

system in order to grasp the specific logic of the traditional pedagogic relation and, therefore, of its breakdown, the model constructed by means of the methodological autonomization of the educational system must not be credited with the power to explain the totality of the social aspects of the crisis of the system, in particular everything that affects its function of reproducing the structure of relations between the social classes.

18. Once the variations in the structure of the distribution of competences are taken into account, the question of the optimizing of the pedagogic relationship can no longer be evaded. A public whose competences are distributed in a bell-shaped curve calls for pedagogic choices of different types depending on whether the transformations which affect it over the course of time are expressed in a displacement of the mode or a variation of the dispersion. A lowering of the mode requires the transmitter simply to lower the level of transmission, whether by a controlled increase in redundancy or by a systematic effort to deliver the code of the message in full within the message, through definition or exemplification. On the other hand, increased dispersion of competences tends, beyond a certain threshold, to pose problems which cannot be resolved simply by adjusting the transmission level, as is shown by the situation in certain scientific disciplines, where the growing dispersion of reception levels cannot so easily be masked by an agreement to misunderstand as it can in Arts Faculties.

19. This product of an analysis of the school system which the system's own evolution makes possible, i.e. a pedagogy explicitly aiming to secure the optimum adjustment between transmission level and reception level (each defined by both mode and dispersion), owes nothing to any ethical adhesion to a trans-historical, trans-cultural ideal of educational justice or any belief in a universal idea of rationality. If the implementation of the principles of this pedagogy cannot be taken for granted, this is because it would imply the institutionalization of a continuous testing of reception by both teachers and taught; and, more generally, because it would require all the social characteristics of the communication to be taken into account, in particular the unconscious presuppositions which teachers and taught owe to their social background and academic training. It would, for example, be a mistake to attribute virtues or vices to this or that technique of transmission or assessment (lectures or non-directive teaching, the dissertation or the multiple-choice test), since it is only in the complete system of relations between the content of the message, its place in the learning process, the functions of the training, the external demands bearing on the communication (urgency or leisure), and the morphological, social and academic characteristics of the public or the teaching corps, that the specifically pedagogic productivity of a technique can be defined.

2

THE LITERATE TRADITION AND SOCIAL CONSERVATION

Our magistrates have understood this mystery. Their scarlet robes, the ermine in which they swaddle themselves, the palaces where they preside, all this august apparel was most necessary; and if doctors had no cassocks and scholars no four-cornered caps, no spreading, four-pieced robes, they would never have fooled the world, which cannot resist such authentic display. Only men of war have not disguised themselves in this way, because their role is indeed more essential: they establish themselves by force, the others with airs and graces.

Pascal,
Pensées

The *skeptron* is passed to the orator before he begins his speech so that he may speak with authority (. . .). It is an attribute of the person who brings a message, a sacred personage whose mission is to transmit the message of authority.

E. Benveniste,
Indo-European Language and Society

In highlighting the extent of the wastage of information which occurs in teacher-student communication, our intention of treating the pedagogic relation as a simple communicative relation so as to measure its informational efficiency brings out a contradiction forcing us to challenge the inquiry that has given rise to it.¹ Could the informative efficiency of pedagogic communication be so low if the pedagogic relation were reducible to a simple relation of communication? To put it another way, what are the particular conditions such that the relation of pedagogic communication can perpetuate itself even when the in-

formation transmitted tends towards zero? The logical contradiction brought out by our research must make us wonder whether the very intention of submitting pedagogic communication to the test of measurement is not ruled out by the whole logic of the system to which it is applied. We are led to ask, in other words, what are the institutional means and social conditions which enable the pedagogic relation to perpetuate itself, in the happy unconsciousness of those engaged in it, even when it so utterly fails to achieve its apparently most specific end – in short, to seek to determine that which sociologically defines a relation of pedagogic communication, as opposed to a relation of communication defined in formal terms.

PEDAGOGIC AUTHORITY AND THE AUTHORITY OF LANGUAGE

The confident use that teachers make of the university idiom is no more fortuitous than students' tolerance of semantic fog. The conditions which make linguistic misunderstanding possible and tolerable are inscribed in the very institution: quite apart from the fact that ill-known or unknown words always appear in stereotyped configurations capable of inducing a sense of familiarity, magisterial language² derives its full significance from the situation in which the relation of pedagogic communication is accomplished, with its social space, its ritual, its temporal rhythms; in short, the whole system of visible or invisible constraints which constitute pedagogic action as the action of imposing and inculcating a legitimate culture.³ In designating and consecrating every agent appointed to inculcate as worthy to transmit that which he transmits, the institution confers on professorial discourse a *status authority* tending to rule out the question of the informative efficiency of the communication.

To reduce the pedagogic relation to a purely communicative relation would make it impossible to account for the specific characteristics it

owes to the authority of the pedagogic institution. The mere fact of transmitting a message within a relation of pedagogic communication implies and imposes a social definition (and the more institutionalized the relation, the more explicit and codified the definition) of what merits transmission, the code in which the message is to be transmitted, the persons entitled to transmit it or, better, impose its reception, the persons worthy of receiving it and consequently obliged to receive it and, finally, the mode of imposition and inculcation of the message which confers on the information transmitted its legitimacy and thereby its full meaning. The lecturer finds in the particularities of the space which the traditional institution arranges for him (the platform, the professorial chair at the focal point on which all gazes converge) material and symbolic conditions which enable him to keep the students at a respectful distance and would oblige him to do so even if he did not wish to. Elevated and enclosed in the space which crowns him orator, separated from his audience, if numbers permit, by a few empty rows which materially mark the distance the laity fearfully keep before the *mana* of the Word and which at all events are only ever occupied by the most seasoned zealots, pious ministers of the magisterial utterance, the professor, remote and intangible, shrouded in vague and terrifying rumour, is condemned to theatrical monologue and virtuoso exhibition by a necessity of position far more coercive than the most imperious regulations. The professorial chair commandeers, willy-nilly, the intonation, the diction, the delivery, the oratorical gestures of its occupant, so that the student who presents an exposé ex cathedra is seen to inherit the professor's oratorical manner. Such a context governs teachers' and students' behaviour so rigorously that efforts to set up a dialogue immediately turn into fiction or farce. The lecturer can call for participation or objection without fear of it really happening: questions to the audience are often purely rhetorical; the answers, serving chiefly to express the part the faithful take in the service, are generally no more than *responses*.⁴

Of all the distancing techniques with which the institution equips its officers, magisterial discourse is the most efficacious and the most

subtle: unlike the distances inscribed in space or guaranteed by regulation, the distance words create seems to owe nothing to the institution. Magisterial language, a status attribute which owes most of its effects to the institution, since it can never be dissociated from the relation of academic authority in which it is manifested, is able to appear as an intrinsic quality of the person when it merely diverts an advantage of office onto the office-holder. The traditional professor may have abandoned his ermine and his gown, he may even choose to descend from his dais and mingle with the crowd, but he cannot abdicate his ultimate protection, the professorial use of a professorial language. There is nothing on which he cannot speak, be it incest or the class struggle, because his position, his person, his role imply the 'neutralization' of his utterances; and also because language can ultimately cease to be an instrument of communication and serve instead as an instrument of incantation whose principal function is to attest and impose the pedagogic authority of the communication and the content communicated.

Such a use of language presupposes that measurement of the informative efficiency of the communication be discouraged. Indeed, everything takes place as if exposés and dissertations, the only means of feedback the institution offers to students and teachers, had the latent function of preventing precise measurement of comprehension and hence of the echolalia which palliates misunderstanding. Thus the ex cathedra lecture and the dissertation make up a functional couple, as the professorial solo and the lonely prowess of the examinee, or the harangue *de omni re scibili* which testifies to mastery and the wordy generalities of the dissertation. If dissertational rhetoric gives the teacher the impression that his words have not been too badly understood, this is because the dissertation authorizes a discourse and a relation to discourse which prohibit clear-cut choices and induce the marker to pass a judgement as prudent as its object. Teachers never tire of repeating how difficult it is to mark the 'mass' of 'mediocre' scripts which offer no purchase for clear-cut judgements and have to be read and re-read in laborious board-meetings before scraping a hairsbreadth acquittal tinged with contempt: 'Give her a pass mark' or 'Let him

through'. Agrégation examiners' reports tirelessly deplore as a natural disaster the effect which the very principle of the exercises and the traditional criteria of marking necessarily produce: 'There are few very bad scripts; but even fewer good ones; the rest, no less than 76 percent, are bogged down between 6 and 11/20'.⁵ The language of these reports inexhaustibly stigmatizes the congenital 'mediocrity' of the 'great mass of candidates', the 'greyness' of the 'dull', 'insipid' or 'flat' scripts from which there 'fortunately stand out' the few 'distinguished' or 'brilliant' scripts which 'justify the existence of the examination'.⁶ Analysis of dissertational rhetoric enables us to perceive the anomic forms of a garbled feedback whose simplifications, decontextualizations and re-interpretations belong less to the logic of cultural apprenticeship than to the logic of acculturation as observed, for example, by linguists in their analysis of 'creolized' languages. The allusive, elliptical discourse which characterizes the modal dissertation presupposes the complicity in and by misunderstanding which defines the pedagogic relationship in its traditional form. Transmitting in a language which is little or not at all understood, the professor logically ought not to understand what his students send back to him. However, just as the status legitimacy of the priest, as Weber remarks, causes the responsibility for failure to fall neither on the god nor on the priest but solely on the conduct of the faithful, so the teacher who, without acknowledging it and without drawing all the inferences, suspects he is less than perfectly understood, can, so long as his status authority is not contested, blame his students when he does not understand their utterances.

The whole logic of an academic institution based on pedagogic work of the traditional type and ultimately guaranteeing the 'infallibility' of the 'master', finds expression in the professorial ideology of student incapacity, a mixture of tyrannical stringency and disillusioned indulgence which inclines the teacher to regard all communication failures, however unforeseen, as integral to a relationship which inherently implies poor reception of the best messages by the worst receivers.⁷ If the student fails to be what he ought to be, which is none other than his 'being-for-the-teacher', then all the faults — whether of error or

ill-will — are on his side. 'On the lips of the candidates', as the agrégation reports put it, the most brilliant theories are reduced to the state of logical monstrosities, as if the students, incapable of understanding what they are taught, had no other role than to illustrate the futility of the efforts which the teacher squanders and will, despite everything, continue to squander on them, out of a sense of professional duty but with a disenchanting lucidity which only adds to his merit.⁸ Like evil in the theodicies, the existence of 'bad students', periodically recalled to mind, prevents any feeling of this being the best of all possible educational worlds while furnishing a justification for pedagogic morals which can claim to be the best possible, since by making pedagogic failure appear inevitable it provides the one unimpeachable excuse for it.

Thus the illusion of being understood and the illusion of understanding can reinforce each other by serving as each other's alibi because they have their foundations in the institution. All the conditioning received in their previous training and all the social conditions of the relation of pedagogic communication cause students to be objectively condemned to enter the game of fictitious communication, even if this entails adherence to the academic world-view which casts them into unworthiness. As in the Kula cycle, where the armshells always go round in one direction and the necklaces in the other,⁹ all the wit and wisdom go from teachers to students and all the dullness and crudity from students to teachers. Students are the less inclined to interrupt the professorial monologue when they do not understand it, because status resignation to approximate understanding is both the product and the condition of their adaptation to the university system: since they are supposed to understand, since they must have understood, they cannot accede to the idea that they have a right to understand and must therefore be content to lower their standards of understanding. Like the priest who actually serves the institution when, as the holder of power over the oracles delegated to him by the institution, he manages to preserve the representation of his infallibility by making the failure of the practices of salvation redound on the

faithful, so the teacher protects the institution when he tends to shun and prevent the assessment of a failure which is not so much his as the institution's, and which he can exorcize, through the stereotyped rhetoric of collective guilt, only by sharpening the thirst for salvation.

In short, students and teachers have a duty — to themselves and to each other — to over-estimate the quantity of information which really circulates in pedagogic communication, because this is their duty to the institution. In recognizing them as legitimate transmitters or receivers of the pedagogic message, the University imposes on them obligations towards the institution which are the exact counterpart of their institutional worthiness as attested by their presence in the institution.¹⁰ And, in choosing (not usually by conscious calculation) the line of conduct that is academically most economical or profitable, teachers and students are simply obeying the laws of the educational universe, considered as a system of sanctions. Not only could the teacher not adopt a new language and relation to language without effecting a dissociation of the contents communicated and the manner of communicating them which he cannot conceive of because they were indissociably linked in the manner in which he himself received and assimilated them; but also he could not measure exactly the students' understanding of his language without destroying the fiction which enables him to teach with the least effort, i.e. as he was taught. And if he did want to draw all the pedagogic inferences from his discovery, he would be liable to appear even to his students as an elementary school teacher who had strayed into higher education.¹¹ As for the student, it is necessary and sufficient for him to follow his bent in the use of language to which his whole training predisposes him, for example in writing a dissertation, in order to enjoy all the safeguards secured by keeping the teacher at arm's length with the pseudo-generalities and prudent approximations which are 'not even wrong' and will win him, as the phrase goes, 'a mark between 9 and 11',¹² in short, to avoid having to reveal, in the clearest code possible, the exact level of his understanding and knowledge, which would condemn him to pay the price of clarity.¹³ Students can always concoct, at least for the

teacher's purposes, a semblance of sustained discourse in which no palpable absurdity ever shows through, since the dissertational genre authorizes the use of a second-order, second-hand *ars combinatoria* which, applied to a finite batch of semantic atoms, can only produce strings of words mechanically linked. Summoned to defend themselves with words in a combat in which all words are not allowed, often their only course is the rhetoric of despair, a regression towards the prophylactic or propitiatory magic of a language in which the grandiloquence of magisterial discourse is reduced to the passwords or sacramental phrases of a ritual murmur; the poor-man's relativism, imaginary exemplifications, and hybrid notions, hovering between the abstract and the concrete, the verifiable and the unverifiable, are so many defensive tactics which minimize the risks by throwing a smoke-screen of vagueness over the possibility of truth or error. Desperate imitation of magisterial ease, when the social conditions of its acquisition have disappeared, leads to the caricature of mastery in which, as in nativistic movements, regulated variations have given way to mechanical or anarchic deformations.

LANGUAGE AND RELATION TO LANGUAGE

But how could such a system of education continue to exist, did it not, through the traditional form of communication which it sets up, continue to serve the classes or groups from whom it derives its authority, even when it seems so utterly to fail the demands inherent in the performance of its essential function of inculcation? Would the freedom the system allows to the agents appointed to inculcate be so great if it were not conceded in return for the class functions which the university never ceases to fulfil even when its pedagogic efficiency tends towards zero? From Renan to Durkheim, it has often been remarked how much an education so concerned to transmit a style, that is, a type of relation to language and culture, owes to the humanist tradition

inherited from the Jesuit colleges – an academic, Christian reinterpretation of the social demands of an aristocracy, which leads distinguished detachment from the professional task to be seen as the accomplished form of the accomplishment of every distinguished profession. But one cannot account for the pre-eminent value the French system sets on literary aptitude and, more precisely, on the capacity for turning all experience, not least literary experience, into literary discourse; in short, everything that goes to make up the French way of living the literary – and sometimes even the scientific – life like a Parisian life, unless one sees that this intellectual tradition nowadays still fulfils a social function in the functioning of the educational system and in the equilibrium of its relations with the intellectual field and the different social classes.

University French has never been anyone's mother tongue, even for the children of the privileged classes, but this timeless amalgam of former states of the history of the language is very unequally removed from the languages actually spoken by the different social classes. Doubtless there would be something arbitrary, as has been pointed out, in 'distinguishing a determinate number of French parlances, for the various levels of society intermingle. Nonetheless, there exist at the two extremities of the scale two well-defined modes of speech: *bourgeois parlance* and *common parlance*.'¹⁴ With its high proportion of lexical and syntactic borrowings from Latin – which, imported, used and imposed exclusively by literate groups, have escaped assimilatory restructuring and reinterpretation – constantly checked and braked in its evolution by the standardizing, stabilizing intervention of scholarly or fashionable legitimating agencies, the bourgeois language can be adequately handled only by those who, thanks to the School, have been able to convert their practical mastery, acquired by familiarization within the family group, into a second-degree aptitude for the quasi-scholarly handling of language. Given that the informative efficiency of pedagogic communication is always a function of the receivers' linguistic competence (defined as their variably complete mastery of the code of university language), the unequal social-class distribution of

educationally profitable linguistic capital constitutes one of the best-hidden mediations through which the relationship (grasped by our tests) between social origin and scholastic achievement is set up, although its weight as a factor varies according to the constellation of factors in which it belongs and, consequently, according to the type and level of education concerned. The social value of the different linguistic codes available in a given society at a given time (i.e. their economic and symbolic profitability) always depends on the distance separating them from the linguistic norm the school manages to impose in defining the socially recognized criteria of linguistic 'correctness'. More precisely, the academic market value of each individual's linguistic capital is a function of the distance between the type of symbolic mastery demanded by the School and the practical mastery he owes to his initial class upbringing (primary PW).¹⁵

But no one acquires a language without thereby acquiring a *relation to language*. In cultural matters the manner of acquiring perpetuates itself in what is acquired, in the form of a certain manner of using the acquirement, the mode of acquisition itself expressing the objective relations between the social characteristics of the acquirer and the social quality of what is acquired. So it is in the relation to language that one finds the principle underlying the most visible differences between bourgeois language and working-class language. What has often been described as the tendency of bourgeois language to abstraction, formalism, intellectualism and euphemistic moderation, should be seen primarily as the expression of a socially constituted disposition towards language, i.e. towards the interlocutor and even the object of conversation. The distinguished distance, prudent ease and contrived naturalness which are the foundations of every code of society manners, are opposed to the expressiveness or expressionism of working-class language, which manifests itself in the tendency to move from particular case to particular case, from illustration to parable, or to shun the bombast of fine words and the turgidity of grand emotions, through banter, rudeness and ribaldry, manners of being and doing characteristic of classes who are never fully given the social conditions

for the severance between objective denotation and subjective connotation, between the things seen and all they owe to the viewpoint from which they are seen.¹⁶

So it is simultaneously in the distance between the practical mastery of language transmitted by domestic pedagogic work and the symbolic mastery demanded by the school, and in the social conditions of the more or less complete acquisition of this verbal mastery, that one finds the principle underlying the variations in the relation to academic language – a relation which, reverential or casual, tense or detached, stilted or easy, heavy-handed or well-tempered, ostentatious or measured, is one of the surest distinctive signs of the speaker's social position. The disposition to express feelings and judgements in words, which is greater the higher the level in the social hierarchy, is only one dimension of the disposition, demanded more and more the higher the level in the educational hierarchy and the hierarchy of occupations, to manifest, even in one's practice, the capacity to stand aloof from one's practice and from the rule governing that practice. Contrary to appearances, nothing is more opposed to literary ellipsis or metaphor, which almost always presupposes the context of a literate tradition, than the practical metaphors and 'ellipsis by *deixis*', as Bally calls it, which enable working-class speech to supply all or part of the verbal information by implicit (or gestural) reference to the situation and 'circumstances' (in Prieto's sense). Rhetorical devices, expressive effects, nuances of pronunciation, melody of intonation, registers of diction or forms of phraseology by no means solely express the conscious choices of a speaker preoccupied with the originality of his expression (as a summary reading of the opposition between *langue* and *parole* qua execution might suggest): all these stylistic features always betray, in the very utterance, a relation to language which is common to a whole category of speakers because it is the product of the social conditions of the acquisition and use of language. Thus the avoidance of the everyday expression and the search for the rare turn of phrase which characterize the relation to language that professional practitioners of writing and difference through writing maintain with language, are only

the extreme form of the literary disposition towards language which is proper to the privileged classes, who are inclined to make the choice of language and the manner of its use a means of excluding the vulgar and thereby affirming their distinction.

Like everything pertaining to the *modality of behaviour*, the relation to language tends to elude the sort of experimental measurement practised in empirical research that is often as routine-bound in the production of its questionnaires as in interpreting its results. But it is not impossible to find indices of the modality of linguistic behaviour in the objective characteristics of the linguistic competence measured by a vocabulary test.¹⁷ Thus, for example, an index of differing relations to language may be seen in the fact that Sorbonne students – or students of privileged-class origin and a fortiori privileged-class Sorbonne students – are proportionately more numerous in hazarding a definition of a non-existent word deliberately inserted into a vocabulary test (*gérophagie*). When one adds that the students with the most 'brilliant' academic records (classical training, baccalauréat distinctions, etc.) are more ready to define the trick word, and that it is the category privileged in each of the respects previously mentioned who produce the largest number of imperturbably prolix definitions of this anthropological-sounding term, it may be concluded that ease in the handling of language can run to off-handedness when combined with the self-assurance given by membership of a privileged category.¹⁸

Similarly, methodical observation of the linguistic and gestural behaviour of candidates in an oral examination enables us to bring to light some of the social signs by which professorial judgement is unconsciously guided, and among which we must count the indices of the modality of the use of language (grammar, accent, tone, delivery, etc.), itself linked to the modality of the relation to the teacher and the situation which is manifested in bearing, gesture, dress, make-up and mimicry.¹⁹ The analysis required for the purposes of experimentation reveals that nothing, certainly not the appreciation of even the most technical knowledge and know-how, goes uncontaminated by the system of convergent or, more precisely, redundant impressions bearing

on one total disposition, that is, on the system of *manners* characteristic of a social position.²⁰ Thus, in contrast to the ease that is called 'forced', particularly frequent among those middle- or working-class students who strive, by rapid delivery and not without many false notes, to conform to the norms of university verbalizing, the ease that is called 'natural' affirms the well-mastered mastery of language in the casualness of the delivery, the evenness of the tone and the stylistic under-statement that betoken the art of concealing art, the supreme manner of suggesting, by the tempering applied to the temptation of speaking too well, the potential excellence of one's speech. If the laboured relation to language is unconsciously catalogued as the poor man's ease, or, what amounts to the same thing, the ostentation of the nouveau riche, this is because it lets its presentational function show through too clearly not to be suspected of self-interested vulgarity in the eyes of academics attached to the prestigious fiction of an exchange which, even in an examination, remains an end in itself.

The opposition between these two types of relation to language stems from the opposition between the two modes of acquiring verbal mastery, the exclusively scholastic acquisition which condemns the acquirer to a 'scholastic' relation to scholastic language and the mode of acquisition through insensible familiarization, which alone can fully produce the practical mastery of language and culture that authorizes cultivated allusion and cultured complicity.²¹ There is a world of difference between the experience of school that is prepared for by a childhood spent in a family circle where words define the reality of things, and the experience of unreality given to working-class children by the scholastic acquisition of a language which tends to make unreal the things it speaks of because it makes up their whole reality: the 'pure', 'correct' – i.e. 'corrected' – language of the classroom is opposed to the language the teacher's marginal notes stigmatize as 'vulgar' or 'common', and even more to the anti-language of the boarding school, where children from rural areas, confronted with the simultaneous experience of forced acculturation and insidious counter-acculturation, can only choose between duplication and acceptance of exclusion.

There is perhaps no better indication of the objective functions of the French educational system than the well-nigh absolute preponderance it gives to oral transmission and the manipulation of words, at the expense of other techniques of inculcation or assimilation. The disproportion between the space accorded to lecture halls and the space devoted to practical-work rooms or reading rooms, or the extreme difficulty of obtaining access to the tools of self-teaching, whether books or machines, betrays the disproportion between learning by hearsay and learning from documentary evidence through orderly discussion, practice, experiment, reading or production of work.²² More precisely, the primacy of oral transmission must not conceal the fact that communication is conducted through a spoken word dominated by the written word, as is shown by the great value set on the rules of written expression and literate stylistics, which tend to be imposed on all utterances regulated and sanctioned by the university institution, whether in the lecture or in the candidates' oral productions. In an academic universe in which the ideal is to 'talk like a book', the only fully legitimate speech is one which presupposes at every point the whole context of legitimate culture and no other context.²³

The hierarchy of pedagogic tasks, as manifested objectively in the organization of the institution and the ideology of its agents, is no less revelatory. Of all the obligations of professorship, transmission by literate word of mouth is the only one felt as an unconditional imperative; and so it takes pride of place over the tasks of organizing and assessing the students' work, such as the marking of scripts, commonly held to be the dull obverse of the act of teaching and left to assistant lecturers, except when it is an occasion to exercise the sovereign power of the examining board of one of the great national *concours*. The titles designating the different university ranks are evidence that the higher one rises in the hierarchy the more one is legitimated to speak the legitimate language of the institution: the *assistant* will only ever give 'practicals' even if he does nothing but talk; the *chargé d'enseignement* gives 'teaching' (*enseignement*) and the *maitre de conférences*, who does just the same thing, gives 'lectures' (*conférences*), but only the

professor delivers allegedly magisterial courses (*cours magistraux*).²⁴ This stratified system of 'terms of reference' hides, under the guise of a technical division of tasks, a hierarchy of degrees of excellence in the performance of a single function, still held, ideally, to be indivisible, even if hard times and operational requirements oblige the exclusive holders of tenure to distribute that function among an ever growing army of auxiliaries.²⁵

The relation to language and knowledge implied in the primacy of words and the well-read manipulation of words constitutes, for the teaching corps, the most economical way, that is, the one most consonant with their previous training, of adapting themselves to the institutional conditions in which they work, and particularly to the morphology of the pedagogic space and the social structure of their public:

Twice a week the professor had to appear for an hour before a random audience often made up, for two successive lectures, of quite different individuals. He had to speak without concerning himself with his pupils' special needs, without having inquired what they know and do not know (...) Long scientific deductions requiring the listener to have followed a whole series of arguments had to be eliminated (...) Open to all, turned into the arena of a sort of competition to attract and hold the public, what can university courses be in such circumstances? Brilliant expositions, 'recitations' in the manner of the orators of declining Rome (...) The swing-door opening and shutting throughout the performance, the perpetual coming and going, the listeners' air of having nothing better to do, the professor's tone, rarely didactic, sometimes declamatory, his skill at hunting out sonorous commonplaces which convey nothing new but which infallibly spark off signs of assent - it all seems remote and improbable.²⁶

More generally, it is impossible to understand the style peculiar to French academic and intellectual life unless it is seen that a mode of inculcation which tends to reduce pedagogic action to a verbal incantation or an exemplary exhibition is particularly appropriate to the interests of a body of professors directly subjected, especially nowadays, to the models of the intellectual field and called upon to affirm themselves as intellectuals in their pedagogic practice itself. Doubtless

there is nothing to prevent the *ex cathedra* lecture from serving functions different from or even opposed to those it has in a traditional pedagogy, as when, for example, in an initiatory phase, it enables the preliminaries of pedagogic communication and work to be transmitted in the most economical way, or, in research teaching, is used to present a theoretical synthesis or a problematic, or when it is recorded for use as a simple technical support for repeated exercises. However, by virtue of the weight it carries in the system of the means of inculcation, and by virtue of the relation to language and knowledge it calls for, the French-style professorial lecture, a well-tempered balance between compilation without heaviness and creation without excess, authorizes and produces, even in its most desperate imitations, a double-dealing with the norms it purports to accept: the demands of didactic clarity dispense it from the meticulousness of erudite references, the appearances of erudition dispense it from original research, and the appearance of creative improvisation can in any case dispense it from both clarity and erudition. It can be seen that the institutional conditions of pedagogic communication authorize and favour a professorial charisma (if the oxymoron will pass) capable of imposing the academic summas which, for the space of a university reign or dynasty, oust all the works they claim to conserve and supersede.²⁷

It is also clear why so many actual or would-be intellectuals manifest their conformity to the dominant model of the relation to language and culture even in those aspects of their behaviour seemingly least marked by their education. It is only an apparent paradox that 'extra-curricular' culture should contain the truth of school culture, or more precisely that it should be in the least academic utterances of the intellectuals most free of academic constraints that one finds the clearest expression of the complacent attitude to culture which is encouraged and recognized by a university bound by its contract of delegation to shoulder the depreciation of everything which savours of the academic. If Parisian-style culture fades away the moment one tries to assess it by means of a test of knowledge, this is because it owes its insubstantial structure to the conditions in which it is acquired, whether through

brief encounters with authors, their works and those who talk about both, or through weekly consultation of the gazettes of the intellectual demi-monde; above all it is because the relation to culture acquired in such conditions is appropriate for use in areas abandoned to distinguished conversation or bohemian argument and consigned to the classificatory grimaces of salon conversation or the all-embracing taxonomies which in the twinkling of an eye confound left and right in art or philosophy with left and right in politics. But it would be naive to suppose that the function of social distinction performed by the cultivated relation to culture is exclusively and eternally attached to 'general culture' in its 'humanistic' form. The glamour of econometrics, computer science, operational research or the latest thing in structuralism can serve, no less well than knowledge of the classics or the ancient languages in another epoch, as an elegant ornament or an instrument of social success: consider the technocrats who hawk from conference to conference knowledge acquired at conferences; the essayists who draw from a diagonal reading of the most general pages of the least specialized works of specialists matter for general disquisitions on the inherent limits of the specialization of specialists; or the dandies of scientificity, past masters in the art of the chic allusion which instantly places the speaker in the outposts of the avant-garde sciences which bear no stain of the plebeian sin of positivism.

CONVERSATION AND CONSERVATION

But to suppose that practices and ideologies whose possibility and probability are objectively inscribed in the structure of the relation of pedagogic communication and in the social and institutional conditions of its conduct can be explained solely by reference to the interests of the teaching corps or, still more naively, by the pursuit of prestige or gratifications of self-esteem, would be to forget that, in order to fulfil its social function of legitimating the dominant culture, an educational

system must obtain the recognition of the authority of its action, even if this has to take the form of recognition of the authority of the masters appointed to inculcate that culture. Reference to the limiting case of an educational system having no other technical function beyond its social function of legitimating the culture and relation to culture of the dominant classes enables us to bring to light some of the tendencies of the French system, which is able to communicate so little while giving such prominence to the spoken word, only because it always tends to give primacy to the social function of culture (scientific as well as literary culture) over the technical function of competence. If magisterial discourse were to owe its audience entirely to the authority of the institution, it would at least impose the authority of the institution which makes it possible and the legitimacy of its *de facto* addressees. 'What is left when you have forgotten everything else' is a relation to culture defined by the right to forget which is implied by the fact of having known or, rather, of being socially recognized as having learnt. What indeed is left from long frequentation of ancient texts or protracted dealings with classic authors, apart from the right to hear phrases from the pink pages of the dictionary without a blush²⁸ and, at a higher degree of academic consecration, the ease and familiarity characteristic of the 'relations as between a famous father and his sons or nephews' with which Giraudoux complacently credits *normaliens*, those 'intimates of the great ethics, the great aesthetics and the great authors'?

In conceding the teacher the right and the power to deflect the authority of the institution onto his own person, the educational system secures the surest means of getting the office-holder to put all the resources and zeal of the person into the service of the institution and through it the institution's social function. Whether or not he wants to or is even aware of it, the teacher must define himself by reference to the social definition of a practice which, in its traditional form, cannot forego some dramatic action. Although it presupposes pedagogic authority in order to take place, pedagogic action must, by an apparent paradox, obtain the recognition of its authority in and

through the performance of the work of inculcation. Being required to exalt the quality of his office and the culture he communicates by the quality of his personal manner of communicating it, the teacher must be equipped by the institution with the symbolic attributes of the authority of his mission (not least the livery of the Word which is to the teacher what the white overall or jacket is to the cook, the hairdresser, the waiter or the nurse), so as to be able to afford the elegance of ostentatiously renouncing the most visible protections of the institution, while accentuating those aspects of his task which, like the gestures of the surgeon, the soloist or the acrobat, are predisposed to manifest symbolically the unique quality of the performer and the performance. The most typically charismatic feats, such as verbal acrobatics, hermetic allusion, disconcerting references or peremptory obscurity, as well as the technical tricks which serve as their support or substitute, such as the concealment of sources, the insertion of studied jokes or the avoidance of compromising formulations, owe their symbolic efficacy to the context of authority the institution sets up for them. And if the institution tolerates and so strongly encourages disrespect for the accessories and even the institutional rules, this is because pedagogic action must always transmit not only a content but also the affirmation of the value of that content, and there is no better way of doing so than by diverting onto the thing communicated the glamour which the irreplaceable manner of communicating it secures for the interchangeable author of the communication.

But ultimately, to authorize the games with the institutional rule which, like the liberties taken with the syllabus that implicitly are on the syllabus, contribute better than crude, immediate imposition of the rule towards imposing unconscious recognition of the rule, is to inculcate, through a relation to the teacher, a relation to the academic institution and, through this, a relation to language and culture which is none other than that of the dominant classes. Thus the ruse of academic reason, by which the institution leads the teacher to serve it by disposing him to make use of it, ultimately serves a function of social conservation which academic reason cannot recognize. If the freedom

the educational system allows the teacher is the best guarantee that he will serve the system, the freedom allowed to the educational system is the best guarantee that it will serve the perpetuation of the relations prevailing between the classes, because the possibility of this redirection of ends is inscribed in the very logic of a system which never better fulfils its social function than when it seems to be exclusively pursuing its own ends.

To establish in another way that the relation to language and culture, that infinite sum of infinitesimal differences in manners of doing and saying which seems to be the most perfect expression of the autonomy of the school system and the academic tradition, sums up in one respect the ensemble of the relations between this system and the structure of class relations, one only has to imagine all the prerequisites which would be objectively implied in setting up a different relation to language in all school practices.²⁹ Thus it is impossible to imagine a teacher able to maintain with his own discourse, his pupils' discourse and his pupils' relation to his own discourse a relation stripped all of indulgences and freed from all the traditional complicities, without at the same time crediting him with the capacity to subordinate his whole pedagogic practice to the imperatives of a perfectly explicit pedagogy which could actually implement the principles logically implied in affirmation of the autonomy of the specifically scholastic mode of acquisition. There is indeed every difference in the world between a teaching oriented by the express intention of minimizing code mistakes by continuously and methodically stating the code, and the forms of teaching which are able to dispense with expressly teaching the transmission code because they speak by tacit agreement to a public prepared by insensible familiarization to understand their tacit meanings. Pedagogic work expressly guided by the methodical pursuit of maximum efficiency would thus tend consciously to reduce the gap between the level of transmission and the level of reception – whether by raising the reception level by giving, together with the message, the code for deciphering it, in a mode of expression (verbal, graphic or gestural) whose code the receiver is already familiar with; or by temporarily

lowering the transmission level in accordance with a programme of controlled progress, in which each message serves to prepare for reception of the message at the next level of transmission and so produces a steady rise in the level of reception by giving the receivers the means of acquiring complete possession of the code through repetition and practice.³⁰

Maximizing the productivity of pedagogic work would ultimately imply not only recognition of the gap between the linguistic competences of transmitter and receiver but also knowledge of the social conditions of the production and reproduction of that gap, that is, knowledge both of the modes of acquisition of the different class languages and of the scholastic mechanisms which consecrate and so help to perpetuate inter-class linguistic differences. It is immediately clear that, short of relying on the accidents or miracles of individual conversions, such practice can be expected only from teachers objectively constrained to satisfy a specifically and exclusively pedagogic demand; to put it another way, it would require a pedagogic action directed towards the inculcation of a different relation to language and culture, i.e. subordinated to the objective interests of a quite different public, and teachers recruited and trained to satisfy the requirements of posts that were differentiated technically – and not merely hierarchically – and thus capable of preventing the play of circular alibis that is authorized by the traditional cumulation of the tasks of teaching, research and even management.³¹ In short, only a school system serving another system of external functions and, correlatively, another state of the balance of power between the classes, could make such pedagogic action possible.

If the French educational system perpetuates and consecrates a cultural privilege founded on a monopoly of the conditions of acquisition of the relation to culture that the privileged classes tend to recognize and impose as legitimate precisely to the extent they monopolize it, this is because the relation to culture it recognizes is fully mastered only when the culture it inculcates has been acquired by familiarization; it is also because the mode of inculcation that the

system sets up remains, despite its relative autonomy, continuous with the mode of inculcation of legitimate culture for which the social conditions are only ever given to families whose culture is the culture of the dominant classes. It can be seen, first, that in not explicitly giving what it demands, the system demands uniformly of all its students that they should have what it does not give, i.e. the relation to language and culture exclusively produced by a particular mode of inculcation. Secondly, it is clear that, in perpetuating a mode of inculcation differing as little as possible from the family mode, it gives training and information which can be fully received only by those who have had the training it does not give. Thus the dependence of the traditional system on the dominant classes is to be seen in the primacy it gives to the relation to culture over culture and, among the possible types of relation to culture, to the one it can never fully produce: the school system betrays the final truth of its dependence on class relations when it disparages the over-scholastic manners of those who owe their manners to it, thereby disavowing its own manner of producing manners and confessing by the same token its incapacity to affirm the autonomy of a specifically scholastic mode of production.

Just as traditional economic conduct is defined as an objectively economic practice which cannot declare itself as such and consequently cannot explicitly pose itself the question of its perfect adequacy to its objective ends,³² so traditional pedagogic work may be defined as a *pedagogy in itself*, i.e. as a pedagogic practice which is unaware of or refuses rational calculation of the means best suited to achieve the functions it objectively asserts by its very existence. The academic depreciation of the academic manner, of which the French university provides countless examples and which is paralleled both in the debate set up by the ancient Greek schools on the possibility of teaching excellence and in the Confucian cult of amateurism, is so universal only because it manifests the contradiction inherent in academic institutions which can neither repudiate their pedagogic function without denying themselves as schools nor recognize it completely without denying themselves as traditional schools. The 'academic anti-academicism' of

the Ming and Ch'ing periods stands in the same relation to the formal conventions, devices, restrictions and prescriptions which define the tradition of scholarly painting as professorial exaltation of creative inspiration to the routine didactics of literature professors, pious ministers of genius who are as far from practising what they preach as they are from preaching what they practise.³³ But the apparent contradiction between the reality of literate traditions or traditional schools and the ideology of the 'gift', which is perhaps most stridently affirmed in the most routine-bound school systems, must not conceal the fact that the scholastic cult of the non-scholastic relation to culture — even school culture — is predisposed to assume a conservative function, since, even in its omissions, schooling of the traditional type automatically serves the pedagogic interests of the classes which need the school in order to give scholastic legitimation to a relation to culture which they never owe to it in full.

In bringing to light the relations which prevail, in the most diverse historical situations, between the culture of the dominant classes and traditional pedagogy, or more precisely, the relations of structural and functional affinity between the value systems of any privileged class (inclined to stylize a culture reduced to a code of manners) and traditional school systems devoted to reproducing the legitimate manner of using the legitimate culture, historical comparison enables us to understand those aspects of the French system in which this recurrent combination of elements is expressed. To explain the specific form this combination has taken in the French academic and intellectual tradition, one would no doubt have to go back to the work of the Society of Jesus which, in secularizing Christian ethics, succeeded in converting the theology of grace into a worldly, 'society' ideology of good grace. But the persistence of this historical form has no explanatory value unless it is in turn explained by the persistence of its functions: the continuity of pedagogic customs within the continuous history of the education system has been made possible by the continuity of the services rendered by a School which, despite the changes in the social structure, has always managed to occupy homologous

positions in the system of relations which link it to the dominant classes.³⁴ Thus, the constellation of attitudes which was codified in the seventeenth-century ethic of the *honnête homme* – and is not so far removed from the ethic of the 'literary gentleman' in the Confucian tradition – owes to the historical permanence of its function the ease with which it has been able to perpetuate itself, at the cost of a few reinterpretations, despite the changing of the content of school curricula and the changing of the classes placed in the dominant position. Consider, for example, the primacy of manner and style; the value attached to naturalness and lightness, conceived as the antithesis of pedantry, didacticism or effort; the cult of the 'gift' and the disparagement of apprenticeship, the modern reformulation of the ideology of 'birth' and contempt for study; the disdain for specialization, trades and techniques, the bourgeois transposition of contempt for business; the pre-eminence conferred on the art of pleasing, that is, the art of adapting oneself to the diversity of social encounters and conversations; the attention devoted to nuances and imponderables, perpetuating the aristocratic tradition of 'refinement' and expressed in the subordination of scientific to literary culture, and of literary culture to artistic culture, still more conducive to the indefinite niceties of the games of distinction; in short, all the ways, declared or tacit, of reducing culture to the relation to culture, in other words, of setting against the vulgarity of what can be acquired or achieved a manner of possessing an acquirement whose whole value derives from the fact that there is but one way of acquiring it.

NOTES

1. The first part of this chapter takes up certain analyses which have been published elsewhere (P. Bourdieu, J.-C. Passeron and M. de Saint-Martin, 1965, 2)

but which, because they were not supported by an explicit theory of pedagogic authority as the social condition of the possibility of the relationship of pedagogic communication, could lend themselves to misreadings. If we seek here to mark the most radical refusal of purely psychosociological explanation of pedagogic action, and to challenge the naivety of ethical verdicts as to the goodwill or ill-will of the agents, this is because a search for explanation which, even by omission, allowed it to be supposed that the principle of agents' practices is to be found in their ideology, would still be obeying the internal necessity of the system which, in and by its functioning, produces representations tending to conceal the social conditions of the possibility of its functioning.

2. *le langage magistral*: the discourse of the *maitre* (master, schoolmaster) but also that of the *ex cathedra* professorial lecture, the *cours magistral* (trans.).

3. The relation of systematic interdependence which unites the techniques characteristic of a dominant mode of imposition and which tends to remove their arbitrariness in the eyes of the agents, is most clearly manifested in situations of crisis when the whole set of these techniques becomes the object of a generalized challenge. There is a clear analogy between the tendency of the reforms applied to most educational institutions and the *aggiornamento* of the Church (simplified liturgy, suppression of ritualized practices, reading of texts facing the congregation, use of the vernacular – all measures designed to 'facilitate a more active participation by the faithful').

4. If university space so rigorously imposes its laws on practices, this is because it symbolically expresses the law of the university institution. Thus the traditional form of the pedagogic relationship can reappear in other types of spatial organization, because the institution in a sense generates a symbolic space more real than real space: in a university which has remained self-identical in all other respects, the organization of a seminar around a circular table does not prevent all expectations and attention from converging on the person who has retained all the signs of professorial status, not least a privileged speaking role which implies control over other participants' speech.

5. *Rapport d'agrégation masculine de grammaire*, 1957, p. 9.

6. And teachers are seen observing with something like amazement that the candidates 'quite naturally' fall into the categories which are the by-product of the categories of professorial perception: at 5 or less out of 20, the script is 'worthless' (*nul*) and generally incurs derision or indignation; from 6 to 8, it is 'mediocre' or 'saddening'; between 9 and 11 it is 'borderline', and a resigned shrug acquiesces as much as it reproves; from 12 to 15, honour and approval are liberally bestowed; and above 15 the crown of 'brilliance' is solemnly awarded. With this grading system, the examiner expresses a judgement at once syncretic and categorical, so that, thinking he is weighing out points, half-points and even quarter-points, he is in fact content to divide the population into broad masses

within which the hierarchies remain fluid. In accordance with the eternal scheme of elitism, always confirmed because it produces what confirms it, only 'a few brilliant individuals' ever emerge from 'the whole batch, *rare nantes in gurgite vasto*, as the agrégation reports might put it: 'The exercise was satisfactory in that it brought to light talent or the absence of talent' (*Agrégation féminine de lettres classiques*, 1959, p. 23). Not that traditional humanities teaching has a monopoly on this mode of thought: 'Apart from a few exceptional candidates of striking and sometimes dazzling personality, the examination leaves an impression of greyness' (examiners' observations on the work of the candidates for the Ecole Nationale d'Administration, *Epreuves et statistiques du concours de 1967*, Paris. Imprimerie Nationale, 1968, p. 9) (see also 1975, 10).

7. As former model pupils who would like to have no pupils except future teachers, teachers are predisposed by their whole training and all their educational experience to play the game of the institution. In addressing himself to the student such as he ought to be, the teacher infallibly discourages the student's temptation to demand the right to be only what he is: the teacher respects, by the credit he gives him, the fictitious student whom a few 'gifted pupils', objects of all his care and attention, authorize him to regard as real.

8. 'Every year has its fashion, in which, as in a clumsy caricature, one discerns the distorted image of the advice or teaching of some master or other' (*Agrégation masculine de lettres*, 1950, p. 10). 'Looking through the batch of scripts, more in sorrow than in anger, one finds . . .'. To account for the destructive treatment the student inflicts on everything he touches, professorial discourse oscillates between metaphors of barbarism and those of natural disaster: the student 'ravages', 'wreaks havoc', 'tortures', 'corrupts', 'devastates' language or ideas. 'So often this delicate text was ill-treated and savaged' (*Agrégation masculine de lettres modernes*, 1964, p. 22).

9. See B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London, RKP, 1922, pp. 92 ff. (trans.).

10. Although the symbolic relations between transmitters and receivers only ever express, in the last analysis, the structure of objective relations defining the pedagogic situation, they are nonetheless capable of adding their own force to those relations, as can be seen in critical states of the system, when, within certain limits, they help to perpetuate fictitiously the appearances of a communication whose structural conditions are no longer fulfilled. Thus the adhesion of teachers and students to the same psychological, hence ethical, vision of the pedagogic relation, and more precisely their complicity in misunderstanding and in the fiction of the absence of misunderstanding, are evidence that the representations agents have of their objective relations, experienced as interpersonal relations, possess a relative autonomy with respect to those objective conditions, since, up to a certain point, they manage to conceal the transformations of the structure of

objective relations which made them possible.

11. Unless this unlikely and incongruous endeavour earned him the equally spurious prestige of non-conformism, in which case the institution would still have put him in the wrong.

12. I.e. a bare pass with 10/20 (trans.).

13. It sometimes happens, in the *classes préparatoires* for example, that the rules defining the traditional relation to language are made explicit in the maxims of academic prudence which testify to the fact that 'higher rhetoric' and 'the rhetoric of despair' ultimately presuppose the same relation to language. Every candidate knows, for example, that it would be the height of naivety 'to write nothing just because you know nothing' and that 'you don't need to know much to scrape a pass in History', provided you know how to use a chronology without exposing egregious lacunae. To be sure, this crafty prudence has its risks, as shown by the story of the candidate who, having read in the chronology *Krach boursier à Vienne* (Vienna stockmarket crash), wrote about the Viennese stockbroker Krach (*Krach boursier à Vienne*). When teachers joke about such gems, they forget that these misfirings of the system contain the truth of the system. If one remembers that the 'university elite' was trained in this way, and if one considers the ethical implications of such exercises, then a whole aspect of *homo academicus* and his intellectual productions is illuminated.

14. J. Damourette and E. Pichon, *Des mots à la pensée. Essai de grammaire de la langue française*, Paris, Collection des linguistes contemporains, 1931, T.I, p. 50.

15. It can be seen, for example, that the syntactic complexity of the language used is taken into account not only in explicit evaluation of the qualities of form which language exercises – composition, dissertation, etc. – are supposed to measure, but also in every evaluation of intellectual operations (mathematical demonstration as well as the decoding of a work of art) that entail the handling of complex schemes, an accomplishment unequally accessible to individuals equipped with a practical mastery of language unequally predisposing them towards the most accomplished form of symbolic mastery.

16. The description of the opposition between bourgeois language and working-class language could be taken further with the aid of the remarkable analyses Basil Bernstein and his school have devoted to the differences between the 'formal language' of the 'middle classes' and the 'public language' of the working class. However, in failing to formulate the implicit assumptions of the theoretical tradition to which his analyses belong (whether the Sapir-Whorf anthropological tradition or the philosophical tradition which runs from Kant to Cassirer through Humboldt), Bernstein tends to reduce to intrinsic characteristics of the language, such as degree of syntactic complexity, differences whose unifying, generative principle lies in the different types of relation to language,

themselves embedded in different systems of attitudes towards the world and other people. Though the *modus operandi* can be grasped most objectively in the *opus operatum*, the productive habitus (i.e. in this case, the relation to language) must not be reduced to its product (here, a certain structure of discourse): to do so would mean seeking in the language the determining principle of speakers' attitudes, in short, taking the linguistic product for the producer of the attitudes that produce it. The *realism of the structure* inherent in such a sociology of language tends to exclude from the field of research the question of the social conditions of production of the attitude system governing, inter alia, the structuration of language. To make just one example, the distinctive features of the language of the lower middle classes [*les classes moyennes*], such as faulty hyper-correctness and proliferation of the signs of grammatical control, are indices among others of a relation to language characterized by anxious reference to the legitimate norm of academic correctness. The uneasiness about the right manner – whether table manners or language manners – which petty-bourgeois speech betrays is expressed even more clearly in the avid search for the means of acquiring the sociability techniques of the class to which they aspire – etiquette handbooks and guides to usage. This relation to language can be seen to be an integral part of a system of attitudes to culture which rests on the pure will to respect a cultural code more recognized than known, and on a meticulous respect for rules, a cultural willingness which, in the last analysis, expresses the objective characteristics of the condition and position of the middle strata in the structure of class relations (see also 1975, 7).

17. To ignore the distinction between behaviour and modality of behaviour inevitably leads one purely and simply to treat as identical practices or opinions that are separated only by their modalities – in politics, for example, the different ways (linked to social origin) of being and declaring oneself 'left wing' which make all the difference between the leftist and the thwarted rightist, or in art, the different ways of appreciating or admiring the same work which would be revealed in the whole constellation of works conjointly admired or in the manner of the utterance in which admiration is declared. Everything that is referred to as culture is at stake in the 'trifling' nuances which separate cultivated allusion from scholastic commentary or, more subtly, the different significations of acquiescence by interjection and mimicry. Those who would see in this only an inconsequential *distinguo* should bear in mind that the modality of a 'commitment' reveals, more tellingly than the manifest content of opinions, the likelihood of its being acted upon, because it directly expresses the habitus as the conduct-generating principle and so provides a more reliable basis for forecasting, especially in the long term.

18. Among the remarks made on the term *gérophagie* it is easy to distinguish two phraseologies betokening two relations to language (M = male, F = female, P = Paris, p = provinces, Wo = working class, Mi = middle class, Up = upper class): 'I

don't know the definition' (M p Wo). 'Means nothing to me' (F p Mi). 'Gero (perhaps old?); phagy: act of eating; so someone who eats old people? (subject to correction)' (M p Mi). 'The etymology seems to indicate the fact of eating the old' (F p Mi). These responses, expressing either lucidity or scholastic prudence, or more precisely the desire to 'do one's best' to make use of one's knowledge within the bounds of scholastic prudence, contrast with another phraseology, peremptory, arrogant, off-hand or *rechierché*: 'The etymology is as follows (. . .) Gerophagy is therefore the custom of eating the aged among certain non-Promethean clansmen' (M P Up). 'If *gero* comes from *geras*, an old man, then gerophagy designates a form of anthropophagy preferentially oriented towards the older elements of population X' (F P Up). 'Formed from the aorist of –, to eat; the consumption of old people, a practice encountered among certain primitive tribes' (F P Mi). 'The eating of *gero* as in the eating of *anthropo*' (M P Up).

19. Initial methodical observation reveals, for example, that the positive or negative signs of verbal or postural ease (oratorical action, bodily manifestations of embarrassment or anxiety such as trembling of the hands or blushing, way of speaking, whether improvising or reading notes, manners characterizing the relation to the examiner, such as the search for approval or well-bred detachment, etc.) appear to be strongly linked to one another as well as to social origin. Whatever its limitations, this experiment at least has the effect, because it entails the unusual standpoint of analytical observation, of bringing to light certain social factors of assessment, and also the devious paths they have to take in order to act in spite of the censorship on taking them expressly into account. Thus the embarrassment or clumsiness of working-class students or the insistent willingness of middle-class students can play their part in the examiners' deliberations only in the guise of 'psychological' qualities such as 'timidity' or 'nervousness'. Only experimental measurement of these indices, by which the appreciation of the candidates' worth is unconsciously governed, would make it possible to draw out the social implications of the categories of university perception which are expressed in the terminology of professorial jurisprudence – examiners' reports, marginal comments on scripts, termly reports etc. (cf. 1975, 10).

20. It is this system of manners, working as a mass of infinitesimal indices of indissolubly intellectual 'qualities', that supplies the cues for social perception of the 'spirit' proper to this or that training. 'In the seminary', said Stendhal, 'there is a way of eating a boiled egg which announces the progress made in the religious life.' The edifying literature of the alumni's associations strives through incantatory, sometimes desperate prose, to evoke this phenomenon: 'The H.E.C. spirit is a whole way of thinking, a cast of mind (. . .) a certain way of conducting oneself in life.' And one could quote countless examples of solemn disquisitions or sententious chatter on the style of the *normalien* or the virtues of the

polytechnicien [see Glossary].

21. It is significant that to distinguish genuine bilingualism from scholarly, i.e. scholastic, bilingualism, some linguists will resort to the criterion of ease, 'the native-like control of two languages', as Bloomfield puts it (L. Bloomfield, *Language*, 1933, rpt. London, Allan & Unwin, 1956, p. 56).

22. An indication of the influence of oral transmission on school learning may be seen in the fact that the lecture-course tends, to an unequal extent, depending on the category of students (by the general law of attitude variation according to sex, residence and social origin), to take the place of every other mode of acquisition, especially books, as is shown by the value attached to lecture notes, which are read and reread, swapped and borrowed.

23. It is not difficult to show that French university language obeys the implicit rules of written discourse more fully than does the scholarly language of other educational traditions. Three-point composition, the organization of each part of the statement (particularly the professorial lecture, often given straight to the publishers) in accordance with a plan which implies reference to the whole at all times, has as its model, and often its precondition, written discourse, with the second thoughts and revisions (successive drafts) it permits. Not to mention the inhibition of the products of French education towards the use of foreign languages, which they would rather not speak at all than not speak them as they ought to be written.

24. As for the primary school teacher, he prosaically 'does the class' ['il fait la classe'], i.e. his job. It is not surprising that students whose social origin predisposes them to distinguished casualness betray in so much of their conduct aristocratic contempt for subaltern tasks (a reflection of the university opposition between the perfectly accomplished intellectual act and the laborious processes of pedagogic work), since the academic institution objectively relegates to the lowest place in its hierarchy the methodical inculcation of the material and intellectual techniques of intellectual work and the technical relation to these techniques.

25. The recruitment policy which has led to a great increase, since about 1960, in the number of junior, untenured faculty staff, while the rules defining access to the rank of full professor remained unchanged, would not have been so readily accepted if the traditional institution had not produced the conditions for that policy and the agents most disposed to go along with it: the university power-holders profited from an expansion on the cheap which extended the scope of their authority without endangering it; those who paid the price for the economies thus made found in the traditional model of promotion by seniority grounds for identifying in advance, qua potential successors, with the inaccessible master (witness their resigned and sometimes militant submission to the self-mortification of the interminable *thèse d'état*); and, more profoundly, each side found in a university organization which, like the medieval corporation, knew no

other division of labour than hierarchical distinction between the degrees of a scale of dignity, an incitement to regard as natural or inevitable the indefinite lengthening of a career of indefinitely multiplied stages.

26. E. Renan, *Questions contemporaines*, Paris, Calman-Lévy, 1868, pp. 90-91. It is very generally observed that the higher a profession ranks in the hierarchy of occupations, the more the socially approved definition of accomplished exercise of the profession implies a detached distance from the task in hand, i.e. from the minimum (and subaltern) definition of the task. But teachers also have to reckon, especially in higher education, with an image of the accomplished exercise of their profession which has the objectivity of an institution and which can only fully be accounted for by a social history of the position of the intellectual fraction within the dominant classes and the position of university teachers within that fraction (i.e. in the intellectual field). But a complete analysis of the functions of these practices and ideologies would, above all, have to take into account the very real services they render this or that category of teachers in a given state of the educational system. Thus conduct which, like the flaunted refusal to check student attendance or demand the punctual submission of assignments, offers a means of achieving with less effort the image of a quality teacher for quality students, enables teachers who, especially in subordinate positions, are condemned to permanent juggling of research with teaching, to reduce their work-load and so find a practical solution to the situation which the most over-crowded faculties and disciplines create for them.

27. Kant, whose historical position predisposed him to perceive the first signs of the Romantic revolt against Enlightenment rationalism, particularly against its confidence in the powers of education, well describes the effects of the *institutional charisma* authorized by the ideology of inspiration and creative genius:

But a breed of so-called men of genius (apes of genius, rather) has insinuated itself under that sign: speaking the language of minds exceptionally favoured by nature, they declare painstaking learning and research to be mere bungling, and claim to have grasped the spirit of all science in an instant but to dispense it concentrated in strong doses. This breed of men, like the race of quacks and mountebanks, is very deleterious to progress in scientific and moral culture when, from the chair of wisdom, it dogmatizes on religion, politics or ethics in incontrovertible tones, like an adept or potentate, and so contrives to mask the poverty of its mind. What is one to do against them, except laugh, and continue patiently on one's way, with diligence, order and clarity, without glancing back at those tricksters?

(I. Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1798), *Sämtliche Werke*, Leipzig, Voss, 1868, Bd. VII, p. 544.)

28. The reference is to the (pink) pages in the *Dictionnaire Larousse*, which

list 'Latin and other foreign expressions' [trans.].

29. This imaginary variation presupposes that, in another historical context, culture could be dissociated from relation to culture, i.e. from the mode of acquisition by familiarization which bourgeois ideology posits as constitutive of the *nature of culture* by refusing to recognize as cultured any relation to culture other than the 'natural' one. Far from justifying the populist temptation of purely and simply canonizing popular culture by academic recognition, discovery of the pre-established harmony between the relation to culture recognized by the school and the relation to culture monopolized by the dominant classes requires one, when all the inferences are drawn, to completely reformulate the question of the relationship between academic culture and the culture of the dominant classes, since the school consecrates the dominant culture at least as much by the relation to culture it presupposes and consecrates, as by the content of the culture it transmits.

30. Action directed towards the express goal of a higher level of reception is to be distinguished from the pure and simple lowering of the transmission level which generally characterizes the enterprise of popularization, and still more from the demagogic concessions of instruction (or any other form of cultural diffusion) which seeks to dispense with pedagogic work by fixing the transmission once and for all on a given state of the reception level. If one accepts that an educational system always has to reckon with a social definition of the competence technically demandable, i.e. to ensure at all events the inculcation of an incompressible minimum of information and training, then it is clear that it is impossible to lower indefinitely the quantity of information transmitted in order to minimize its wastage, as happens in some non-directive teaching which boasts a high rate of assimilation but at the cost of a considerable lowering of the quantity of information assimilated. Pedagogic work is more productive, both absolutely and relatively, the more completely it satisfies two contradictory demands, neither of which can be completely sacrificed: first, the maximizing of the absolute quantity of information received, which may lead it to minimize redundancy and seek conciseness and density (not to be confused with the ellipsis by omission and unspoken assumption found in traditional teaching); and secondly, the minimizing of loss, which may involve, among other techniques, the increasing of redundancy in the form of conscious, calculated repetition (not to be confused with traditional redundancy in the form of musical variation on a few themes).

31. Without actually bringing about such a radical restructuring, the transformations of educational technology (audiovisual devices, programmed learning, etc.) tend to trigger a systematic set of transformations of the educational system. It would of course be a mistake to regard changes in the technological base of pedagogic communication as automatically determining; this would amount to

ignoring the dependence of the technical means on the system of the technical and social functions of the educational system (e.g. the sole effect of closed-circuit television can be to accentuate ad absurdum the traditional characteristics of the professorial lecture). However, to the extent that it affects the pedagogic relation in its most specific aspect, i.e. the instruments of communication, transformation of the technology of pedagogic action is liable to affect the social definition of the pedagogic relation, particularly the relative importance of the act of transmission and the work of assimilation, since, with the possibility of recording in advance a message which can be endlessly retransmitted, teaching is freed from the constraints of place and time and tends to be centred less on the transmitters and more on the receivers, who can make use of it when it suits them. Thus the intrinsic effect of recording is likely to bring about a strengthening of control over the act of transmission and a transformation of the system of reciprocal demands, with students tending, for example, to write off the traditional teacher's most cherished effects, such as his jokes or anecdotes, as 'useless', while teachers are forced into stricter self-censorship by the disappearance of the safeguards previously given by the irreversible flight of speech.

32. See 1977, 1, for an analysis of the misrecognition which founds archaic economic conduct (trans.).

33. J. R. Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate*, London, RKP, 1958, Vol. I, *passim*, esp. p. 31. Cf. also E. Balazs, 'Les aspects significatifs de la société chinoise', *Asiatische Studien*, VI (1952), pp. 79-87.

34. The mode of inculcation and mode of imposition characteristic of a determinate educational system can never be entirely dissociated from the specific characteristics which the culture it is mandated to reproduce owes to its social functions in a determinate type of structure of class relations. Thus, as Calverton points out, whereas in France it is a *grande bourgeoisie* still partly faithful to the cultural ideal of the aristocracy that has given its specific form to the dominant culture and to the institutions mandated to reproduce it, in the US from the very beginning it is the petty bourgeoisie that has marked the cultural and academic traditions (V. F. Calverton, *The Liberation of American Literature*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932, p. xv). Similarly, it is in a systematic comparison of the relative positions of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy in France and Germany in different periods that one would doubtless find the principle underlying the differences between the educational systems of the two countries, particularly as regards their relationship with the dominant representation of the cultivated man.