

Homo Academicus

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Preface to the English Edition

It is history which is the true unconscious.

Emile Durkheim, The Evolution of Educational Thought

This analysis of the academic world is the end product of the critical reflection on scientific practice which I have never ceased to conduct as part of the very process of my research, since the time when, as a young ethnologist, I took my own native region as the object of my ethnological observation.¹ Thus my sociological analysis of the academic world aims to trap *Homo Academicus*, supreme classifier among classifiers, in the net of his own classifications. It is a comic scenario, that of Don Juan deceived or The Miser robbed, and there are those who, hoping to feel endangered or to make others feel threatened, prefer to treat it in tragic terms. I for my part think that the experience whose results this book presents is perhaps not so different from that attributed by David Garnett to the hero of his short story *A Man in the Zoo*, where the young man, as the result of a quarrel with his girlfriend, writes in despair to the director of the zoo to offer him a mammal missing from his collection, that is, himself, so that he is placed in a cage, next to the chimpanzee, with a notice saying: 'Homo sapiens. This specimen is the gift of John Cromantie, Esquire. Visitors are requested not to tease the man with personal remarks.'

The sociologist who chooses to study his own world in its nearest and most familiar aspects should not, as the ethnologist would, domesticate the exotic, but, if I may venture the expression, exoticize the domestic, through a break with his initial relation of intimacy with modes of life and thought which remain opaque to him because they are too familiar. In fact the movement towards the originary,

institution, as is the case with the 'oblates' of humble origins, or those born into the school milieu (as sons of primary teachers).¹⁴

THE ORDINARY PROFESSORS AND THE REPRODUCTION OF THE
CORPS

Academic capital is obtained and maintained by holding a position enabling domination of other positions and their holders, such as all the institutions entrusted with controlling access to the corps – boards of examiners for the entrance exam to the *École Normale Supérieure*, for the *agrégation* or the doctorate, the Universities Consultative Committee: this power over the agencies of reproduction of the university body ensures for its holders a statutory authority, a kind of function-related attribute which is much more linked to hierarchical position than to any extraordinary properties of the work or the person, and which acts not only on the constantly renewed audience of students but also on the clientele of the doctoral candidates, from whom the assistant lecturers are usually appointed, and who are placed in a relation of wide-ranging and prolonged dependency.¹⁵

We may take from an interview with a group of informants this portrait of the ideal-typical incarnation of such a power of reproduction which, in this extreme case, is almost entirely independent of the scientific value of the work produced. 'X is a graduate of the School of Athens, but who did not keep up his archaeology for long. He preferred to move into the history of literature, with a penchant for the popular. But he is on all the university councils, on the Consultative Committee, on the CNRS, everywhere that decisions are taken. He was elected to the CNRS again last year with an amazing number of votes. . . . He has no intellectual prestige, yet he has power. . . . He's well known, even if what he produces is feeble – he's the Barbara Cartland of Greek studies in France. . . . He wrote a literary history of Greece. It's a popular work, made up of literary passages, padded out with trendy remarks. X aims at the ordinary reading public. It's not a work on Greek literature, but, as its title suggests, a literary history of Greece. That says it all. . . . What's happened to X makes you stop and think. Nobody ever thought he was any good. How could someone so useless get so near to the top? His book is the most pathetic in the whole Erasmus series. It has absolutely nothing to say. He got into the *École Normale* at his first shot. He was placed first in the *agrég.* That must have helped in those days. He's published a lot. He works quickly, because he hardly ever stops to take

allodoxia which finds its objective basis in the fact that, between the two extremes where the two kinds of power would be entirely dissociated, there exist all the intermediary profiles provides support for the individual and collective bad faith without which intellectual or academic life would perhaps be unliveable: it is what enables the old-style thesis supervisor to see himself as a master selected and consulted for his scientific competence alone, at the cost of a little self-deceit backed up by the complicity or indulgence of the passing pupils channelled towards him for reasons of institutional power.

This power over the mechanisms of reproduction, and thereby over the development of the university body, which is at its peak in the medical faculties, is based on control, through co-optation, of access to the university body, on durable relations of production and dependency between the head and his clients, and finally on control of the institutional positions of power, boards of entrance examiners, Consultative Committee, even committees of enquiry.⁴⁸ But the surest guarantee of academic order, inextricably social and scientific, doubtless lies in the complex mechanisms whereby promotion towards the summit of the temporally dominant institutions goes hand in hand with progress in academic initiation, marked, in the case of the medical faculties, by successive competitive examinations (which, as one observer notes, postpone until very late true initiation into the scientific methods of the laboratory), or, in the case of the arts faculties, by the long wait for the doctorate, that is, in both cases, by an enforced prolongation of the dispositions which have been acknowledged through the primitive procedures of co-optation, and which hardly encourage heretical breaks with the artfully intertwined knowledge and power of academic orthodoxy.

THE CONSECRATED HERETICS

Those who hold positions in the field diametrically opposed to those of the *lectores*,⁴⁹ or lecturers primarily orientated towards the reproduction of culture and of the group of reproducers, have in common their own primary devotion to research, although they also have teaching functions (but generally in academically peripheral institutions like the Collège de France or the Ecole des Hautes Etudes): they are very often at the head of a research team, and are rarely found in positions of university power whose tenure takes up

much time, and they supervise fewer theses. They are particularly well represented in the new disciplines, especially ethnology, linguistics and sociology, or in the peripheral disciplines (like Assyriology, Egyptology, Indian studies, Sinology, Islamic or Berber studies, Indian languages and literatures, etc.), or even in the canonical disciplines if using new methods, like economic and social history, and they have a renown which, for some of them at least, considerably transcends the frontiers of the academic field. Accumulating the most prestigious titles of academic recognition (like the Institute, the peak of a long series of relations of dependency), to which they sometimes add those indices of 'intellectual' consecration most recognized by the general public (publication in paperback, a mention in the *Larousse* or membership of the French Academy) and positions of power in the intellectual field (participation in the editorial committees of intellectual reviews, direction of publishers' series, etc.), known and acknowledged abroad (as witnessed by the frequency of citations and translations of their works), often writing in a foreign language, these authorities whose names, at least in the cases of those who have founded a school, are associated with various '-isms' have pupils or disciples rather than clients, although their symbolic capital tends to be accompanied, at least in certain cases, by a certain social power.

The fact that symbolic authority is more often found among specialists of the new sciences should not disguise the fact that these disciplines, through the combination of old-style powers – like the Consultative Committee – and the new powers associated with research which they offer (like the committees allocating posts in research at the CNRS and elsewhere, research funds, etc.), had allowed some 'recycled' heads to achieve a concentration of powers out of all proportion to those of the little academic principalities of the canonical disciplines. The scale of positions being considerably extended, the person who at the same time, through doctoral theses and the Consultative Committee, controlled access to posts in higher education, and, through committees in the CNRS, access to posts in research and an important proportion of funds, possessed unprecedented possibilities of exchange and could thus, directly or indirectly – especially through the control of access to the teaching body – define the whole orientation of a discipline, and were able to do so for a considerable period of time.

If the professors of the Collège de France or the Ecole des Hautes Etudes and the professors of the minor and marginal disciplines of

the faculties, or even the most specialized professors of the canonical disciplines (for instance, historians of Christian philosophy) are particularly well represented towards the research pole, it is because they have in common the more or less total avoidance of the constraints which hamper the dominant disciplines of the faculties, and first and foremost those imposed by a syllabus and a large audience, with all the responsibilities and also the prestige and the powers that follow. Free to choose their own lecture topics, they can explore new areas, for the benefit of a small number of future specialists, instead of propounding to a large number of pupils, who are mostly destined to teach, the state of research already accomplished (often by others) on topics imposed every year by the syllabuses of entrance and other examinations, and in a spirit which inevitably owes much to the logic of school tests.

The opposition between the two poles should not be confused with the opposition between the faculties and more prestigious institutions. Even the Collège de France, as well as having specialists who follow the tradition of the eighteenth-century 'private collection', has its contingent (even in the most classic disciplines, such as classical languages) of 'eminent academics' who have followed a classic career-pattern (teaching at Rhétorique Supérieure [preparatory class for *grande école*] and the Sorbonne) and who have added to the ordinary titles of academic excellence a social renown acquired sometimes through journalism.⁵⁰ To which we might add that purely academic merit (a good grade at entrance to the Ecole Normale Supérieure and a good grade in the *agrégation*) was at all times an entrance ticket to scholarship by way of the School of Athens and archaeology. For their part the faculties too have in their ranks professors orientated towards research, especially in social science and in minor disciplines, but also in the most specialized sectors of the canonical disciplines, like philosophy or history.

As a corollary, the marginal positions, however prestigious some of them may be, often tend virtually to exclude power over the mechanisms of reproduction. Knowing the characteristics of these posts, we may understand why those who hold them (when they are not entirely estranged from the 'normal' career pattern – as is the case with those of them who were not born in France), without ever being totally alienated from the university order, have almost all accomplished a more or less decisive detour from the 'normal' trajectories which lead to simple reproduction, and from the psychological and social security which these trajectories guarantee.⁵¹

A typical example of these academic trajectories on the margins of or outside the university is the career of Claude Lévi-Strauss, as he recalls it himself in an interview (revealing in passing that he has always given precedence to research over teaching): 'I retired fifty years to the day after taking up my first post: philosophy teacher at Mont-de-Marsan. Fifty years of public teaching is a very long time. I only stayed in secondary teaching for two and a half years, since I left for Brazil in 1935, for a university post at São Paulo. From that moment on, teaching and research were always very closely connected. For me, teaching has always been a public test-bed – obliging me to articulate my ideas, even if this formulation was provisional or erroneous, with a view to later publication. All the books which I have written were initially expressed orally. . . My career has constantly been interrupted by external factors. My departure for Brazil profoundly changed it. I had absolutely no thought of going there until the opportunity came up. Then the expeditions to the far interior of Brazil completely upset my academic routine. I went back to secondary teaching for a few weeks. But my appointment was rescinded after the [anti-Semite] Vichy government laws. I was lucky to be able to get away to the United States, because of the interest which American colleagues had taken in my early work. So I spent a few years in New York before being recalled to France, as soon as Paris was liberated. I spent only six months in Paris, during the winter of 1944–5. Then I was sent to the United States, as cultural attaché at the embassy. On my return to France, in 1948, I taught at the Musée de l'Homme and at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes. Then in 1959 at the Collège de France. So it was a switchback academic career whose most striking characteristic was no doubt that it was accomplished outside the university system properly speaking' (*Libération*, 2 June 1983).⁵² Some of these distinguished marginals, and some of the most eminent, have had difficulties or disagreements with the Sorbonne. And we know that several of the best-known teachers of the Collège de France were for a long time *personae non gratae* at the Sorbonne: thus it is that around 1960 degree candidates could not quote the name of Lévi-Strauss in the presence of Gurvitch or refer to the name of Dumézil in the presence of Heurgon (to restrict ourselves to the examples best known, along with those of Benveniste or Gourou, at the time of the enquiry).

It is doubtless thus, that is, by means of the disposition to take the (relative) gamble implied by any deviation from the canonical curriculum vitae, and likewise from its associated lifestyle and modes of thought, that an intelligible relation with social and geographical origins generally much more privileged than those of ordinary

professors can be established: we know, having often observed its effects, the law which requires that the propensity to take risks – in all kinds of investments – is a function of objective security and the confidence which that encourages.⁵³ Thus it is that the opposition between the professors situated towards the pole of research and cultural production and those professors most orientated towards teaching reproduces within the limits of the university field (as is normal at a time when a particularly large proportion of writers and critics have become part of the professorial body), therefore doubtless in attenuated form, the structural opposition between writers and professors, between the freedom and the audacity of the artist's life and the strict and somewhat circumscribed rigour of *homo academicus*.

That having been said, the professors situated towards the pole of research and of cultural production, like those who are situated at the opposite pole, are distributed in their respective orders of precedence – the Collège de France being to the Ecole des Hautes Etudes, in the first sector, what the Sorbonne is to Nanterre in the other – according to a hierarchy based in both cases on the amount of capital which they possess, scientific or intellectual capital on the one side (membership of the Institute, direction of a laboratory), above all academic capital on the other (membership of the Consultative Committee). This capital is itself strongly linked to the status of *normalien* and to age (as well as to variables such as marital status or place of birth). At the heart of the most academic sector (where the faculty of Nanterre holds the subordinate position), the principles of hierarchization are purely academic, and the hierarchy corresponds simply to the hierarchy of ages but also the few distinctions – such as the title of *normalien* – and of the disciplines, with philosophy and classics at the top and geography at the bottom. At the other pole, the hierarchy is arranged according to symbolic capital between a small number of professors endowed with all the attributes of fame, and the others, much less famous, often linked with the Ecole des Hautes Etudes and the social sciences and also with the intellectual field, especially through the medium of a more or less frequent participation in journalism.⁵⁴

A statistical analysis, which amputates it of those holding dual membership, does not provide a good reconstruction of the position of the 6th section of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes and does not enable us to do justice to the decisive force exercised by this academically minor institute in the university field. This is why in

this case we must look at the institution itself, and at the *institutional effect* which it is no doubt alone among French university establishments in exercising. At the time of the enquiry, that is, on the eve of 1968, it was a marginal institution, but prestigious and dynamic.⁵⁵ It was distinguished from all the other establishments of higher education through the freedom given it by the absence of the academic servitude of the ordinary faculties (like the preparation for examinations and entrance examinations, especially the *agrégation*) and also through the organizational action of academic and administrative directors entrusted with an ambitious academic and institutional project. At this phase in its history, it included a number of professors officially seconded from other institutions ('visitors') to whom it offered the material and institutional conditions (offices, administrative services and, above all, perhaps, a spirit of openness and enterprise) of a research activity of a new type, often long-term and collective, of which the great enterprises of the Centre for Historical Research constitute the paradigm.

The first social science 'laboratories' (like the Laboratory of Social Anthropology,⁵⁶ the Centre for Historical Research,⁵⁷ The Centre for Comparative Research on Ancient Societies,⁵⁸ etc.) were not created at the CNRS, nor at the Sorbonne, but at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes, which has gradually equipped itself with the apparatus for collective work: documentation centres, libraries, laboratories of cartography, calculation centres, etc., and with a whole range of publications (seventeen reviews were launched between 1955 and 1970). One of the most important factors in this development which has made this institution the place of innovation in social science *par excellence*, as much in the domain of research as in research training, is doubtless a policy of risky investments based first and foremost on the rational exploitation of the marginality of the institution – with, for example, the concern to do what was not being done elsewhere, to welcome unknown or forgotten disciplines, to prospect for promising researchers, etc.: but also based on the creation of a genuine institutional loyalty, which is exceptional in France;⁵⁹ and finally, and above all, an openness to abroad, the 6th section having always been willing to welcome teachers, influences, innovations and even funds from other countries.⁶⁰

Without claiming to characterize in a few sentences a long and slow evolution – linked in particular to the transformations of the Parisian faculties after 1968 and to the correlative improvement of the position of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes – we may at least note

that the importance of 'visiting' professors, as much within the team of directors (during the 1960s, the academic council was entirely composed of 'visitors') as among the teaching body, has tended to wane, the administration (president, council, academic council) being recruited nowadays from purely internal candidates. As a result, if the enquiry, because of the fact that it amputates the 6th section of its visiting members, underestimates the weight of this institution in 1967, it gives a fairly accurate picture of what it is tending more and more to become with the passage of time; a very different picture at all events from the image it manages to sustain, owing to the symbolic capital collectively accumulated by the Ecole des Annales, owing to the effect of symbolic contamination still ensured by the presence of prestigious 'visitors' and owing to the effect of public relations, privileged and facilitated by its almost organic links with the press and with publishers: a large proportion of its professors lack the titles and powers of the orthodox university, yet without having won public acclaim or produced scientific work on the scale of the grand masters. There is hardly any property of its members which cannot be described in two opposite ways, in the language of lack – that of its adversaries – or in the language of elective refusal. We could say the same about the pedagogical models (seminars rather than lectures), the diplomas awarded (the School's diploma or the 'third-cycle' thesis rather than the *agrégation*), or even the external renown of the professors, where some will perceive the effect of a dubious compromise with journalism, whereas others will see in it evidence of an opening up to the world and to 'modernity'. This *structural dissonance* is written into the institutional regulations, in terms of the dependency of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes on other faculties (at least until recently) for granting degrees, especially the doctorate, and also in terms of the discrepancy between the two diplomas it awards, the School's diploma, open to students without the *baccalauréat*, and the 'third-cycle' thesis, still not widely recognized on the university market – not to mention the concomitant heterogeneity of the student population.

The heretical traditions of an institution based on a break with academic routine, and structurally inclined towards pedagogical and academic innovation, lead its members to become the most vigorous defenders of all the values of research, of openness to abroad and of academic modernity; but it is also true that they can encourage to the same extent work based on bogus, fictitious and verbal homage

to these values, and that they can encourage members to give prestigious excuses for activities which promise the maximum symbolic value for a minimum real cost. Thus it is that, as the institution ages, there is a continuously growing gap between the level of aspiration and the level of achievement, between the ideal representation and the reality of scientific and pedagogical practices. Thus we may no doubt explain why the need to overcome this structural discrepancy is felt ever more strongly by the institution as a whole, as it must conform increasingly to a policy of public relations liable to endanger its autonomy; and also felt by those teachers least certain of realizing the ambition of scientificity and modernity so loudly proclaimed, who must transgress the old academic norms prohibiting all compromise with journalism in order to obtain, outside the institution, and especially in so-called cultural journalism, a symbolic capital of renown partly independent of recognition within the institution. The structural ambiguity of the position of the institution reinforces the dispositions of those who are attracted to this very ambiguity, by offering them the possibility and the freedom to live beyond their intellectual means, on credit, so to speak: this is why it represents the weak point of the university field for the intrusion of journalistic criteria and values.⁶¹ To all the impatient claimants who, against the long production cycle and long-term investment represented by the monumental doctoral thesis (above all for historians), have chosen the short production cycle, whose ultimate example is the article in the daily or weekly press, and have given priority to marketing rather than production, journalism offers both a way out and a short cut: it enables them to overcome rapidly and cheaply the gap between aspirations and opportunities by ensuring them a minor form of the renown granted to great scholars and intellectuals; and it can even, at a certain stage in the evolution of the institution towards heteronomy, become a path to promotion within the institution itself.

COLLUSION BETWEEN OPPONENTS

The conflicts which are rooted and engendered in the structural opposition between the official 'oblates' of the higher-educational 'clergy' and the minor modernist heretics grouped mostly around the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes* do not exclude a form of complicity

thought. He makes up his mind without bothering with any complexities' (interview, classics department, 1971). No doubt this is an extreme case. But its characteristics can be found elsewhere: 'Y has kept his intellectual prestige but it's a special kind. The fact that he doesn't do research – mind you, we do challenge him on this, people do quite often now, but only over the last seven or eight years. . . . I remember saying it in 1963: my colleagues hit the roof! "What do you mean! Don't you call his geographical abstracts research?" I said, no, that's not research. It's a synthesis. . . . He's a synthesizer, a popularizer, a teacher really' (interview with a group of geographers, 1971). 'I think that you shouldn't overestimate prestige. Considerations of intellectual merit are much less important (in geography) than academic power as such. Just think of Z, whose thesis was considered by most people to be a bad thesis: he's someone who has much more power in the university than he would have had if it had been based on intellectual merit. . . . There are more and more organizations; what counts more and more is access to money, to projects, to work funded by the government, etc., and then it isn't automatically someone's intellectual level which counts' (geographer, 1971).

The extent of the semi-institutionalized power which each agent can exercise in each of the positions of power he holds, his 'weight', so to speak, depends on all the attributes of power which he otherwise holds (this is no doubt what is invoked, in this case as in others, by the use of terms of address such as 'President' or 'Dean') and on all the possibilities of exchange which he can derive from his different positions. In other words, each agent imports into each of the secondary institutions the weight which he wields institutionally, but also personally (for example, as a university president or as an elector to that office) as a member of the highest institution to which he belongs and to which, in a hierarchical universe based on competition, the members of the institutions of lower rank that he frequents aspire by definition. Thus we can explain the fact that the members of the Institute, who are divided more or less equally between the two poles of the university field – the 'academic' and the 'scholarly' or 'intellectual' – can exercise on the whole field, and especially on the former, that is the institutional, sector, an immense power of control and censorship. Here too, capital breeds capital, and holding positions conferring social influence determines and justifies holding new positions, themselves invested with all the weight of their combined holders.¹⁶

That is what enables us to say of all the great university monarchs what Jean-Baptiste Duroselle wrote of Pierre Renouvin: 'We felt that he

moved into the key positions as if by some natural necessity, without having intrigued or postulated. We always turned to him in the end.' Once the initial accumulation has been achieved, one only has to manage this acquired wealth wisely: 'In this way, apart from the great number of committees and commissions which took up an important part of his time, he had attained, by the end of the thirties, and he retained more or less continuously until 1964, the three positions which together gave him extensive power over French historiography: direction of the history department at the Sorbonne, presidency of the history commission at the CNRS. . . . He aimed, successfully, to control the quality of the candidates for teaching posts and to exert influence on appointments. As almost all these were examined in Paris, and because, being after 1938 the most senior modern historian at the Sorbonne, he presided over all the boards of examiners and was invited to the very few important thesis examinations held in the provinces, he knew all the future senior lecturers personally.¹⁷ He got the Consultative Committee to agree that the 'short list' should not contain any more good candidates than the number of vacant posts. Thus no appointments were made by the Ministry of Education without his approval. Moreover, there is no evidence that the Director-General of Higher Education ever failed to take his advice before making an appointment. As he had also controlled the preparation of the thesis – if only through the management of research posts at the CNRS – he in fact possessed an authority which, although unwritten, was preponderant.'¹⁸

In general, the accumulation of positions controlled is the condition of the exchanges of services between the powerful which enable them to constitute and maintain their clientele: the circulation of services rendered can only be perceived at the level of a group of institutions, and it is rare that they take the visible form of a direct and immediate exchange in which the appointment of one of X's pupils on Y's recommendation to establishment A would be answered by the appointment of one of Y's pupils on X's recommendation to establishment B; the more the networks of positions controlled are extended and diversified – in the institutions of teaching but also of research; in publishers' series and academic reviews but also, at the other pole of the field, in the daily and weekly press, etc. – the longer, the more complicated and the more indecipherable for the uninitiated is the cycle of exchanges. A 'recommendation' by Y of a pupil of X may perhaps be repaid by a book review in a weekly written by a member of X's 'ideological family', after X has drawn their attention to Y's book, taking advantage of an editorial committee meeting, an electoral commission or an electoral support committee. In terms of this logic, we can well understand that the title of *normalien*, which certifies the acquisition of competence but

also and above all the acquisition of a disposition towards the academic institution, plays so important a role in the accumulation of power: the social capital represented by Ecole Normale connections when they are duly maintained by sustained exchanges, is one of the sole bases of transdisciplinary solidarity; which explains why it plays a decisive role every time that someone has to obtain and hold positions of university power which are situated beyond the little local fiefs, limited to the scale of a discipline, and even positions of prestige such as those offered by the Collège de France. As social capital of actual or potential connections, the fact of being a *normalien* exercises a multiplier effect on all the social powers held; it is therefore all the more effective in the case of those placed higher up in the hierarchy of these powers.

Because of the fact that the accumulation of academic capital takes up time (which is evident from the fact that the capital held is closely linked with age), the distances, in this space, are measured in time, in temporal gaps, in age differences. It follows that the structure of the field is perceived by the agents in the form of an ideal career – from the Ecole Normale to the Institute, passing through the stages of assistant lecturer, doctoral thesis, promotion from assistant lecturer to lecturer and then a chair at the Sorbonne – against which all other trajectories are objectively measured. The agents tend to associate with each of the major stages of this itinerary, which is also an obstacle race and a competitive examination, a normal age of access, with reference to which one might appear young or old at any (biological) age. In fact, since the positions of power are hierarchized and separated in time, reproduction of the hierarchy supposes a respect for distances, that is respect for the *order of succession*. It is this very order which threatens the *celeritas* of those who want to ‘cut corners’ (for example, by importing into the university field properties or powers acquired on other terrains), as against *gravitas*, the healthy slowness which people like to feel is in itself a guarantee of reliability (in writing a thesis, for instance) and which is really the most authentic proof of *obsequium*, unconditional respect for the fundamental principles of the established order.¹⁹

Far from containing the threat of a permanent revolution, the struggle of each against all which this permanent competition stimulates among those who have once entered the race, and who have the competitive dispositions both required and reinforced by the race, contributes by its own logic to the reproduction of the order as a system of temporal distances: on the one hand because

the very fact of competing implies and elicits recognition of the common objectives of the competition; on the other hand because the competition is restricted at any one moment to competitors placed at approximately the same point in the race, and because it is arbitrated by those who hold a more advanced position.

If it is clear that all the strategies of domination would be nothing without the structures which render them possible and effective, it is no less evident that the powers conferred by mastery of the strategic positions which give control over the progress of the competitors will only have an effective impact on the new entrants – the assistant lecturers, for example – on condition that they are willing to play the competitive game, and accept its objectives. Moreover, the exercise of academic power presupposes the aptitude and propensity, themselves socially acquired, to exploit the opportunities offered by the field: the capacity to ‘have pupils, to place them, to keep them in a relation of dependency’ and thus to ensure the basis of a durable power, the fact of ‘having well-placed pupils’ (geographer, 1971), implies perhaps above all the art of manipulating other people’s time, or, more precisely, their career rhythm, their curriculum vitae, to accelerate or defer achievements as different as success in competitive or other examinations, obtaining the doctorate, publishing articles or books, appointment to university posts, etc. And, as a corollary, this art, which is also one of the dimensions of power, is often only exercised with the more or less conscious complicity of the postulant, thus maintained, sometimes to quite an advanced age, in the docile and submissive, even somewhat infantile, attitude which characterizes the good pupil of all eras – in Germany the thesis supervisor is called the *Doktorvater*, the ‘doctor’s father’.

‘As for the lecturers and assistant lecturers, they must often kick their heels a little before getting an article published in a review. . . . In Paris especially, you can keep them waiting a year or two and when they are about to be placed on the LAFMA²⁰ that can be a nuisance’ (geographer, 1971). ‘The heads have all the power because they have the power to appoint assistant lecturers. They have the power at two levels: first by choosing assistant lecturers, then by making them pay for this first service. When he is placed on the promotion list, the assistant lecturer ceases to be obligated: so they invent regulations to control nomination to the list; for some heads, there is a certain number of thesis pages to be written; for others, it’s a question of diligence’ (literature teacher, 1971).

In all the situations where power is hardly or not at all institutionalized,²¹ the establishment of *durable* relations of authority and dependency is based on *waiting*, that is, the selfish expectation of a future goal, which lastingly modifies – that is, for the whole period that the expectation lasts – the behaviour of the person who counts on the thing expected; and it is based also on the art of *making someone wait*, in the dual sense of stimulating, encouraging or maintaining hope, through promises or skill in not disappointing, denying or discouraging expectations, at the same time as through an ability to inhibit and restrain impatience, to get people to put up with and accept the delay, the continuing frustration of hopes, of anticipated satisfactions intrinsically suggested behind the promises or encouraging words of the guarantor, but indefinitely postponed, deferred, suspended.

Academic power thus consists in the capacity to influence on the one hand expectations – themselves based partly on a disposition to play the game and on investment in the game, and partly on the objective indeterminacy of the game – and on the other hand objective probabilities – notably by limiting the world of possible competitors. As long as a provincial professor aspires to move to the Sorbonne, or a professor at the Sorbonne or the Collège de France aspires to the Institute, the Institute member or the Sorbonne professor on whom his election depends can dictate his choice of assistant lecturer, count on his vote in an election (in particular, in an election to designate his own successor), or, quite simply, obtain from him reverence and references (the reader will understand that exemplification, which would mitigate the peremptory style of our analysis, is impossible here). Such authority is founded on career expectations: one is only hooked if one is in the pool. But these expectations themselves are not independent of the objective existence of probable futures, neither totally determined nor totally indeterminate. If, for the mechanism to function, it is obviously necessary for several competitors having the same qualifications and belonging to the same academic generation to be in competition for the same posts, their number must be small enough for them to reasonably aspire to the posts on offer and to identify in advance with their holders – something which becomes impossible when the objective probabilities slip below a certain threshold – and yet still numerous enough for them not to have any absolute certainty, which would eliminate the expectation. Within the latitude thus defined, the master

adjudicates the race between competitors differentiated by secondary properties (age, sex, graduation from the Ecole Normale Supérieure), reminding them of proprieties and priorities, of promises and precedence ('I will get you on to the promotion list, but not before X'). And the seminars at which each week he welcomes 'pupils' from Poitiers, Rennes or Lille are much closer, in their functions and mechanism, to the great annual meetings organized by the American professors' associations, that is to the logic of the 'academic market-place',²² than to the research seminar in the German tradition: almost compulsory for those who want to succeed, these meetings of the whole group of the competitors for the coveted posts are no doubt the place where we find inculcated and reinforced, in and through mimetic submission to the master or to more advanced competitors, that ethical relation to scientific work which, more than any other factor, determines the forms and limits of academic production.²³

TIME AND POWER

Relations of dependency, and their outcome, depend on the strategies of the thesis director, or 'head', themselves linked to his position and his dispositions, and on the strategies of the 'clients', albeit, of course, within the limits imposed on all parties, and of which the most important is doubtless the degree of saturation of the employment market in the discipline considered (the dominators having it all the easier when the market is more saturated, and the competition between the new entrants that much stronger). If we leave aside those professors who, as one informant says, 'provide intellectual stimulus, help with your work and incite you to publish' (linguist, 1971) – no doubt a minority in this area of the university space – we see that the thesis 'heads' who have adjusted to their position, that is who have enough gamesmanship to be able to place their clients, to ensure them a career and thus secure the transmission of power, must achieve an optimum equilibrium between the desire to hold back their 'colts' as long as possible, preventing them from becoming independent or even active rivals (especially for their own clientele) too soon, and the necessity to 'push' them enough so as not to disappoint them, enough to gain their loyalty (preventing them, for instance, from going over to the side of their rivals) and

and the ordinary, world should be the culmination of a movement towards alien and extraordinary worlds. But it hardly ever is: in Durkheim as in Lévi-Strauss, there is no prospect of subjecting to analysis the 'forms of classification' employed by the scholar, and seeking in the social structures of the academic world (which Durkheim had none the less analysed superbly in his *The Evolution of Educational Thought*) the sources of the categories of professorial understanding. And yet, social science may expect to derive its most decisive progress from a constant effort to undertake a sociological critique of sociological reasoning – that is, to establish the social derivation not only of the categories of thought which it consciously or unconsciously deploys, such as those pairs of antithetical terms which so often inform the scientific construction of the social world, but also of the concepts which it uses, and which are often no more than commonsense notions introduced uncritically into scholarly discourse (like the notion of 'profession', which is tacitly repudiated in this study²), or of the problems which it elects to study, which not infrequently are nothing but more or less skilfully disguised versions of the latest 'social problems' ('poverty' or 'hooliganism', 'under-achievement in school' or 'the senior citizen', etc.).

One cannot avoid having to objectify the objectifying subject. It is by turning to study the historical conditions of his own production, rather than by some form or other of transcendental reflection, that the scientific subject can gain a theoretical control over his own structures and inclinations as well as over the determinants whose products they are, and can thereby gain the concrete means of reinforcing his capacity for objectification. Only a sociological self-analysis of this kind, which owes and concedes nothing to self-indulgent narcissism, can really help to place the scholar in a position where he is able to bring to bear on his familiar world the detached scrutiny which, with no special vigilance, the ethnologist brings to bear on any world to which he is not linked by the inherent complicity of being involved in its social game, its *illusio*, which creates the very value of the objectives of the game, as it does the value of the game itself.

In making a scientific analysis of the academic world, one takes as one's object an institution which has been socially licensed as entitled to operate an objectification which lays claim to objectivity and universality. Far from leading to a nihilistic attack on science, like certain so-called 'postmodern' analyses, which do no more than

add the flavour of the month dressed with a soupçon of 'French radical chic' to the age-old irrationalist rejection of science, and more especially of social science, under the aegis of a denunciation of 'positivism' and 'scientism', this sort of sociological experimentation applied to sociological study itself aims to demonstrate that sociology *can* escape from the vicious circle of historicism or sociologism, and that in pursuit of this end it need only make use of the knowledge which it provides of the social world in which science is produced, in order to try to gain control over the effects of the social determinisms which affect both this world, and, unless extreme caution is exercised, scientific discourse itself. In other words, far from destroying its own foundations when it brings to light the social determinants which the logic of the fields of production brings to bear on all cultural productions, sociology claims an epistemological privilege: that conferred by the fact of being able to reinvest in scientific practice its own scientific gains, in the form of a sociological increase in epistemological vigilance.

What scientific profit can there be in attempting to discover what is entailed by the fact of belonging to the academic field, that site of permanent rivalry for the truth of the social world and of the academic world itself, and by the fact of occupying a determined position within it, defined by a certain number of properties, an education and training, qualifications and status, with all their concomitant forms of solidarity or membership? Firstly, it provides an opportunity for conscious neutralization of the probabilities of error which are inherent in a position, understood as a point of view implying a certain angle of vision, hence a particular form of insight and blindness. But above all it reveals the social foundations of the propensity to theorize or to intellectualize, which is inherent in the very posture of the scholar feeling free to withdraw from the game in order to conceptualize it, and assuming the objective, which attracts social recognition as being scientific, of arriving at a sweeping overview of the world, drafted from an external and superior point of view. There is patent bad faith in refusing to credit science, when it encroaches on the world of the scholar, with the qualities readily granted to structuralist objectivism when it handles the 'savage mind', assumed to be inaccessible to itself; none the less, this should not prevent us from asking if the will to know is not surreptitiously motivated in the present case by a special kind of will to power, which is displayed in the fact of attempting to adopt towards rivals,

reduced to the state of objects, a point of view which they are unable or unwilling to adopt towards themselves. But in the event the declared intention of the enterprise is hardly relevant, since the enterprise functions as a mechanism generating 'problem situations', as Popper would say. The tendency to forget to programme into the complete theory of the world analysed the gap between the theoretical and the practical experience of this world is compensated for by the inevitably reflexive view imposed by the sociological analysis of the social conditions of sociological analysis: the objective analysis, or even the objectivist or structuralist analysis, of the structures of a world in which the scientist responsible for the work of objectification is himself ensconced, and of which he has an initial representation which is capable of surviving objective analysis, will then reveal its own limits in its turn by calling attention, for instance, to its own individual or collective defence mechanisms, which often take the form of an operation of negation, and through which the agents aim to maintain in being, for themselves and for others, representations of the social world which clash with the representation constructed by science through a totalization which ordinary existence precludes, in spirit and in letter. Objective analysis obliges us to realize that the two approaches, structuralist and constructivist (by which I mean a kind of phenomenology of one's initial experience of the social world and of the contribution which this experience makes towards one's construction of that world), are two complementary stages of the same procedure. If the agents do indeed contribute to the construction of these structures, they do so at every stage within the limits of the structural constraints which affect their acts of construction both from without, through determinants connected with their position in the objective structures, and from within, through the mental structures – the categories of professorial understanding – which organize their perception and appreciation of the social world. In other words, although they are never more than particular angles of vision, taken from points of view which the objectivist *analysis situs* constitutes as such, the partial and partisan views of the agents engaged in the game, and the individual or collective struggles through which they aim to impose these views, are part of the objective truth of this game, playing an active part in sustaining or transforming it, within the limits set by the objective constraints.

It is understandable that a book aiming to account for this sort of initiatory itinerary orientated towards that reappropriation of the self which, paradoxically, is only accessible through objectification of the familiar world, is bound to be read differently by readers who are part of this world as opposed to those who are outsiders. And this is so despite the fact that this text, given its object, has the singularity of providing its own context – contrary to what usually happens, in the international (and also the intergenerational) circulation of ideas, where texts are transmitted without the context of their production and use, and count on receiving a so-called ‘internal’ reading which universalizes and eternalizes them while derealizing them by constantly relating them to the sole context of their reception.³ It could be supposed that, contrary to the native reader who understands only too well in one sense, but who may be inclined to resist objectification, the foreign reader, because (at least at first sight) he has no direct stake in the game which is described, will be less inclined to offer resistance to the analysis. All the more so since, as it happens in the theatre that one may laugh unwittingly at the portrait of one’s own foibles, the foreign reader can always elude the challenges implicit in situations or relations which he *does* find familiar, by isolating only the most blatantly exotic, but perhaps also the least significant, characteristics of academic traditions thus dismissed as archaisms, thereby managing all the better to keep his distance.⁴ In fact, *mutatis mutandis*, the foreign reader finds himself faced with the same alternative as the native reader (and the sociologist himself): he can use the objectification of a world in which he participates at least by analogy (as witness the international solidarity between holders of equivalent positions in the different national fields) in order to reinforce the defence mechanisms of his bad faith, by accentuating the differences which particularize the species *homo academicus gallicus*; or, alternatively, he may use it to lay the foundations of a self-analysis, either by concentrating on the invariants of the genus *homo academicus*, or, better still, by educating himself with what he may discover about himself through the objectification, however harsh at first sight, of one of the positions of *homo academicus gallicus* which is homologous to his own position in his own field. In order to foster the second kind of reading, the only one, I believe, which reflects the epistemological intentions of this book, one would need

either to offer a constructed set of transformational rules enabling systematic transfers to be made from one historical tradition to another,⁵ or at least, more modestly, to suggest starting points for the transposition of the analyses, those, for instance, which concern the rhetorical strategies of teachers' judgements, the pairs of adjectives which structure professorial understanding, or the objective and subjective bases of that management of one's own and other people's time which ensures the maintenance of the hierarchy of power, that is, if I may make a slight modification to Leibniz's famous definition of time, 'the order of successions' on which depends the perpetuation in time of the social order.⁶

The scientific virtue (and perhaps also the ethical value) of the notion of the field resides no doubt in the fact that this notion tends to exclude those partial and unilateral objectifications of the unconscious of other people, whether rivals or opponents, which characterize the 'sociology of intellectuals', and which differ from the folk-sociology of intellectual gossip only in their claims to the 'ethical neutrality' of science, which render them guilty of a veritable abuse of symbolic power. Thus for instance when in *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (a classic of the genre) Raymond Aron undertakes to lay bare the reasons behind the arguments of his opponents of the day, and describes the social determinants of the ethical or political stances of those he calls intellectuals (excluding himself, of course, from the stigmatized class), that is, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and the other 'left-wing intellectuals', Aron makes no attempt to ask himself from what point of view he operates this sovereign objectification (no more than does Simone de Beauvoir herself in the diametrically opposite article which she devotes, at roughly the same time and with the same lack of moral hesitation, to 'right-wing thought'): trapped within the lights of his self-interest, he is entirely blind, as blind as those whose blindness he denounces, to the space within which he is situated, yet within which may be defined the objective relation which connects him to them, and which is the source both of his insights and of his oversights.

The construction of the field of production, substituting for a polemic where prejudice is disguised as analysis a polemic where scientific reason challenges itself, that is, challenges its own limits, implies a break with naïve and self-indulgent objectifications unaware of their sources. It can only be an unjustifiable abstraction (which

could fairly be called reductive) to seek the source of the understanding of cultural productions in these productions themselves, taken in isolation and divorced from the conditions of their production and utilization, as would be the wish of *discourse analysis*, which, situated on the border between sociology and linguistics, has nowadays relapsed into indefensible forms of internal analysis. Scientific analysis must work to relate to each other two sets of relations, the space of works or discourses taken as differential stances, and the space of the positions held by those who produce them. This means for instance that any one particular work produced by an academic on the subject of the events of May 1968 only yields its significance if, using the principle of intertextuality, it is set in the space of the works dealing with this subject, within which its symbolically pertinent properties are defined, and if this space is related to the homologous space of the positions held by their authors in the academic field. Any reader familiar with this literature will be able to verify, if they refer to the diagram on p. 276, how this functions as an instrument of analysis: the differences observed in the distribution of power and prestige among the authors correspond to the differences, intentional or not, which they display not only in their overall judgement of the events but also in their way of expressing them. The hypothesis that there is an almost perfect homology between the space of the stances (conceived as a space of forms, styles and modes of expression as much as of contents expressed) and the space of the positions held by their authors in the field of production finds its most remarkable confirmation in the fact, which will be blindingly obvious to all observers familiar with the details of what happened in the universities in 1968, that the distribution in the academic field – constructed by considering *exclusively* the most typically academic characteristics of the different professors (the institution they belong to, their academic qualifications, etc.) – corresponds very closely to the distribution in terms of political positions or trade-union affiliations and even stances adopted during the events of May 1968. Thus it is that the Director of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, Robert Flacelière, who made a very firm stand against the student movement, is surrounded on the diagram by the names of the professors who signed motions in support of his action, whereas those who took up positions favourable to the movement are all situated in the opposite area. This means that it is not, as is usually thought, political stances which determine people's

stances on things academic, but their positions in the academic field which inform the stances that they adopt on political issues in general as well as on academic problems. The margin of autonomy which ultimately devolves to the specifically political sources of the production of opinions then varies according to the degree to which the interests directly associated with their position in the academic field are directly concerned or, in the case of the dominant agents, threatened.

But one could go further and reintroduce into the model not only the political stance but also the works themselves, considered in their most visibly social properties, like their genre or their place of publication, and in their topic as well as their form: thus we see, for instance, that the distribution of works according to their degree of conformity to academic norms corresponds to the distribution of their authors according to their possession of specifically academic power. And to give a more concrete idea of this relation I need only mention the astonishment of a certain young American visitor, at the beginning of the seventies, to whom I had to explain that all his intellectual heroes, like Althusser, Barthes, Deleuze, Derrida and Foucault, not to mention the minor prophets of the moment, held marginal positions in the university system which often disqualified them from officially directing research (in several cases, they had not themselves written a thesis, at least not in canonical form, and were therefore not allowed to direct one).

If we linger a while over the case of these philosophers, who are the most likely to be familiar to Anglo-Saxon readers, we see that knowing the structure of the overall space in which they are situated enables us to put ourselves so to speak *in their place* in the social space, through a genuinely 'participant objectification' which has nothing reductively polemical about it, and to reconstruct the point of view from which their intellectual project was defined. As may be seen from the diagram, they were caught in a dual relation with the worlds of philosophy and the social sciences. Their relation to the temporally dominant pole of institutionalized philosophy, which, frozen in the motionless time of lectures informed by the eternal recurrence of the topics set for competitive examinations, is personified by the university professors who control the organs of reproduction of the corps, agencies entrusted with the selection of teachers for secondary education, such as the *agrégation* competitive examination, or for higher education, such as the Comité Consultatif

des Universités, the Universities Consultative Committee. In their relation with the philosophical high priests of the Sorbonne, who, like most of them, are products of the 'great lay seminary', the Ecole Normale Supérieure, which is the apex of the whole academic hierarchy, they appear like religious heretics, or, in other words, rather like freelance intellectuals installed within the university system itself, or at least, to venture a Derridean pun, encamped on the margins or in the marginalia of an academic empire threatened on all sides by barbarian invasions (that is, of course, as seen by the dominant fraction). More or less totally deprived of, or liberated from, the powers and privileges but also the tasks and the responsibilities of the ordinary professor (examining the entrance examinations, supervising theses, etc.) they have strong connections with the intellectual world, and especially with the avant-garde reviews (*Critique*, *Tel Quel*, etc.) and with journalism (especially the *Nouvel Observateur*): Michel Foucault is no doubt the most representative of this position, since, until the end of his life, and even when he became professor at the Collège de France (after this enquiry was completed), he remained almost entirely bereft of specifically academic and even scientific powers, and therefore of the clientele which these powers afford, even if because of his fame he wielded considerable power over the press and, through it, over the whole field of cultural production. The marginal nature of this position, even more striking in the cases of Althusser or Derrida, who held minor posts (tutor or *caïman* – 'alligator', in Ecole Normale slang – at the Ecole Normale Supérieure), is obviously not unconnected with the fact that all these heretics with a vocation to become heresiarchs, beyond the differences, the divergencies, and sometimes the conflicts which separate them, share a sort of *anti-institutional mood* homologous in its form to that of a considerable fraction of students: they are inclined to react impatiently to the discrepancy between their already considerable fame in the outside world, that is, outside the university and also outside France, and the subaltern status which is accorded them inside the French university world, in collusion with their contempt and their rejection, by an institution which, when they were adolescents, had attracted and even consecrated them.⁸

If it was necessary to start by considering the case of the most obscure pole, it is because that is the one most likely to escape the foreign observer or the superficial analyst (not to mention the

polemicist whose home ground it is), although it no doubt played a decisive part – and not just as a foil, but also as the opponent who had to be constantly fought in order to assert the right to exist or at least to subsist – in the same way that the old Sorbonne did, when faced with the *Annales* team, in the constitution or the reinforcement of the ethical or political dispositions which will define the general trend of the works. It remains the case that it is above all in relation to the other pole, that of the all-conquering social sciences, which are incarnated by Lévi-Strauss, who rehabilitates these disciplines traditionally despised by the philosophy teachers from the École Normale, and who establishes them as the paragon of intellectual achievement, under the heading of *anthropologie*, that it is necessary to redefine these philosophical projects which had initially been constituted between 1945 and 1955, both with reference to the phenomenological and existential tradition and the figure of the philosopher as endowed by Sartre with exemplary stature, and also, and above all, against it. The adoption, instead of the banal and restrictive term ‘ethnology’, of the term ‘anthropology’, which, borrowed from the Anglo-Saxon tradition, is also laden with all the prestige of a great philosophical past (it is in this period that Foucault translates and publishes Kant’s *Anthropology*), symbolizes the formidable challenge that the social sciences, through their most eminent representatives, offer to philosophy, which previously was all-powerful. This challenge comes out into the open in the confrontation between Lévi-Strauss and Sartre, in the first real protest against its undivided rule over the whole intellectual field for a quarter of a century. Indeed, although Sartre and Merleau-Ponty also had to take the social sciences into account during the preceding generation, they were in an incomparably easier situation, since, because of the extreme decadence of the Durkheimian school and the very inferior status of an empirical sociology still in its infancy and ‘compromised’, in those highly politized times, by its American origins, they were confronted with only a ‘scientistic’ psychology (albeit with the exception of Piaget) and a psychoanalysis with no influence (despite the presence at the Sorbonne of Lagache, a fellow student of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty at the École Normale).

Henceforth, as the final diagram clearly shows,⁹ it is the social sciences as a whole or even as a mutually supportive autonomous bloc (the arts faculties become faculties of the arts and social sciences) which hold the symbolically dominant position, confronting the

representatives of philosophy, threatened with an entirely new situation not only in its position of dominant discipline but also in its intellectual identity and its research programmes: this is the case in linguistics, a truly dominant discipline, with Benveniste and the virtual presence of Jakobson (living abroad but consecrated by Lévi-Strauss), and, albeit less importantly, Martinet; in 'anthropology', with Lévi-Strauss, backed up by Dumézil; in history, with Braudel, long since consecrated by the long discussion that Sartre had devoted to his *Méditerranée*, working to lay the institutional foundations of a renovated and integrated social science, with the 6th section of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, its prestigious scientific council (including Lévi-Strauss, Aron, Le Bras, Friedmann), its research centres in full development, its reviews (including *Les Annales*, inherited from Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, and *L'Homme*, founded by Lévi-Strauss, which supplants the ageing *Temps modernes*, relegated to the status of purveyor of partisan, Parisian literary essays), and, soon, its Parisian stronghold, the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme; in psychoanalysis with Lacan, who, socially and symbolically allied to Lévi-Strauss and to Merleau-Ponty, has great importance in the field (although he was not included in the correspondence analysis, and therefore not in the diagram, because he did not hold an official position in the university – the refusal to permit him to lecture at the Ecole Normale Supérieure had been at the root of the revolt against Flacelière); in sociology itself which, although relegated to the bottom division of the major new intellectual powers, manages, through Raymond Aron and his polemics with Sartre or the new philosophical currents (*D'une sainte famille à l'autre*), to command the respect of a generation of philosophers who had still been brought up to write essays on the themes launched, between the two wars, by the *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*.

One might also pause for a moment to consider the case of Roland Barthes, which shows us more clearly than others the relation of twofold difference which is characteristic of the avant-garde of the seventies: not being one of the institutional elite (he is neither *normalien* nor *agrégé*, nor a 'philosopher'), and, doubtless moved by the obscure sentiment of revenge felt by the outsider, he is able to engage with the ordinary professors (represented in this instance by Picard) in public controversy which their feelings of statutory dignity prohibit in the more consecrated of the young heresiarchs;

and he can also display towards the great masters, who accumulate both ordinary and extraordinary claims to his gratitude, an unambiguous reverence, which others grant only in much more subtle or perverse forms. Condensing in his social being the tensions or contradictions inherent in the awkward position of the marginal academic institutions (like the Ecole des Hautes Etudes 'après Braudel', or, at other times, Nanterre or Vincennes), which try to convert a twofold opposition, often linked to a double privation, into a willed transcendence, and which, as places of transit for some and as terminus for others, cause divergent trajectories to meet momentarily, Roland Barthes represents the peak of the class of essayists, who, having nothing to oppose to the forces of the field, are condemned, in order to exist, or subsist, to float with the tides of the external or internal forces which wrack the milieu, notably through journalism. He calls to mind the image of a Théophile Gautier whom a contemporary described as 'a spirit floating on every breeze, quivering at every touch, able to absorb every impression and to retransmit it in turn, but needing to be set in motion by a neighbouring spirit, always eager to borrow a watchword, which so many others would then come to seek from him': like the good Théo, who was accused of lacking 'character' by his friend Flaubert who failed to see that his very inconsistency was the source of his importance, and who inspired someone else to remark that he adopted in turns the Chinese, the Greek, the Spanish, the medieval, the sixteenth-century, the Louis XIII, the Louis XIV, the rococo and the romantic styles, Roland Barthes gives instantaneous expression to all the changes in the forces of the field while appearing to anticipate them, and in this respect it is sufficient to follow his itinerary, and his successive enthusiasms, to discover all the tensions which were applied to the point of least resistance of the field, where what is called fashion continually flowers.

It is clear that the relation of twofold opposition would inevitably be experienced very differently according to the position occupied in the field and the previous trajectory, as we have just seen in the case of Roland Barthes, and according to the specifically philosophical capital which could be invested in the effort to overcome the tension it engendered. Those who, like Althusser and above all Foucault, had been led by their rejection of what has been called the 'philosophy of the subject', and of the 'humanism' associated with existentialist ideas, towards a tradition of epistemology and of history of science

represented by Gaston Bachelard, Georges Canguilhem and Alexandre Koyré (among others), were predisposed, with that touch of ostentatious extravagance needed to signal their distance from the 'positivism' of the scholars ('Man is dead. . .'),¹⁰ to identify with the 'subjectless philosophy', which Lévi-Strauss, loyal in this to the Durkheimian tradition, had just reaffirmed, giving it a modernist air by referring to a notion of the unconscious which reconciled Freud revised by Lacan, Saussure summarized by Jakobson, and, if not the old Durkheim, still excluded from the very closed circle of distinguished philosophers, at least Marcel Mauss, easier to adapt at the cost of some bold reinterpretations to the new intellectual regime (Merleau-Ponty, who played an important part in the transition between the two intellectual generations because of his particularly open and comprehensive attitude towards the social sciences, notably biology, psychology and linguistics, had written an article entitled 'From Mauss to Lévi-Strauss'). Thus through a strange ruse of intellectual reason it happened that the Durkheimian philosophy of man became rehabilitated, with the more acceptable face of an anthropology legitimated by linguistics, in opposition to the 'philosophy of the subject' that an earlier generation of *normaliens*, that of Sartre, Aron and Nizan, had set up in the thirties in opposition to this 'totalitarian' philosophy of the Durkheimians, among others.

But, let there be no mistake about it, the acknowledgement of the social sciences implies no unconditional surrender. Although each philosopher in his own way betrays his deference to or dependence on the social sciences – if only, like Derrida, by choosing them as the target of his criticism, or by borrowing their themes (for instance the criticism of the use of pairs of adjectives in literary criticism) – the philosophers constantly mark (and not least in their style, as with Foucault, who indulges in set-pieces of rhetorical elegance, or with Derrida, who imports into the philosophical field the procedures and effects which are used in *Tel Quel* circles) their statutory distance from the ordinary practitioners of the 'so-called social sciences', as Althusser liked to put it (and thus, not surprisingly, they elicit quite a different reaction from those who read them and expect to find in their reading a demonstration of the dignity which they invest in their writing). And they deploy all the resources of their culture in order to transfigure, perhaps above all in their own eyes, the 'historicist' philosophy which they borrow from social science along with many of its themes, its problems and its mode of thought.

Thus it is that Foucault finds in Nietzsche an acceptable philosophical sponsor for the socially improbable combination of artistic transgression and scientific invention that he achieves and for the screen-concepts which, like that of genealogy, help to provide a cover for an ambitious enterprise in social history or genetic sociology. Similarly, as I have shown in the case of the analysis which he devoted to the *Critique of Judgement*, Derrida knows how to suspend 'deconstruction' just in time to prevent it tipping over into a sociological analysis bound to be perceived as a vulgar 'sociologistic reduction', and thus avoids deconstructing himself *qua* philosopher.¹¹

In addition to all this argument, which cannot take the place of genuine genetic sociology of the works themselves, perceived from the particular points of view (specified by the secondary social, religious or sexual characteristics of the different producers) in which they were elaborated, we could not understand the critical liberty which gives these works a family resemblance and which makes them much more than variously successful reconversions of the philosophical enterprise, if we failed to see that this critical liberty is rooted in the especially intense experience of an especially dramatic crisis. The previously dominant disciplines, philology, literary history and even philosophy, whose intellectual foundations are threatened by their new rivals, disciplines like linguistics, semiology, anthropology, or even sociology, find that the social foundations of their academic existence are also under siege from the criticisms welling up on all sides, usually in the name of the social sciences and on the initiative of teachers from these disciplines, against the archaic nature of their contents and their pedagogical structures. This double criticism frequently awakens touching reactions of traditionalist conservatism in those professors who did not have the instinct and the boldness to recycle themselves in time, and in particular among those whom I call the 'oblates'¹² and who, consigned from childhood to the school institution (they are often children of the lower or middle classes or sons of teachers), are totally dedicated to it. These reactions are bound to exacerbate the revolt of those who are by their capital and dispositions led to break simultaneously with institutionalized philosophy and the philosophical institution. The break, which sometimes takes on the aspect of a civil war, is accomplished in fact, well before 1968, between the professors who remained attached to the traditional definition of their discipline and

the social foundations of its existence in terms of a social body (like the *agrégation*), and the members of the new avant-garde who managed to find in the resources inherent in membership of a prestigious discipline the means necessary to operate a successful reconversion and who are perceived as traitors or renegades by the guardians of orthodoxy – who, like themselves, are products of the ‘great seminary’. All the more so because these modernists, despite being called by a precocious and often dramatic consecration to fulfil the highest academic destinies, found that they were relegated, often with their own connivance, to awkward positions which predispose them to feel and express, whether in direct or in transposed forms, a crisis of the academic institution of which their very position in the institution is proof enough. A crisis affecting an institution which has the function of inculcating and imposing forms of thought must weaken or ruin the social foundations of thought, bringing in its wake a crisis of faith, a veritable, practical *epoche* of doxa, which encourages and facilitates the appearance of a reflexive awareness of these foundations. If the experience and the expression of this crisis took a more radical form in France than elsewhere, it is because, owing to the particularly archaic nature of an educational system hypnotized by illusory images of its grandeur, those consecrated by a bankrupt institution were obliged, if they were to be worthy of the ambitions which it had inculcated in them, to break with the derisory and henceforth untenable roles which it assigned to them, and were led to invent new ways of playing the part of the teacher (all based on adopting a reflexive distance from practice and from the ordinary definition of their functions), by lending him the strange features of an intellectual master of reflection who reflects on himself and in so doing, helps to destroy himself qua master.¹³

Because of their self-critical dispositions and their impatience with authority, and especially with the power wielded in the name of science, these self-destructive masters were prepared to harmonize their rhythms with the movements which pulsated through the ethical and political avant-garde of the student world. The students of bourgeois origins who have become academically downclassed, and who populate the arts faculties, especially in the new disciplines, are victims of verdicts which, like those of the school, appeal to reason and science in order to block off the paths leading (back) to power. They are spontaneously inclined to denounce science, power, the power of science, and above all perhaps a power which, like the

triumphant technocracy of the moment, appeals to science in order to legitimate itself. Moreover, the new 'student life' which is created in the faculties suddenly invaded by an incomparably more numerous and more diversified clientele than in the past, in terms both of social origins and of gender (it is around 1970 that girls become as numerous as boys in the arts faculties) forms a social experiment through which, as in bohemian circles in the nineteenth century, a new bourgeois 'life-style' developed, making room for values excluded from the old, pre-war, neo-Kantian university and still not admitted in the disciplines professed by the boarding schools leading to the 'schools for the elite' – that is, desire, pleasure and 'anti-repressive' dispositions. All these are themes which will be strongly orchestrated by all the philosophical avant-garde,¹⁴ from Deleuze to Foucault, via Derrida and even Althusser (with his 'ideological state apparatuses'), not to mention the minor heresiarchs, more closely 'tuned in' to the new vulgate.¹⁵

I have made no concessions in writing this book, but I trust that it bears no malice, for it comprises, as the reader will have guessed, a considerable proportion of self-analysis by proxy, as well as a distance, no doubt encouraged by sociology but first affirmed in the fact of abandoning philosophy for the social sciences – and that, obviously, at a time when, thanks to Lévi-Strauss's rehabilitation of ethnology, it became possible to do so without stooping too low . . . And the special place held in my work by a somewhat singular sociology of the university institution is no doubt explained by the peculiar force with which I felt the need to gain rational control over the disappointment felt by an 'oblate' faced with the annihilation of the truths and values to which he was destined and dedicated, rather than take refuge in feelings of self-destructive resentment.