetoric, the verbalism of abstract virtue which, as Hegel clearly saw, engenders fanaticism and Jacobin terrorism (try reading the dreadful phraseology of Robespierre's correspondence), all of that participates in the logic of double-dealing, of the ego and its double which underlies the subjectively and objectively legitimate usurpation of the delegate.

I would like to consider the example of the debate on popular art. (I am somewhat worried by the communicability of what I have to say and that must be evident in the difficulty I have in saying it.) You are aware of the recurring debate on popular art, proletarian art, socialist realism, popular culture, etc., a typically theological debate into which sociology cannot enter without getting caught in a trap. Why? Because it is the terrain *par excellence* of the oracle effect I have just been describing. For example, what is called socialist realism is in fact the typical product of that substitution of the individual 'I' of the political delegates, of the Zhdanovian 'I' to call it by its real name, in other words, the second-rate petit-bourgeois intellectual who wants to impose order, especially on first-rate intellectuals, and who universalizes himself by setting himself up as the people. And an elementary analysis of socialist realism would show that there is nothing popular in what is in reality a formalism or

even an academicism, based on a highly abstract *allegorical iconography*, 'the Worker', etc. (even if this art seems to satisfy, very superficially, the popular demand for realism). What is expressed in this formalist and petit-bourgeois art – which, far from expressing the people, involves rather a *negation of the people*, in the form of that naked-torsoed, muscular, sun-tanned, optimistic people turned towards the future, etc. – is the social philosophy and the unconscious ideal of a petite bourgeoisie of party men who betray their real fear of the real people by identifying themselves with an idealized people, torches aloft, the living flame of Humanity... The same could be demonstrated of popular culture, etc. What we are dealing with are typical cases of *subject substitution*. The priesthood – and this is what Nietzsche was getting at – the priest, the Church, the apparatus of every country substitutes his own vision of the world (a vision deformed by his own *libido dominandi*) for that of the group of which he is supposedly the expression. The 'people' is used these days just as in other times God was used – to settle accounts between clerics.

#### HOMOLOGY AND THE EFFECTS OF MISRECOGNITION

But we must now ask how all these double-dealing strategies, these strategies of the ego and its double, manage to work in spite of everything: how is it that the delegate's double-dealing doesn't betray itself? What has to be understood is what comprises the heart of the mystery of the ministry, namely, 'legitimate imposture'. It is not, in fact, a question of getting away from the naïve representation of the dedicated delegate, the disinterested militant, the self-abnegating leader, in order to fall back into the cynical view of the delegate as a conscious and organized usurper – that is the eighteenth-century view, as found in Helvetius and d'Holbach, of the priest, and a very naïve view, for all its apparent lucidity. Legitimate imposture succeeds only because the usurper is not a cynical calculator who consciously deceives the people, but someone who in all good faith *takes himself to be* something that he is not.

One of the mechanisms that allow usurpation and double-dealing to work (if I may put it like this) in all innocence, with the most perfect sincerity, consists in the fact that, in many cases, the interests of the delegate and the interests of the mandators, of those he represents, coincide to a large extent, so that the delegate can believe and get others to believe that he has no interests outside

those of his mandators. In order to explain this, I have to make a detour through a rather more complicated analysis. There is a political space, there is a religious space, etc.: I call each of these a *field*, that is, an autonomous universe, a kind of arena in which people play a game which has certain rules, rules which are different from those of the game that is played in the adjacent space. The people who are involved in the game have, as such, specific interests, interests which are not defined by their mandators. The political space has a left and a right, it has its dominant and its dominated agents; the social space also has its dominant and its dominated, the rich and the poor; and these two spaces correspond. There is a homology between them. This means that, *grasso modo*, the person who in this game occupies a position on the left, *a*, is related to the person occupying a position on the right, *b*, in the same way that the person occupying a position on the left *A* is related to the person occupying a position on the right *B* in the other game. When *a* wants to attack *b* to settle certain specific scores, he helps himself, but in helping himself he also helps *A*. This structural coincidence of the specific interests of the delegates and the interests of the mandators is the basis of the miracle of a sincere and successful ministry. The people who serve the interests of their mandators well are those who serve their own interests well by serving the others; it is to their advantage and it is important that it should be so for the system to work.

If we are obliged to talk of interests, it is because this notion has a radically disruptive function: it destroys the ideology of disinterest, which is the professional ideology of clerics of every kind. People who are in the religious, intellectual or political game have specific interests which, however different they may be from the interests of the managing director who is playing in the economic field, are none the less *vital*. All these symbolic interests – not losing face, not losing your constituency, shutting up your opponent, triumphing over an adverse trend, being made chairperson, etc. – are such that, by serving them and obeying them, it often happens that agents serve their mandators. (There are, of course, cases of discrepancy, in which the interests of the delegates come into conflict with the interests of the mandators.) In any case, what happens far more frequently than one might expect if everything happened randomly, or in accordance with the logic of the purely statistical aggregation of individual interests, is that, because of homology, agents who are content to carry out the duties imposed by their position in the game serve, *eo ipso* and in addition, the people they use to serve

themselves and whom they are supposedly serving. The effect of metonymy makes possible a universalization of the particular interests of the apparatus, the attribution of the interests of the delegate to the mandators he is supposed to be representing. The principal merit of this model is that it explains the fact that the delegates are not cynical (or far less and far less often than one might believe), that they are absorbed in the game and that they really believe in what they are doing.

There are many cases like that, in which the mandators and the delegates, customers and producers, are in a relation of structural homology. It is true of the intellectual field and of the field of journalism: the journalist from the left-wing *Nouvel Observateur* is to the journalist of the right-wing *Figaro* what the reader of the *Nouvel Observateur* is to the reader of the *Figaro*; and so when he enjoys settling accounts with the *Figaro* journalist, he also gives pleasure to the reader of the *Nouvel Observateur* even without trying to please that reader directly. It is a very simple mechanism, but one which contradicts the ordinary way that we represent ideological action as self-interested service or servility, as self-interested subservience to a function. The *Figaro* journalist is not a boot-licking hack writer for the bishops or the lapdog of capitalism, etc.: he is first and foremost a journalist who, from time to time, is obsessed by left-wing journals such as the *Nouvel Observateur* or *Libération*.

#### THE DELEGATES OF THE APPARATUS

Up to now I have been emphasizing the relation between mandators and delegates. I must now examine the relation between the body of delegates, the apparatus, which has its own interests and, as Weber says, its 'own tendencies', such as the tendency to reproduction, and particular delegates. When the body of delegates, the priestly body, the Party, etc., asserts its own tendencies, the interests of the apparatus take precedence over the interests of individual delegates who, therefore, cease to be the delegates of their mandators, and become responsible to the apparatus: from then on, the properties and practices of the delegates cannot be understood without an understanding of the apparatus.

The fundamental law of bureaucratic apparatuses is that the apparatus gives everything (including power over the apparatus) to those who give it everything and expect everything from it because they themselves have nothing or are nothing outside it; to put it

more bluntly, the apparatus depends most on those who most depend on it because they are the ones it holds most tightly in its clutches. Zinoviev, who understood all this very cleverly, and for good reason, but who remained trapped in value judgements, said in *The Yawning Heights*: 'The source of Stalin's success resides in the fact that he is an extraordinarily mediocre person.' Here he comes very close to stating the law that operates in such cases. Still talking about the apparatus, he also talks about 'an extraordinarily insignificant and thus invincible force'. These are very fine formulae, but they are somewhat false, since the polemical intention, which gives them their charm, prevents one from grasping the facts as they are (which is not the same as accepting them). Moral indignation cannot understand the fact that the ones who succeed in the apparatus are those whom charismatic intuition perceives as the most stupid, the most ordinary, those who have no value in themselves. In fact, they succeed not because they are the most ordinary but because they have nothing outside the apparatus, nothing which would authorize them to take liberties with regard to the apparatus, to try to be smart.

There is thus a sort of structural and non-accidental correspondence between the different kinds of apparatus and certain categories of people, defined above all negatively, as having none of the properties that it is advantageous to possess at the moment under consideration in the field concerned. In more neutral terms, one might say that the apparatus will consecrate people who are reliable. But *why* are they reliable? Because they have nothing they might use to oppose the apparatus. This is why in the French Communist Party of the 1950s, as in the China of the Cultural Revolution, the young frequently served as symbolic warders and watchdogs. Young people, after all, do not just represent enthusiasm, naivety, conviction, everything which one associates somewhat unthinkingly with youth; from the point of view of my model, they are also the people who have nothing. They are the new entrants, those who are arriving in the field without any capital. And from the point of view of the apparatus, they are cannon-fodder against their elders who, now starting to have capital, either through the Party or through themselves, use this capital to take issue with the Party. The person who has nothing is an unconditional supporter; he has all the less to oppose in that the apparatus gives him a great deal, befitting the unconditional nature of his support and his own nothingness. This is why in the 1950s this or that 25-year-old intellectual could have, *ex officio*, by delegation from the apparatus, the kind of audience which

only the most established intellectuals could enjoy, though in the latter case this was, so to speak, because of their status as authors.

This sort of iron law of the apparatus is coupled with another process which I will mention very briefly and which I will call the 'organization effect'. I refer you to Marc Ferro's analysis of the process of Bolshevization. In the district soviets, the factory committees and other spontaneous groups of the beginning of the Russian Revolution, everyone was present, people talked, etc. And then, as soon as a party worker was chosen, people started to come less. With the institutionalization incarnated in the party worker and the organization, everything is inverted: the organization tends to monopolize power, the number of participants in the assemblies diminishes. It is the organization which *calls* meetings and the participants serve, on the one hand, to demonstrate the representativeness of their representatives and, on the other, to *ratify* their decisions. Party workers start to reproach ordinary members for not coming often enough to meetings which reduce them to these functions.

This process of concentration of power in the hands of delegates is a sort of historical realization of what is described by the theoretical model of the process of delegation. People are there and speak. Then comes the party official, and people come less often. And then there is an organization, which starts to develop a specific competence, a language all of its own. (Mention might be made here of the way the bureaucracy of research develops: there are researchers, and there are scientific administrators who are supposed to serve the researchers. Researchers do not understand the administrators' language, which may be bureaucratic - 'research budget', 'priority', etc. - and, nowadays, technocratic-democratic - 'social need'. They immediately stop coming and their absenteeism is denounced. But certain researchers, those who have time, do stay. The rest of the story is easy to predict.) The party official (*permanent*) is, as the term suggests, the person who devotes all his time to what is, for others, a secondary or, at least, part-time activity. He has time, and he has time on his side. He is in a position to dissolve all the prophetic, that is, discontinuous struggles for power into the tempo of the bureaucracy, into that repetition that swallows up time and energy. It is in this way that delegates secure a certain concentration of power and develop a specific ideology, based on the paradoxical reversal of their relation with their mandators - whose absenteeism, incompetence and indifference to collective interests are denounced, without it being seen that this indifference is the result of the concentration of power in the hands of the party officials. The dream of all party officials is an apparatus without a base, without faithful

followers, without militants... They have their permanent status to protect them from discontinuity; they have their specific competence, their own language, a culture which belongs to them, apparatus culture, based on its own history, that of their own petty affairs (Gramsci says this somewhere: we have debates of Byzantine complexity, conflicts between tendencies, trends which nobody understands the slightest thing about). Then, a specific social technology emerges: people become professionals of the manipulation of the only situation which could create problems for them, namely, confrontation with their mandators. They know how to manipulate general assemblies, transform votes into acclamations, etc. And in addition, they have social logic on their side because, although I do not have time to demonstrate this here, they need do absolutely nothing and yet things will tend to go the way that suits their interests, and their power often resides in the - entropic - choice not to do, not to choose.

It is thus easy to understand that the central phenomenon is that sort of reversal of the table of values which ultimately enables opportunism to be converted into militant dedication. There are jobs, privileges, and people who take them; far from feeling guilty about having served their interests, they will claim that they are not taking these jobs for their own benefit, but for that of the Party or the Cause, just as they will invoke, so as to hang on to those jobs, the rule that says you do not give up a position you have won. And they will even go as far as to describe as abstentionism or culpable dissidence any ethical reservations that might be expressed concerning the concentration of power.

There is a sort of self-consecration of the apparatus, a theodicy of the apparatus. The apparatus is always right (and the self-critique of individuals provides it with a final defence against any questioning of the apparatus as such). The reversal of the table of values, together with the Jacobin exaltation of the political and of the political priesthood, has meant that the political alienation to which I was referring at the beginning has ceased to be noticed; it has also meant that, on the contrary, it is the priestly vision of politics which has imposed itself, to the point of viewing as guilty all those who do not play the political games. In other words, the view which decreed that the fact of not being a militant, of not being involved in politics, was a kind of sin for which one had eternally to make amends has been so strongly internalized that the final political revolution, the revolution against the political clericature and against the usurpation which is always potentially present in delegation, is yet to be carried out.

of these properties and their bearers. In other words, the characteristics and criteria noted by objectivist sociologists and anthropologists, once they are perceived and evaluated as they are in practice, function as signs, emblems or stigmata, and also as powers. Since this is the case, and since there is no social subject who can in practical terms be unaware of the fact, it follows that (objectively) symbolic properties, even the most negative, can be used strategically according to the material but also the symbolic interests of their bearer.<sup>1</sup>

One can understand the particular form of struggle over classifications that is constituted by the struggle over the definition of 'regional' or 'ethnic' identity only if one transcends the opposition that science, in order to break away from the preconceptions of spontaneous sociology, must first establish between representations of and reality, and only if one includes in reality the representations of reality, or, more precisely, the struggle over representations, in the sense of mental images, but also of social demonstrations whose aim it is to manipulate mental images (and even in the sense of delegations responsible for organizing the demonstrations that are necessary to modify mental representations).

Struggles over ethnic or regional identity – in other words, over the properties (stigmata or emblems) linked with the *origin* through the *place* of origin and its associated durable marks, such as accent – are a particular case of the different struggles over classifications, struggles over the monopoly of the power to make people see and believe, to get them to know and recognize, to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and, thereby, to *make and unmake groups*. What is at stake here is the power of imposing a vision of the social world through principles of di-vision which, when they are imposed on a whole group, establish meaning and a consensus about meaning, and in particular about the identity and unity of the group, which creates the reality of the unity and the identity of the group. The etymology of the word region (*regio*), as described by Emile Benveniste, leads to the source of the di-vision: a magical and thus essentially social act of *diacrisis* which introduces by *decree* a decisive discontinuity in natural continuity (between the regions of space but also between ages, sexes, etc.). *Regere fines*, the act which consists in 'tracing out the limits by straight lines', in delimiting 'the interior and the exterior, the realm of the sacred and the realm of the profane, the national territory and foreign territory', is a *religious* act performed by the person invested with the highest authority, the *rex*, whose responsibility it is to *regere sacra*, to fix the

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# Identity and Representation

## *Elements for a Critical Reflection on the Idea of Region*

The confusion surrounding debates concerning the notion of region and, more generally, of 'ethnic group' or 'ethnicity' (scientific euphemisms that have been substituted for the notion of 'race', which is none the less still present in actual practice) stems in part from the fact that the desire to submit to logical criticism the categories of common sense – emblems or stigmata – and to substitute for the practical principles of everyday judgement the logically controlled and empirically based criteria of science, leads one to forget that practical classifications are always subordinated to practical functions and oriented towards the production of *social effects*. One also tends to forget that the practical representations that are the most exposed to scientific criticism (for example, the statements made by regionalist militants about the unity of the Occitan language) may *contribute to producing* what they apparently describe or designate, in other words, the *objective reality* to which the objectivist critique refers them in order to show their delusions or incoherence.

But on a deeper level, the quest for the 'objective' criteria of 'regional' or 'ethnic' identity should not make one forget that, in social practice, these criteria (for example, language, dialect and accent) are the object of *mental representations*, that is, of acts of perception and appreciation, of cognition and recognition, in which agents invest their interests and their presuppositions, and of *objectified representations*, in things (emblems, flags, badges, etc.) or acts, self-interested strategies of symbolic manipulation which aim at determining the (mental) representation that other people may form

rules which bring into existence what they decree, to speak with authority, to pre-dict in the sense of calling into being, by an enforceable saying, what one says, of making the future that one utters come into being.<sup>2</sup> The *regio* and its frontiers (*finés*) are merely the dead trace of the act of authority which consists in circumscribing the country, the territory (which is also called *finés*), in imposing the legitimate, known and recognized definition (another sense of *finés*) of frontiers and territory – in short, the source of legitimate di-vision of the social world. This rightful act, consisting in asserting with authority a truth which has the force of law, is an act of cognition which, being based, like all symbolic power, on recognition, brings into existence what it asserts (*auctoritas*, as Benveniste again reminds us, is the capacity to produce which is granted to the *auctor*).<sup>3</sup> Even when he merely states with authority what is already the case, even when he contents himself with asserting what is, the *auctor* produces a change in what is: by virtue of the fact that he states things with authority, that is, in front of and in the name of everyone, publicly and officially, he saves them from their arbitrary nature, he sanctions them, sanctifies them, consecrates them, making them worthy of existing, in conformity with the nature of things, and thus 'natural'.

Nobody would want to claim today that there exist criteria capable of founding 'natural' classifications on 'natural' regions, separated by 'natural' frontiers. The frontier is never anything other than the product of a division which can be said to be more or less based on 'reality', depending on whether the elements it assembles show more or less numerous and more or less striking resemblances among themselves (given that it will always be possible to argue over the limits of variations between non-identical elements that taxonomy treats as similar). Everyone agrees that 'regions' divided up according to the different conceivable criteria (language, habitat, cultural forms, etc.) never coincide perfectly. But that is not all: 'reality', in this case, is social through and through and the most 'natural' classifications are based on characteristics which are not in the slightest respect natural and which are to a great extent the product of an arbitrary imposition, in other words, of a previous state of the relations of power in the field of struggle over legitimate delimitation. The frontier, that product of a legal act of delimitation, produces cultural difference as much as it is produced by it: one need only consider the role of the educational system in the development of language to see that political will can undo what history had done.<sup>4</sup> Thus the science which claims to put forward the criteria that

are the most well founded in reality would be well advised to remember that it is merely recording a *state* of the struggle over classifications, in other words, a state of the relation of material or symbolic forces between those who have a stake in one or other mode of classification, and who, just as science does, often invoke scientific authority to ground in reality and in reason the *arbitrary* division they seek to impose.

Regionalist discourse is a *performative discourse* which aims to impose as legitimate a new definition of the frontiers and to get people to know and recognize the *region* that is thus delimited in opposition to the dominant definition, which is misrecognized as such and thus recognized and legitimate, and which does not acknowledge that new region. The act of categorization, when it manages to achieve recognition or when it is exercised by a recognized authority, exercises by itself a certain power: 'ethnic' or 'regional' categories, like categories of kinship, institute a reality by using the power of *revelation* and *construction* exercised by *objectification in discourse*. The fact of calling 'Occitan's' the language spoken by those who are called 'Occitans' because they speak that language (a language that nobody speaks, properly speaking, because it is merely the sum of a very great number of different dialects), and of calling the region (in the sense of physical space) in which this language is spoken 'Occitanie', thus claiming to make it exist as a 'region' or as a 'nation' (with the historically constituted implications that these notions have at the moment under consideration), is no ineffectual fiction.<sup>6</sup> The act of social magic which consists in trying to bring into existence the thing named may succeed if the person who performs it is capable of gaining recognition through his speech for the power which that speech is appropriating for itself by a provisional or definitive usurpation, that of imposing a new vision and a new division of the social world: *regere finés, regere sacra*, to consecrate a new limit. The effectiveness of the performative discourse which claims to bring about what it asserts in the very act of asserting it is directly proportional to the authority of the person, doing the asserting: the formula 'I authorize you to go' is *eo ipso* an authorization only if the person uttering it is authorized to authorize, has the authority to authorize. But the cognition effect brought about by the fact of objectification in discourse does not depend only on the recognition granted to the person who utters that discourse: it also depends on the degree to which the discourse which announces to the group its identity is grounded in the objectivity of the group to which it is addressed, that is, in the recognition and the belief

granted to it by the members of this group, as well as in the economic or cultural properties they share in common, since it is only in accordance with a given principle of pertinence that the relation between these properties can appear. The power over the group that is to be brought into existence as a group is, inseparably, a power of creating the group by imposing on it common principles of vision and division, and thus a unique vision of its identity and an identical vision of its unity.

The fact that struggles over identity – that being-perceived which exists fundamentally through recognition by other people – concern the imposition of perceptions and categories of perception helps to explain the decisive place which, like the strategy of the *manifesto* in artistic movements, the *dialectic of manifestation or demonstration* holds in all regionalist or nationalist movements.<sup>8</sup> The almost magical power of words comes from the fact that the objectification and *de facto* officialization brought about by the public act of naming, in front of everyone, has the effect of freeing the particularity (which lies at the source of all sense of identity) from the unthought, and even unthinkable. (This is what happens when an unnameable 'patois' is asserted as a language capable of being spoken publicly.) And officialization finds its fulfilment in *demonstration*, the typically magical (which does not mean ineffectual) act through which the practical group – virtual, ignored, denied, or repressed – makes itself visible and manifest, for other groups and for itself, and attests to its existence as a group that is known and recognized, laying a claim to institutionalization. The social world is also will and representation, and to exist socially means also to be perceived, and perceived as distinct!

In fact, it is not a question of a choice between, on the one hand, objectivist arbitration, which measures *representations* (in all senses of the term) by 'reality', forgetting that they can give rise in reality, by the specific effectiveness of evocation, to the very thing they represent, and, on the other hand, the subjectivist commitment which, privileging representation, ratifies in the domain of science that falsehood in sociological writing by which militants pass from the representation of reality to the reality of the representation. One can avoid the alternative by taking it as an object or, more precisely, by taking into account, in the science of the object, the objective foundations of the alternative of objectivism and subjectivism which divides science, preventing it from apprehending the specific logic of the social world, that 'reality' which is the site of a permanent struggle to *define* 'reality'. To grasp at one and the same time *what is*

*instituted* (without forgetting that it is only a question of the outcome, at a given point in time, of the struggle to bring something into existence or to force out of existence something that already exists) and *representations*, performative statements which seek to bring about what they state, to restore at one and the same time the objective structures and the subjective relation to those structures, starting with the claim to transform them: this is to give oneself the means of explaining 'reality' more completely, and thus of understanding and foreseeing more exactly the potentialities it contains or, more precisely, the chances it objectively offers to different subjective demands.

When scientific discourse is dragged into the very struggles over classification that it is attempting to objectify (and, unless the disclosure of scientific discourse is forbidden, it is difficult to see how this usage could be prevented), it begins once again to function in the reality of struggles over classification. It is thus bound to appear as either *critical* or *complicitous*, depending on the critical or complicitous relation that the reader himself has with the reality being described. Thus the mere fact of *showing* can function as a way of pointing the finger, of accusing (*kategorieren*) or, on the other hand, as a way of showing and throwing into relief. This is as true of classification into social classes as it is of classification into 'regions' or 'ethnic groups'. Hence the necessity of making completely explicit the relation between the struggles over the source of legitimate di-vision which occur in the scientific field and those which take place in the social field (and which, because of their specific logic, grant a preponderant role to intellectuals). Any position claiming 'objectivity' about the actual or potential, real or foreseeable existence, of a region, an ethnic group or a social class, and thereby about the *claim to institution* which is asserted in 'partisan' *representations*, constitutes a certificate of *realism* or a verdict of *utopianism* which helps to determine the objective chances that this social entity has of coming into existence.<sup>9</sup> The symbolic effect to which scientific discourse gives rise by consecrating a state of the divisions and of the vision of the divisions is all the more inevitable because, in symbolic struggles over cognition and recognition, so-called 'objective' criteria, the very ones which are well known to scientists, are used as weapons: they designate the characteristics on which a symbolic action of mobilization can be based in order to produce real unity or the belief in unity (both in the group itself and in others) which ultimately, and in particular via the actions of the imposition and inculcation of legitimate identity (such as those actions performed by the school or



the army), tends to generate real unity. In short, the most 'neutral' verdicts of science contribute to modifying the object of science. Once the regional or national question is objectively raised in social reality, even if only by an active minority (which may exploit its very weakness by playing on the properly symbolic strategy of *provocation* and *testimony* in order to draw out ripostes, whether symbolic or not, which imply a certain recognition), any utterance about the region functions as an *argument* which helps to favour or penalize the chances of the region's acquiring recognition and thereby existence.

Nothing is less innocent than the question, which divides the scientific world, of knowing whether one has to include in the system of pertinent criteria not only the so-called 'objective' categories (such as ancestry, territory, language, religion, economic activity, etc.), but also the so-called 'subjective' properties (such as the feeling of belonging), i.e. the *representations* through which social agents imagine the divisions of reality and which contribute to the reality of the divisions.<sup>10</sup> When, as their education and their specific interests incline them, researchers try to set themselves up as judges of all judgements and as critics of all criteria, they prevent themselves from grasping the specific logic of a struggle in which the social force of representations is not necessarily proportional to their truth-value (measured by the degree to which they express the state of the relation of material forces at the moment under consideration). Indeed, as pre-dictions, these 'scientific' mythologies can produce their own verification, if they manage to impose themselves on collective belief and to create, by their mobilizing capacity, the conditions of their own realization. But they do no better when, giving up the distance of the observer, they adopt the representation of the agents and participants, in a discourse which, by failing to provide itself with the means of describing the game in which this representation is produced and the belief which underlies it, is nothing more than one contribution among many to the production of the belief whose foundations and social effects should be described.

It can be seen that, as long as they do not submit their practice to sociological criticism, sociologists are determined, in their orientation towards the objectivist or subjectivist pole of the universe of possible relations to the object, by social factors such as their position in the social hierarchy of their discipline (in other words, their level of certified competence which, in a socially hierarchized geographical space, often coincides with their central or local position, a particularly important factor when the matter at hand is

that of regionalism) and also their position in the technical hierarchy: 'epistemological' strategies which are at such opposite ends of the spectrum as the dogmatism of the guardians of theoretical orthodoxy and the spontaneism of the apostles of participation in the movement may have in common a way of avoiding the demands of scientific work without giving up their claims to *auctoritas* when they either will not or cannot satisfy these demands, or when they satisfy only the most superficial of them. But they may also swing, following their directly experienced relation to the object, between objectivism and subjectivism, blame and praise, mystified and mystification and complicity and reductionist demystification, because they accept the objective problematic, in other words, the very structure of the field of struggle in which the region and regionalism are at stake, instead of objectifying it; because they enter into the debate on the criteria enabling one to state the meaning of the regionalist movement or to predict its future without asking themselves about the logic of a struggle which bears precisely on the determination of the meaning of the movement (is it regional or national, progressive or regressive, right-wing or left-wing, etc.) and on the criteria capable of determining this meaning.

Here as elsewhere, in sum, one must escape the alternative of the 'demystifying' recording of objective criteria and the mystified and mystificatory ratification of wills and representations in order to keep together what go together in reality: on the one hand, the objective classifications, whether incorporated or objectified, sometimes in institutional form (like legal boundaries), and, on the other hand, the practical relation to those classifications, whether acted out or represented, and in particular the individual and collective strategies (such as regionalist demands) by which agents seek to put these classifications at the service of their material or symbolic interests, or to conserve and transform them; or, in other words, the objective relations of material and symbolic power, and the practical schemes (implicit, confused and more or less contradictory) through which agents classify other agents and evaluate their position in these objective relations as well as the symbolic strategies of presentation and self-representations with which they oppose the classifications and representations (of themselves) that others impose on them.<sup>11</sup>

In short, it is by exorcizing the dream of the 'royal science' invested with the regal right of *regere fines* and *regere sacra*, with the nomothetic or law-giving power of decreeing union and separation, that science can take as its object the very game whose stake is the power of governing the sacred frontiers, that is, the quasi-divine

power over the vision of the world, and in which one has no choice, if one seeks to exercise it (rather than submit to it), other than to mystify or demystify.

## Social Space and the Genesis of 'Classes'

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The construction of a theory of the social space presupposes a series of breaks with Marxist theory. It presupposes a break with the tendency to emphasize substances – here, real groups whose number, limits, members, etc. one claims to be able to define – at the expense of *relations* and with the intellectualist illusion which leads one to consider the theoretical class, constructed by the social scientist, as a real class, an effectively mobilized group; a break with economics, which leads one to reduce the social field, a multi-dimensional space, to the economic field alone, to the relations of economic production, which are thus established as the co-ordinates of social position; and a break, finally, with objectivism, which goes hand in hand with intellectualism, and which leads one to overlook the symbolic struggles that take place in different fields, and where what is at stake is the very representation of the social world, and in particular the hierarchy within each of the fields and between the different fields.

### THE SOCIAL SPACE

To begin with, sociology presents itself as a *social topology*. Accordingly, the social world can be represented in the form of a (multi-dimensional) space constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation or distribution constituted by the set of properties active in the social universe under consideration, that is, able to confer force or power on their possessor in that universe. Agents and