

chargé d'enseignement, professeur – assistant lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer, professor), often conceived or expressed in terms of a class struggle or a labour dispute, disguise considerable differences, for a similar position, according to the trajectory hoped for; so that the teachers of the intermediate categories are led into fluctuating strategies and alliances and are destined to hesitate between individual salvation and collective salvation according to their practical intuition of their own chances of acceding to the dominant positions.

By breaking the relation of anticipated identification with the masters and their magisterial positions, and ending the complicity of holders and claimants in support of the norms of legitimate promotion, the transformation of the norms of appointment laid the university field open to the combined effects of the old career law and transgression of that law; and it is difficult to see where there might arise any forces capable of imposing in practice the establishment of an order where recruitment and promotion would depend on the sole criteria of pedagogical or scientific productivity and efficiency.

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The Critical Moment

Since no business could be transacted, a mixture of anxiety and idle curiosity drove everyone outside. As people dressed less carefully the difference between social ranks was less marked, hatred was suppressed and hopes expressed, the crowd was imbued with tolerance. Faces were gleaming with the pride of newly won rights. There was a carnival gaiety, a camp-site spontaneity; nothing could have been more fun than the sight of Paris during those first few days.

The actor's performance excited the crowd, and subversive proposals proliferated.

'No more academics! No more Institute!'

'No more committees!'

'No more baccalauréat!'

'Down with university degrees!'

'Let's keep them,' said Senecal, 'but let them be awarded by universal suffrage, by the People, the only true judge!'

Public thinking was shaken as after some natural disaster. Intelligent people became half-wits for the rest of their lives.

G. Flaubert, Sentimental Education

Limited as they are to the partial and superficial data of biographical experience but motivated by the ambition to judge and explain, most essays devoted to May 1968 remind us of what Poincaré said of Lorentz's theories: 'An explanation was needed, one was found; one can always be found; hypotheses are the commonest of raw materials.'¹ The temptation to multiply tailor-made hypotheses unreasonably is always most tempting for specialists in the social sciences when they are dealing with events, and with critical events at that. Moments when the meaning of the social world hangs in

the balance are a challenge, beyond the merely intellectual, for all those whose profession is to read the meaning of the world and who, appearing to formulate a state of affairs, tend to remodel the world in conformity with their desire, thereby producing immediate political impact; which requires their immediate statement, rather than reflection after the battle. The political profits that the interpretation of a social event can procure depend closely on its 'topicality', that is to say the extent to which it provokes interest because it is the object of conflict in clashes of material or symbolic interest (which is the very definition of the *present*, never entirely reducible to immediately available facts and events). As a result, the motivation of most of the differences between cultural productions lies in the markets to which they are (more unconsciously than consciously) destined, the restricted market, within which the producer might have as clients in an extreme case only the set of his competitors, or the general production market.² These markets ensure for cultural products (and their authors) material and symbolic profits – that is of sales, of audience, of clientele – and a social profile, a reputation – a good gauge of which is provided by column space in the press – which are extremely unequal, both in size and duration. One of the reasons for the backwardness of the social sciences, constantly threatened with regression into *belles-lettres*, is that the chances of obtaining a purely social success of topical import diminish as one moves away in time from the object studied, that is, with the increase in the time invested in scientific work, a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the scientific quality of the product. The researcher can only arrive after the show, when the lamps are doused and the trestles stacked away, with a performance which has lost all the charms of an *improvisation*. The scientific report, constructed in counterpoint to the questions arising from the immediacy of the event, which are riddles rather than problems, and call for integral and definitive action rather than necessarily partial and arguable analyses, lacks the advantage of the fine clarity of the discourse of good sense, which has no difficulty in being simple, since its premise is to simplify.

Those who pay instant attention to the instant, which, drowned in the event and the emotions it arouses, isolates the critical moment, and thus constitutes it as a totality containing within itself its own explanation, introduce thereby a philosophy of history: they tend to presuppose that there are in history moments which are privileged,

in some way more historical than others (we can see a specific case in the eschatological vision, whether the authorized or the revised version, describing revolution as a final term, *telos*, and culminating point, *acme*, and its agents – proletariat, students or others – as a universal, and therefore ultimate, class). The scientific *ambition*, on the other hand, aims to reinsert the extraordinary event into the series of ordinary events within which it finds its explanation. It does so in order to further examine how to locate the singularity of what remains a moment like any other in the historical series, as we can clearly see with all threshold phenomena, qualitative leaps where the continuous addition of ordinary events leads to a singular, extraordinary instant.

Being an intersection of several partly autonomous series of events arising in several fields pregnant with their own specific determinants, a crisis like that of May 1968 – and no doubt any crisis – introduces a visible break in relation to what produced it, although we cannot comprehend it without restoring it to its place in the series of preceding events. As a university crisis transforming itself into a general crisis, it poses the problem of the conditions of the differential extension of the crisis both within the university field and outside it: to explain how a crisis in the mode of reproduction (in its academic dimension) could thus become the principle of a general crisis, we must, knowing the increasingly important contribution that the education system makes to social reproduction, and which makes it an increasingly disputed stake of social struggles,³ propose a model which allows us to take into account the social effects which the education system has produced, and whose most striking effect is a 'structural downclassing'⁴ generating a kind of collective disposition to revolt. But does the model, which permits us, on the basis of an analysis of the structural conditions of the crisis, and without restoring *ad hoc* hypotheses, to understand the logic of the appearance of the crisis in the different areas of the university space, then of the social space where it appeared, also allow us to understand how a *critical state* of the structure occurred in a clearly determined area of the academic field? The probability that the structural factors which underlie critical tension in a particular field will come to engender a situation of crisis, fostering the emergence of extraordinary events (which a normal state of affairs would render unthinkable or, at the very least, 'exceptional' and 'accidental', therefore bereft of social significance and impact), reaches a maximum when a *coincidence*

is achieved between the effects of several latent crises of maximum intensity. But what are the specific causes of the coincidence of the local crises and, thereby, of the general crisis as integration rather than simple addition of synchronized crises, and what is the specific effect of this synchronization of different fields which defines the historic event as noteworthy and the situation of general crisis as orchestration of different fields? Paradoxically, it is no doubt only if we reinsert the critical moments into the series where the principle of their intelligibility resides, negating what in a sense makes for their singularity, that we can understand what is the unique criterion of definition of the critical situation, if not as 'creation of unpredictable novelty', as Bergson says, at least as intrusion of the possibility of novelty, in short, as open time where all futures appear possible, and are indeed so to a certain extent, for that very reason.⁵

All these questions, which one might call theoretical, must be thought through as historical questions, which implies that we should work at neutralizing the effects of the socially instituted division between simple description, which, as Hegel remarked in his Preface to *The Phenomenology of Mind*, is ill suited to the 'intrusion' of the concept, and pure 'ratiocination', which is no less resistant to interference from effective reality. But we cannot call into question the best-established principles of the visions and divisions of the scientific process, without running the risk of allowing the products of this attempted break to be misunderstood or pass unnoticed; without seeming to disappoint the exigencies both of theory and of empiricism, and allowing the surest gains of research to escape not merely those who can only recognize theoretical questions when they give rise to dissertations (on power, on politics, etc.), but also those who will be moved to suspicion and reserve by the very effort to treat the series of events unfolded by historical description as if they were the product of different effects – as the physicist says – that is as a singular integration of intelligible sequences of events destined to appear, other things being equal, each time that certain conditions are united.

A SPECIFIC CONTRADICTION

We cannot account for the crisis, or at least for the structural conditions of its appearance and its generalization, without mention-

ing the principal effects of the increase in the number of pupils, that is, a devaluation of academic diplomas which causes a generalized downclassing,⁶ particularly intolerable for the more privileged, and, secondarily, the transformations in the functioning of the education system which result from the morphological and social transformation of the public. The increase in pupils and the concomitant devaluation of educational qualifications (or the educational positions to which they provide access, like the status of student) have affected the whole of an age-group, thus constituted as a relatively unified social generation through this common experience, creating a structural hiatus between the statutory expectations – inherent in the positions and the diplomas which in the previous state of the system really did offer corresponding opportunities – and the opportunities actually provided by these diplomas and positions at the moment we are considering.⁷ This hiatus is never greater than when it affects children who come from the dominant class and who have not managed to reconvert their inherited cultural capital into academic capital; and even then their social future does not depend entirely on their academic capital, for the economic or social capital at the disposal of their families allows them to obtain the maximum return for their academic diplomas on the labour market and thus to compensate for their (relative) failure by choosing alternative careers.⁸ In short, the specific contradiction in the mode of reproduction in its educational aspects, which can only contribute to the reproduction of its class by eliminating with their consent a number of its members, takes on an increasingly critical form with the growing number of those who see their chances of reproduction threatened and who, refusing to accept their exclusion, find themselves falling back on a protest against the legitimacy of the instrument of their exclusion, which threatens the whole of their class by attacking one of the bases of its perpetuation.

The effects of this devaluation are no doubt more and more fully effective, since they are in no way corrected by the accumulation of social capital, in inverse proportion to the social origins of their holders, other diplomas and positions being equal. At all events, the *tolerance* of these effects also varies according to the same criterion, but in the opposite direction, on the one hand because aspirations tend to diminish as objective opportunities do, and on the other hand because various mechanisms, such as the plurality of markets, tend to disguise the devaluation – some devalued diplomas keep a

certain symbolic value in the eyes of the least well provided – and the secondary benefits associated with the rise in the nominal value of the diplomas. The partly illusory rise of the ‘miraculously lucky survivors’ who attain posts improbable for the members of their class of origin (like the son of a primary teacher who becomes assistant lecturer in science, or the smallholder’s son who becomes a teacher in a comprehensive school) at a time when these posts are becoming devalued by a general effect of translation, in other words, downclassed, is fundamentally different, despite the surface analogies, from the more or less obvious decline of the person whose origins are in the dominant class, but who does not manage to acquire diplomas sufficient to maintain his position, such as the doctor’s son who becomes a literature student or an instructor in remedial education. It remains the case that, however different they may be, the experiences born of downclassing can help create more or less fantasized alliances between agents holding different positions in social or academic space, or, at the very least, can help create partly orchestrated reactions to the crisis, whose objective concordances it would be wrong to attribute to the effects of ‘contagion’ alone.

In order to understand the forms which the crisis has evolved within the education system, therefore, it is not sufficient to perceive the growth in the size of the population of the different educational establishments. It is true that specifically morphological phenomena have no doubt exercised important effects, by encouraging the transformation of pedagogical relations and of the whole experience of being a student. But the main thing is that the increase in size of the population of an educational establishment, and above all the concomitant transformation of the social composition of this population, are a function of the position which it occupies actually or potentially in the academic (and social) hierarchy of establishments. Thus it is that the *grandes écoles* (or the *classes préparatoires*) have been much less affected than the university faculties; and, within the latter, the faculties of law and medicine have been much less affected than the science and above all the arts faculties, and, within these latter, the traditional disciplines have been much less affected by the influx of students than the new disciplines, especially psychology and sociology. In other words, the social and academic effects of the increase in numbers are all the more striking in an academic institution (institute, faculty or discipline), the more its position in the hierarchy – and, secondarily, the content of the teaching offered –

predispose it to serve as a refuge for students who, in the previous state of the system, would have been excluded or would have dropped out. To which should be added the fact that the effects specifically linked to the disparity between expectations and objective opportunities are never as powerful as in the de luxe refuges represented by some of these new disciplines, especially sociology for boys and psychology for girls: these ill-defined academic positions, which give access to social positions which in their turn are ill defined, are well designed to allow their occupants to surround themselves and their future with an aura of indeterminacy and vagueness.

The same law which regulates the extension of the crisis within the academic institution also regulates the extension beyond the institution of the crisis specific to the institution: the proportion, among the holders of a social position, of agents belonging to the academic generation affected by the devaluation of academic diplomas, and thus endowed with aspirations maladjusted to the objective likelihood of their accomplishment, explains the differential reactions to the crisis of occupants of different positions in the social space. The crisis whose motives are to be found in the academic system is never entirely equivalent to the crisis of any determined class or fraction of a class: no doubt the protest movement found its most fertile ground in the intellectual fractions, and more especially the regions of social space most apt to welcome agents arriving from the dominant class which the academic system did not recognize; but it could also have evoked sympathy or even complicity within the different fractions of the middle classes, and even in the working or agricultural classes, among those adolescents who, having completed a vocational education, or even a normal, full-length secondary education, were disappointed in the expectations apparently authorized by the status of secondary or grammar school pupil (positions all the more prestigious for being rare in the social group of origin), or even *bachelier*.⁹

This is the case, which may serve as a test case, for the holders of a ‘Diploma in General Education’ or of a ‘Certificate of Professional Aptitude’, or even of the *baccalauréat* (in 1968 there were several thousands of ‘O.S.’ [unskilled workmen] who had this diploma), who are channelled into manual professions which attribute low economic and symbolic value to diplomas in general education and even to

vocational diplomas, and who therefore find themselves destined to be objectively and/or subjectively downclassed, and the frustration engendered by the experience of the uselessness of the diploma (as in the case of one educated young workman who, condemned to carry out the same work as workmen having no academic diploma or, 'worse', the same work as 'foreigners', concluded: 'I didn't study for four years to end up working a slicing-machine'). The answers to the question (put in 1969 to a representative sample of the working population) whether, in 1968, it would have been preferable for the students 'to come to the factories to discuss with the workers' provide indications as to the social characteristics of those who feel 'concerned' by the crisis in the educational system: the proportion of workers who declare themselves in favour of opening up factories to students is at its peak in the 20-24 age-group and even more so in the 15-19 age-group and among workmen holding a CAP.¹⁰ And it has been noted elsewhere that, among workers (who, unlike members of the dominant class, are increasingly likely to situate themselves further to the left as they grow older), as among the other social categories, participation in demonstrations increases with the level of instruction and in inverse proportion to age.

The effects of the increase in the number of agents receiving education, and of the concomitant devaluation of the diplomas awarded, do not operate automatically, homogeneously, but only take on their meaning as a function of the dispositions of the agents who are affected by them. Thus it is that, against the logic of analysis itself and of the discourse which expresses it, that is, against a tendency to synchronize and universalize what has taken the form of a slow and uneven transformation of minds, we would need to describe the different forms assumed – mainly as a function of social origins and of dispositions correlative to the education system – by the process of adjustment of hopes to opportunities, of aspirations to accomplishments, and in particular the work of disinvestment required in order to accept a lesser success, or a failure.

We must indeed be careful not to forget the important *time-lag* between the first appearance, in the science faculties, of the morphological transformations which are responsible for the tensions between teachers and the downclassing of the students, and, in a very specific sector of the university field, the outbreak of open crises which will later become generalized. This interval corresponds to the time necessary for certain agents to become aware, intermittently, of the transformations which have occurred in the institution and the effects which these transformations have on their present and future condition: that is to say, in the case of

the students, the devaluation of academic diplomas and the students' relative or absolute downclassing, and, in the case of the subordinate teachers appointed according to the new criteria, the *de facto* inaccessibility of careers apparently promised to the holders of their positions. And if the work (of mourning) indispensable for them to adjust their expectations to the effects of the morphological evolution is necessarily very long, it is because the agents only perceive a very limited fraction of social space (moreover they perceive it through categories of perception and appreciation which are the product of a previous state of the system) and because they are led by this fact to interpret their own experience, and that of the agents who belong to their world of mutual acquaintance, in an individual rather than a categorical perspective, in such a way that the morphological changes can only appear to them in the shape of a multitude of fragmented experiences, difficult to grasp and interpret as a whole. We should thus take into account in our analysis of this process of transformation of the vision of the future the role of institutions responsible for producing scholarly representations of the social world (like official and unofficial statistical institutes) and for accordingly manipulating the representations of prospects liable to be profitable (like careers advisers, and, more generally, all the agents responsible for providing information on prospects for qualifications and posts).

In the case of 'lucky survivors' such as students (or lecturers) coming from social categories particularly improbable for the posts which they hold, the very fact of being present in these positions, even devalued – and by their very presence – constitutes a form of symbolic remuneration, comparable to a nominal rise in salary in a period of inflation: the *allodoxia* is inherent in the fact that the schemes which they implement to perceive and appreciate their position are the product of an earlier state of the system. In addition, the agents themselves have a psychological stake in becoming party to the mystification of which they are the victims – according to a very common mechanism which persuades people (no doubt all the more so, the less privileged they are) to work at *being satisfied* with what they have and with what they are, to love their fate, however mediocre it may be.¹¹ In fact, we may doubt whether these representations can ever fully succeed, even with the complicity of a group, and it is probable that the enchanted image always coexists with the realistic representation, the first being tested primarily in competition with immediate *neighbours* (in the social space) and the second in collective claims challenging the *out-group*.

These effects of *dual consciousness* are even more visible in the

logic which leads students from the dominant class and poorly endowed with academic capital towards the new disciplines, whose power of attraction lies no doubt largely in the vagueness of the future which they offer and the freedom to defer disinvestment which they allow. Or it may lie in the orientation towards ill-defined professions which are as it were designed to allow students to perpetuate as long as possible, for themselves as much as for others, an indeterminacy of social identity, just like the professions of writer or artist and all the minor occupations of cultural production in former times, or all the new occupations, on the frontiers of the intellectual field and the university or medical field, which have proliferated in direct proportion to the effort to escape from devaluation by producing new professions. Everything leads us to believe that the critical tension is all the stronger, the longer the distance between reality and the representation of the self and of a social future has been maintained, necessitating a greater psychological effort.¹²

We can thus argue, first, that the overt crisis reached its maximum intensity in all the social spaces encouraging the perpetuation of maladjusted expectations; and, secondly, that the places liable to encourage a maladjustment which will have to be drastically revised later are those which, because of the vagueness of the social future which they promise, attract agents with maladjusted expectations and provide them with conditions encouraging the perpetuation of the maladjustment. To verify these hypotheses, we can take as our index of the homogeneity or heterogeneity of a position (faculty, institute, discipline) the dispersal of the corresponding population, either according to social origins or according to educational capital (the options studied or grade awarded in the *baccalauréat*), or, more germane to our hypothesis, according to the relation between social origins and educational capital: indeed, we might suppose that the disparity between these expectations and opportunities increases in all probability in proportion to the increase in the presence of students of high social origins and low educational capital. So we might then determine whether the variations in the degree of social and educational homogeneity according to the sectors of the educational institution correspond to variations in the intensity of the crisis.¹³

Only comparison of the distribution according to social origins and educational capital (and also, secondarily, according to gender, increase in

numbers, and place of residence) of the holders (students or lecturers, especially junior ones) of the different positions (*grandes écoles*, faculties, disciplines) in the university field, with variations according to the same variables of the postures adopted by these groups during May 1968, would allow us to verify or to refute the model proposed. At all events, we may establish, from the data available, that there is a correlation between the two series. Although the statistics which show an increase in the relative proportion of middle-class children in educational institutions conflate the populations of different institutions (*lycée*, CEG,¹⁴ etc.), thus masking the mechanisms of educational segregation which tend to maintain a relative social homogeneity of the student population during the period which precedes the crisis, we note a general tendency towards a decrease in the social homogeneity of the student population in the period preceding the crisis: still very strong in the top establishments (such as the *grandes écoles*, the medical faculties, or even the classics sections of grammar schools) or the lowest (such as the CET or the IUT¹⁵), social, academic and above all what one might call socio-academic homogeneity is generally weak in the institutions, options or disciplines occupying an intermediate position, or at least which have an ambiguous status in the hierarchy of the educational system. Moreover, if (since we have no indices of participation in subversive activities¹⁶) we agree to take as an indicator of conformity to, or support for the established university order, the rate of participation in the university elections of 1969 – which is, however, an extremely ambiguous indicator, since a high rate of abstention can result either from an explicit refusal to participate, therefore from a genuinely negative stance, or from a feeling of political impotence, as a consequence of a process of dispossession – we note that the proportion of voters is highest in institutes, disciplines or faculties which define themselves clearly in relation to the precise professions to which they lead. These include the medical faculties (68 per cent) and, to a lesser degree, the law faculties (53 per cent) or, at the other extreme of the university hierarchy, the IUTs (77 per cent). Conversely, the proportion of voters is low in the faculties or disciplines leading to professions strongly scattered throughout the social hierarchy: distinctly lower in the arts faculties (42 per cent) and the science faculties (43 per cent) as a whole, it reaches its lowest level in disciplines like sociology (26 per cent) and psychology (45 per cent), which, leading to particularly dispersed and ambiguous professions, are in clear contradistinction to disciplines leading to tenured teaching posts in secondary education, as in French literature (60 per cent), Greek (68 per cent), Latin (58 per cent), history (55 per cent) or geography (54.4 per cent) – with the exception of philosophy, which, because of the prospects it offers, is related to the social sciences, and which has a very low proportion, 20 per cent (*Le Monde*, 13 March 1969).¹⁷ The

structure of the breakdown according to faculties and disciplines is the same in the provinces, although participation is generally effective at a higher level, doubtless partly because of the effect of the size of the establishments, noticeable everywhere).¹⁸

But we cannot completely understand the special role of the new disciplines, notably sociology, in the triggering of the crisis, if we fail to see that these positions are the place of intersection of two latent crises of maximum intensity. At once inferior and indeterminate, the new disciplines in the arts faculties were predisposed to attract above all students from the dominant class with a low level of academic attainment, therefore endowed with expectations strongly maladjusted in relation to their objective chances of social success, and middle-class students relegated from the more prestigious options and threatened with disappointment in their ambitions since they lacked the social capital needed to enhance their devalued diplomas; moreover, as we have seen, these disciplines had to respond to a very rapid growth in the student population by appointing a considerable number of junior teachers weakly integrated into the university institution and liable to resentment because of the contradiction between the elevated expectations resulting from their (more or less) undreamed-of access to higher education and the disappointment of these expectations entailed by their maintenance in the lowest ranks of the university hierarchy.¹⁹

Just as social and academic heterogeneity seem to account for the attitudes of the students towards the movements of May 1968, so likewise the dispersal of past and above all potential trajectories, and the corresponding tensions between different ranks, seem to be the motivating force behind the different attitudes of the teachers. In order to verify this we have only to make a mental link between the synchronic and diachronic characteristics of the body of teachers of the different disciplines, and their differential participation in the movement of May 1968 or the intensity attained in the conflicts between the teachers of different ranks. But in order to push our demonstration as far as possible we can apply the analysis to the case of teachers of geography and sociology, who, although they both belong to subordinate disciplines, present differences able to explain why they played very different roles both in the movement and in the ensuing struggles over the future of the education system. Whereas the geographers, who are situated at the lowest level of both social and academic hierarchies, present a set of neatly crystallized social and academic characteristics for each rank, the sociologists are distinguished by very marked disparities in these characteristics, especially at the lower levels of the hierarchy: the

proportion of *normaliens*, equally weak in ranks A and B (4.5 and 3 per cent) for the geographers, is relatively high (25 per cent) for the sociologists at the top of their hierarchy (very close to the historians, 24 per cent, and the psychologists, 27 per cent) who, moreover, have often moved from philosophy, whereas it is among the lowest (5.5 per cent as opposed to 10 per cent in psychology and 13 per cent in history) for the sociologists at the lower level (rank B), although the proportion of teachers from the dominant classes is nearly as high in these categories as at the higher level (rank A).²⁰ This double discord (based on an almost chiasmic distribution of social and academic qualifications according to rank) between the top and the bottom of the hierarchy is no doubt the most visible expression of a duality of modes of recruitment which results from the structural ambiguity of the discipline at the same time as it reinforces it: sociology, a pretentious discipline, as Georges Canguilhem has said,²¹ which situates itself at the top of the hierarchy of the sciences, thus challenging philosophy whose ambitions it claims to fulfil but with the rigour of science, is also a refuge, but a *de luxe* refuge allowing all those who wish to flaunt grand ambitions in theory, in politics and in political theory the maximum symbolic profit for the cheapest educational entry fee (the link with politics explains that it is for male students of high social origins and mediocre academic success what psychology is for female students endowed with the same properties).²² We can understand why sociologists and geographers were so clearly marked out, at the heart of the university protest movement, to such an extent that they symbolize, especially in the trade-union movement, the opposition between the 'leftist' tendency and the 'reformist' tendency, between global and 'radical' protest against the university institution and the social world, and 'corporatist' claims placing the accent on teachers' careers or the transformation of the methods and contents of teaching.

To give an immediate impression of the structural affinity between the students and the subordinate teachers of the new disciplines from amongst whom were recruited many of the leaders of May 1968, we have only to present on one side the growth curves between 1950 and 1968 of numbers of pupils in the *grandes écoles* and of the numbers of students in the arts or science faculties, and on the other side those of the tenured professors and of the subordinate teachers (lecturers and assistant lecturers). Whereas the populations of professors and pupils of the several *écoles normales supérieures*, who have distinctly higher chances of becoming professors in higher education than the other students, remain more or less static, the other two populations, those of subordinate teachers and ordinary students, showed a very considerable increase. As a result, the pupils

of the *grandes écoles* can recognize in their professors (at their preparatory classes or in the faculty) the holders of positions which one day could be theirs; on the contrary, the ordinary students, but also those among the assistant lecturers who, having benefited from the new mode of appointment, do not have the secondary properties (the title of *normalien* or *agrégé*) still needed to proceed to the grade of professor, and who, especially in science and in the new disciplines of the arts faculties, are very close to the students, no doubt feel less inclined to establish with the titular professors the relation of anticipated identification which is doubtless designed to encourage investment, and above all encourages a prolongation of their support of the pedagogical status quo.²³ In other words, the paradoxical relations which have long obtained in science and arts – and which have also become predominant in economics recently – between teachers chosen by the most competitive examinations and the least-selected pupils is now tending to arise between the subordinate teachers, often stemming from the population of ordinary students and excluded in fact from careers leading to positions of professor, and the titular professors, in whom, unlike the legitimate heirs, they cannot see a prefiguration of their own future.²⁴ In short, the virtual line of fracture passes more and more clearly between the professors on one side, and the lecturers and assistant lecturers on the other, since the latter are usually objectively closer to the students than to the titular professors. This break in the *chain of anticipated identifications*, which were rooted in the order of succession which they tended to reproduce, is of a kind to encourage a sort of secession of agents who, excluded from the race for future prospects which until then had been programmed into their position, are now led to call into question the race itself. And we can no doubt recognize in this a specific realization of a general model of the revolutionary process: the objective break in the circle of expectations and opportunities leads an important fraction of the less subordinate among the subordinate (here the intermediate categories of teachers, elsewhere the petty bourgeoisie) to leave the race, that is to say, the competitive struggle implying acceptance of the rules of the game laid down and the goals proposed by the dominant class, and to take up a struggle which we may call revolutionary in so far as it aims to establish alternative goals and more or less completely to redefine the game and the moves which permit one to win it.

SYNCHRONIZATION

The students and assistant lecturers in sociology thus represent one of the cases of the *coincidence* between the dispositions and the interests of agents occupying homologous positions in different fields which, through the *synchronization* of crises latent in different fields, has made the generalization of the crisis possible. Such convergences, encouraging the harmonization of local crises or conjunctural alliances, could be seen throughout the arts and science faculties, where the disenchantment of an important fraction of the subordinate teachers, facing a difficult post and destined for mutilated careers, met that of the corresponding students, threatened by the downclassing associated with the devaluation of diplomas. Such convergences could also be seen among all those who, in the academic field itself, took part in the protest, and those who, outside the field, held structurally and sometimes functionally homologous positions, like the subordinate representatives of the agencies of cultural production and diffusion.

A regional crisis can extend to other regions of social space and thus become transformed into a general crisis, a *historical event*, when, through the effect of *acceleration* which it produces, it is able to bring about the *coincidence* of events which, given the different *tempo* which each field adopts in its relative autonomy, should normally start or finish in dispersed order or, in other words, succeed each other without necessarily organizing themselves into a unified causal series, such as that which is suggested after the event, with the benefit of illusory hindsight, by the historian's chronology. It follows that the position of the different fields in the general crisis and the behaviour of the corresponding agents will depend, to a considerable extent, on the relation between the social time-scales germane to each of these fields, that is to say between the rhythms with which, in each one of them, the processes generating its specific contradictions are accomplished.

We cannot understand the roles taken in the crisis by the different faculties or disciplines or even by the individuals who appeared as the incarnations of the movement (notably Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a student of sociology at Nanterre, Jacques Sauvageot, leader of the UNEF,²⁵ and Alain Geismar, lecturer in physics at Paris and general secretary of the

SNESup), unless we realize that, at the moment in objective time when the crisis broke out in the arts faculties, the structural conditions which encouraged its appearance had already been present for more than six years in the science faculties – where the SNESup, which played a decisive role in the generalization of the movement, was very strongly implanted, and had been for some time – whereas they had only just started to appear in the law faculties.

The crisis as conjuncture, that is to say as conjunction of independent causal series, supposes the existence of *worlds* which are separate but which participate in the same *universe* both through their motive forces and through their contingent functioning: the independence of the causal series which ‘develop in parallel’, as Cournot says, supposes the relative autonomy of the fields; the meeting of these series supposes their relative dependence as regards the fundamental structures – especially the economic ones – which determine the logics of the different fields. It is this independence in dependency which renders the *historical event* possible – societies without history being perhaps societies so undifferentiated that there is no place for the properly historical event which is born at the crossroads of relatively autonomous histories. If we take into account the existence of these worlds ‘in each of which’, as Cournot goes on to say, ‘we may observe a chain of causes and effects developing simultaneously, without having any connection between them, without each exercising on the other any appreciable influence’, we can escape from the dilemma which so often traps us between structural history and the history of events (*histoire événementielle*), and gain the means of understanding how the different fields, at once relatively autonomous and structured, but also open, and linked to the same factors, therefore to each other, can proceed to interact to produce a historical event in which are expressed at one and the same time the potentialities objectively inherent in the structure of each of them, and the relatively irreducible developments which are born of their conjunction.

Synchronization as coincidence in the same objective time (as marked by a historical date) of the latent crises germane to each sector of the university field (or, and it amounts to the same thing, the unification of the different fields resulting from the provisional suspension of the mechanisms tending to maintain the relative autonomy of each field) takes agents previously holding homologous positions in different fields, and engages them in the same game with

identical positions. The effect of synchronization exercised by the critical events which are at the *chronological* origins of the crisis and which can comprise a portion of accident (imputable to factors external to the field, such as police violence) is only completely exercised if there exists a relationship of *objective orchestration* between the agents experiencing crisis, as their field reaches its critical state, and other agents, endowed with dispositions which are similar, because produced by similar social conditions of existence (*identity of condition*). But, moreover, agents subjected to very different conditions of existence and endowed by this fact with very different, or even divergent, systems of dispositions (*habitus*), yet occupying in the different fields positions structurally homologous to the positions held by the agents in crisis (*homology of position*), can identify rightly or wrongly (*allodoxia*) with the movement or, more simply, seize the opportunity created by the critical break in the ordinary order, to advance their own claims or defend their own interests.

Starting out from the new disciplines in the arts and social science faculties and spreading to the whole of the university field, the crisis found its most propitious terrain in the institutions of production and diffusion of cultural goods for mass-consumption – radio and television organizations, the cinema, the press, advertising or marketing media, opinion poll institutes, youth movements, libraries, etc. – which, also benefiting from their rapid and considerable growth in size and offering a whole range of new positions to the products of the university threatened with downclassing, are a locus of contradictions analogous to those experienced in the academic field: driven by intellectual ambitions which have not always been able to find fulfilment in works able to give access to acknowledged positions in the intellectual field, the new agents of symbolic manipulation are led to live out in a state of unease or resentment the opposition between their own representation of their task as intellectual creation in its own right and the bureaucratic constraints to which they must bend their activity. Their *anti-institutional mood*, constituted essentially in their ambivalent relationship with a university which has not fully recognized them, cannot fail to be recognized in all the forms of protest against cultural hierarchies of which the revolt of the students against their academic institutions no doubt represents the archetypal form. Which is to say that we cannot impute to the sole effects of fashion, nor of ‘contamination’

(the spreading of the protest has very often been analysed in terms of contagion), the relatedness of themes which were invented and expressed in the sectors furthest away from the 'movement', benefiting from the lifting of taboos which offers an opportunity to reveal social pretensions, or even impulses, often scantily veiled by an appearance of political generalization.²⁶

The 'spontaneist' thematics which is the unifying factor behind the 'May ideas', a more or less anarchic combination of fragments of diverse discourses taken out of context, and which is destined above all to reaffirm the founding complicities of emotional communities, functions in what Malinowski calls the 'phatic' mode,²⁷ that is, as a communication whose only aim is its own act of communication itself or (and it comes to the same thing) the strengthening of the integration of the group.²⁸ The 'practical *gauchisme*' no doubt owes much less than we had thought to the diffusion of learned ideologies – such as that of Marcuse, elicited more often by the commentators than by the participants – even if, according to the characteristic logic of prophecy, certain spokesmen owed some of their impact and their charisma to their art of bringing into public debate and on to the streets popularized versions of learned doctrines, often reduced to key words and themes which had been until then the preserve of limited exchanges between academics ('repression' and 'repressive', for instance). This semblance of ideological diffusion results in fact from the multiplicity of *simultaneous* but independent, albeit objectively orchestrated, *inventions*, realized at different points of the social space, but in similar conditions, by agents endowed with similar systems of dispositions and, so to speak, the same social *conatus* (by which we mean that combination of dispositions and interests associated with a particular class of social position which inclines agents to strive to reproduce at a constant or an increasing rate the properties constituting their social identity, without even needing to do this deliberately or consciously). Indeed, no ideological production better expresses the specific contradictions and the material or symbolic interests of subordinate intellectuals – actual or potential – of the great bureaucracies of cultural production, whose oldest paradigm is obviously the church, than the thematics developed at that moment, in the most apparently anarchic liberty, according to a small number of common generative schemas such as the oppositions between invention and routine, liberty and repression, transformed forms of

the opposition between individual and institution. The typically *heretical* attack on cultural hierarchies and official discourse, which, in a modern variant of the notion of a *universal priesthood*, professes a sort of universal right of spontaneous expression (the right of 'free speech'), has obvious links with the specific interests of the subordinate intellectuals of the great bureaucracies of science and culture: setting 'natural creativity' and 'spontaneity', which each individual contains within him, against socially (that is academically) guaranteed competence is equivalent to using this humanist slogan to denounce the monopoly of cultural legitimation claimed by the educational system, and thereby devalue the competence, certified and legitimated by the academic institution, of agents who, in the name of that competence, occupy the highest echelons of the institutional hierarchy. And moreover we can see the special attraction which this representation of culture exerts on all those who have not managed to obtain social recognition of and reward for their inherited cultural capital.

It is again to the effect of solidarities founded on structural homologies between the holders of positions subordinate in the different fields, and often associated with the experience of a structural downclassing, that we should attribute the extension of the crisis beyond the university field and directly connected fields – without forgetting, of course, the specific action of the trade-union and political machinery, one of whose ordinary functions, as centralized (national) bureaucracies, is precisely to work towards the *controlled generalization* of local movements (through orders for a general strike, for instance). Indeed, since any field tends to organize itself around the opposition between dominant and subordinate positions, there is always a relationship through which the agents of any particular field can join or be included with agents holding a homologous position in another field, however distant in social space this position may be and however different may be the conditions of existence which it offers its tenants and, by the same token, the systems of dispositions with which they are endowed: that is to say that any agent can declare his solidarity with agents holding homologous positions in other fields, but on condition that he does it as if the affinity which linked him to them in this abstract and partial relationship was also valid, if not in all perspectives (which is practically impossible), at least in a set of *decisive* perspectives, especially from the viewpoint of the probability of constituting a

mobilized and socially active group. But homology of position must not allow us to forget the difference between the fields, although intellectual, political and artistic history has furnished a number of historic examples of this confusion. We know the representation which the artists and writers of the first half of the nineteenth century, more attentive to their position in the field of power than to their subordinate position in the social field, made of their relation to the 'bourgeoisie' in the most acute phase of their struggle for the conquest of the autonomy of the field of cultural production. But, in a more general way, the sub-field which people belong to (often overlapping the space of mutual acquaintance and social interaction) always tends to produce a *screen effect*: the agents tend to perceive the position which they hold in it more distinctly and, in the case of subordinate agents, more painfully than the position which the sub-field itself occupies in the wider field which encompasses it, and thereby more plainly than their real position in the overall space.

The homology of position between those subordinate in the field of power and those subordinate in the social field as a whole provides a sociological answer to the question of 'consciousness of the outside world' (as Kautsky said), a kind of siphoning off for the benefit of the subordinate of a part of the accumulated social energy. And the situation of being (relatively) dominated to the power of two, which is that of second-rank intellectuals from the viewpoint of the specific criteria of the intellectual field at a given moment, explains their inclination to turn towards reformist or revolutionary movements and frequently to import into them a form of anti-intellectualism, of which Zhdanovism, but also the *völkisch* [populist] reaction of conservative-revolutionaries, have been exemplary realizations. We can thus understand that a crisis specific to a field where the opposition between the dominant and the subordinate takes the form of unequal access to the attributes of legitimate cultural competence should tend to give preference to the burgeoning of subversive ideological themes, such as the denunciation of 'mandarin rule' and of all forms of statutory authority founded on academically guaranteed competence. These themes are based on a principle of homology, as resemblance in difference, thus on the partly misunderstood, and thus allow the crises germane to other fields which are divided according to other principles to be analysed in the same perspective. Thus it is that, in most revolutionary movements, the 'relatively' subordinate people that artists and intellectuals are, or, more

precisely, the subordinate intellectuals and artists, tend to produce forms of perception, appreciation and expression liable to impress themselves on other subordinate groups through homology of position.

In fact, the reality is more complex: certain oppositions specific to the professional politicians or trade-union militants can indeed find support in homologous oppositions among the subordinate; particularly the opposition found between the permanent workers, more aware and better organized, and the demoralized and demobilized sub-proletariat. Thus it is that the representatives within the labour movement of scientist and authoritarian, that is technocratic, tendencies, most usually holders of a capital of scientific competence (theory, economics, dialectical materialism, etc.), tend to seek their support spontaneously among the most stable and well-integrated proletariat, while the defenders of spontaneist, libertarian positions, often poorer in cultural capital and less given to the practical activities of leader or agitator rather than thinker, tend to become spokesmen for the lowest and least organized fractions of the subordinate, especially the sub-proletariat.

We cannot assign *a priori* limits to the *game of assimilation and dissimilation* through which more or less imaginary solidarity can be established between agents having in common a structural property: the alliances which are engendered in this game can be all the larger for being strongly dependent on the particular conjuncture which gave birth to them and for engaging less strongly the most vital interests of agents who seem to participate only partially and distantly, in their most abstract and most generic social aspect (for example, as human beings subjected to some form or other of domination or violence and at the cost of a more or less total suspension of everything that is associated with any particular conditions of existence). The alliances founded on homology of position – for instance, those which were set up, conjuncturally, between agents occupying subordinate positions in the academic field and agents occupying subordinate positions in the social field taken as a whole – are of this sort: unless they are restricted to the realm of the imaginary, as were a number of meetings dreamed of between the 'intellectuals' and the 'proletariat', they have a greater chance of materializing, and lasting, if the partners whom they mobilize at a distance around vague slogans, abstract manifestos and formal programmes, have less opportunity to enter into direct interaction, to see and speak to each other; indeed, their encounters bring

together not abstract individuals, defined only in relation to their position in a determined region of social space, but total persons, all of whose practices, discourse and even simple bodily appearance express divergent and, at least potentially, antagonistic systems of dispositions (*habitus*).

THE CRISIS AS DEVELOPER

In establishing an objective or, in other words, a historical time, that is a time transcending the specific time-scales of each different field, the situation of general crisis renders *practically contemporary*, for a shorter or longer period, agents who, although theoretically contemporaneous, evolved in more or less completely separate social times, each field having its own specific time-scale and history, with its specific dates, events, crises or revolutions, and rhythms of development. Moreover, it renders *contemporary to themselves* agents whose biography is answerable to as many systems of periodization as there are fields in whose different rhythms they share. And the same effect of synchronization which explains the collective logic of the crisis, especially what we perceive as 'politicization', also explains the relation between the individual crises and the collective crises which are their occasion: in encouraging the intersection of discrete social spaces and in bringing together in the minds of agents practices and discourses on which the autonomy of different fields, and the successive deployment of contradictory choices which it authorizes, conferred a practical form of compatibility, the general crisis produces conflicts of legitimacy which often give rise to radical arguments; it imposes agonizing revisions intended to restore unity of direction to their life, at least symbolically.

The principal effect of this synchronization is to compel people to introduce into positions adopted a relative coherence which is not required in ordinary circumstances, that is when the relative autonomy of social spaces and times makes it possible to hold separate positions successively, and to adopt different or divergent attitudes, which are none the less in accordance in each case with the requirements of the position held: the propensity for successive sincerities is inherent in the plurality of social positions (often linked with the plurality of spatial localizations) which increases, as we know, the higher we rise in the social hierarchy. (Therein lies one of the bases of the

impression of 'authenticity' given off by holders of subordinate positions, who are socially assigned to a single professional position, which is often defined in very rigid terms, and who are by this fact little equipped with the dispositions necessary for successively holding different positions, all the more so because the dispositions imposed by these unitary conditions of existence find reinforcement in the explicit ethical imperative which favours people who have a 'consistent, 'you know me', etc., sort of character.) In obliging everyone to organize his political position with reference to the position held in a specific field and in that one alone, the crisis tends to substitute a *division* into clearly distinguished *camps* (according to the logic of a civil war) for progressive distribution between two poles, and for all the multiple, partly contradictory memberships which the separation of spaces and times allows to reconcile. Moreover, in forcing us to decide in all things on the basis of a single principle of choice and in thus excluding the evasions and equivocations allowed by multiple frames of reference, it acts as a *developer* and discourages or inhibits the usually tacit rather than explicit concessions ('we let them say what they like', 'we pretend not to notice'), the compromises, concessions or even deals and self-denials which render existence tolerable; by forcing us to choose and to proclaim our choices, by multiplying situations where not to choose is still a manner of choosing, it cuts into the vagueness of relations more or less consciously maintained towards and against all the factors of fission. Repressed feelings and judgements break out into broad daylight, and, in order to describe the effects of synchronization and the inevitable alternative which it imposes, we might use Lanson's words on the Dreyfus case (thereby underlining the general validity of the analysis proposed): 'Each group, each individual, will turn out his pockets, so to speak, and reveal his inmost tendencies.'²⁹

This effect is compounded, in the case of a predominantly symbolic crisis, by a radical questioning, requiring a systematic response, which is determined by the appearance in one sector of the milieu of *paradoxical* acts and discourses, what Goffman calls *discrediting events*, liable to shake the doxa on which the normal order relies: these are extraordinary situations, whose paradigm no doubt is the 'general assembly', making manifest on the university campus itself, and sometimes in the presence of the professors, the symbolic reversal of ordinary educational relationships (with the most venerable

professors being addressed by their first name), and the practical transgression of the presuppositions normally objectified, and above all unconsciously internalized, in this relationship. Extraordinary actors are revealed by these situations, students suddenly catapulted out of anonymity, obscure trade-union militants, known only to close colleagues, suddenly promoted as political orators or even revolutionary leaders, etc.; finally there are all the dramatic and theatrical questionings of the beliefs and views which ordinary agents have of the ordinary world, such as the symbolic depositions and destitutions of the symbols of economic power (the Stock Exchange) or cultural power (the Odéon theatre or the Hotel Massa³⁰) or, at the other extreme, all forms of magical negation of real social relations, with various ceremonies of symbolic *fraternization*.

It is clear that critical discourses and displays can break the doxic relation to the social world which is the effect of a correspondence between objective structures and personally internalized structures only in so far as they objectively encounter a critical state able by its own logic to disconcert the pre-perceptual anticipations and expectations which form the basis of the ahistorical continuity of the perceptions and actions of common sense. If the crisis goes hand in hand with criticism, it is because it introduces a break in duration, because it suspends the ordinary order of succession and the ordinary experience of time as presence in an already present future; in overthrowing in reality or in representation the structure of objective opportunities (for financial or social success, etc.) to which behaviour reputed reasonable is spontaneously adjusted, and which creates social order as a world one can count on, that is, a predictable and calculable world, the crisis tends to undo that sense of placing, both as 'knowing one's place' and as knowing how to place sound investments, which is inseparable from the sense of realities and possibilities which we call sensible. It is the *critical moment* when, breaking with the ordinary experience of time as simple re-enactment of a past or a future inscribed in the past, all things become possible (at least apparently), when future prospects appear really contingent, future events really indeterminate, the moment truly instantaneous, suspended, its consequences unpredicted and unpredictable.

The crisis makes the field (in this instance, the academic field) appear retrospectively in the objective truth of its system of objective patterns, more or less converted (distinctly less, in this case) into explicit rules and regulations, which each agent can and must take

into account in order to organize his investments; the objective possibilities immanent in this world are, essentially, attributed in advance and the (objective or personally internalized) capital confers rights of pre-emption on the options, whether positions available for tenure or privileges available for acquisition. It is this temporal structure of the field, as shown in careers, curricula vitae and accumulated honours, which becomes shaken: the uncertainty about the future which the crisis establishes in objective reality itself means that everyone can believe that the processes of reproduction have been interrupted for the time being, and that all futures are possible for all people.

It goes without saying that the *provisional indeterminacy of options* is very differently perceived and appreciated. It engenders more or less 'crazy' hopes in some, notably in all those who hold intermediate positions in the different fields, claimants tempted to project on to the old order, which they continue to recognize implicitly, the new aspirations which it excluded and which become possible once that order is undermined. For those on the contrary who are involved in maintaining and reproducing the status quo, therefore with the 'normal' future of this economy in which they have invested everything, and from the beginning, the sudden appearance of an objective *discontinuity* (of which certain exemplary scenes give a brutally manifest image, thus proving that 'all things are possible' in a world turned upside-down – professors reduced to listening to students, Cohn-Bendit interviewed by Sartre, etc.) seems like *the end of the world*: the reactions of the teachers who are most completely integrated into this social world, which, as long as it was contained within the cyclical time of simple reproduction, was compatible with traditional societies, resemble the despair and the disarray of the elders of such societies when faced with the irruption of modes of life and thought hostile to the deepest axiomatics of their existence.

Just like old Kabyle peasants speaking of the heretical methods of cultivation practised by the young, they can only express their stupefaction, their incredulity in the face of the *incredible*, the world upside-down, the denial of their most intimate beliefs, of all that they hold most dear: 'On the other hand, but it's difficult to talk about. Is it true? Might it not be lies or slander? I hear that recently some professors were not only driven to refuse to invigilate exams – which could be defensible as such – but to boycott them, to mark them

improperly on purpose. That's what I've heard, but I can't believe it. Professors who did that would no longer be professors. They would ruin any reputation we had left. But above all they would wreck the values on which our professional life is founded, and whose basic tenet is that duty is sacrosanct.³¹ 'The papers and the radio kept repeating during the crisis of May and June that the students and the "professors" said this or did that. It is true that professors in the strict sense of the term did demonstrate alongside students through visceral disgust at the police, but in the vast majority of cases the university teachers who associated themselves with revolutionary students in the pursuit of specific aims were lecturers or assistant lecturers. The public, which was not informed about this, was dumbfounded during the crisis, and continues to wonder how it came about that "professors" participated furiously in demonstrations directed against the "professors".³² In fact, these besieged professors took a long time to shake off the sort of 'stupor' they had been cast into by 'the irruption of the barbarians, unconscious of their barbarity'.³³ Having to defend the untouchable, a universe without explicit sanctions or obligations, based on a 'spontaneous consensus' and on 'agreement on self-evident truths',³⁴ they had no real arguments to speak of. Moreover, how could or should they possibly argue about defending what goes without saying? Thus they only relate their experience as teachers, as if the (awestruck) description of their practice contained the evident proof of its excellence: 'The fact that any education worthy of the name implies intellectual objectivity, and, as a result, a strict political neutrality in the exercise of our profession, is an obvious truth which should not have to be spelt out'.³⁵ Education is invoked in an almost religious language: the lecture is a moment of grace, a moment of intense communion with the pupils; and the defence of the profession culminates in a proclamation of faith and love: 'I am one of those who love their profession';³⁶ 'I was proud of my profession and still am';³⁷ 'I have known the joy of teaching; I have also known the virtues of the university, chief of which is integrity, integrity often taken to extremes. I have to laugh at pupils or students who want to monitor our examination procedures. If only they knew!'³⁸

It is clear on the other hand that the teachers are all the more inclined to project themselves into the indeterminate options which are provided by *disrupting events*, to project their fantasies, encouraged by the lifting of taboos, on to the blank screen of the future thus offered, the less they are tied objectively and subjectively, in their present and their future, to the previous state of the system and to the statutory guarantees of their specific competence, the less they have invested in it and the less they expect from it in exchange.

The systems of dispositions and the interests associated with a trajectory and with a position in the university space (faculty, discipline, academic trajectory, social trajectory) are the motive force behind the perception and the appreciation of the critical events, and thereby in practice they mediate the effects of these events themselves.

Added to the effect of symbolic provocation, which, by making the unexpected or the unthinkable suddenly appear, interrupts automatic acceptance of the unquestioned truths of the status quo, there is the effect of all the social techniques of protest or subversion, whether in the case of demonstrations as collective transgression, of sit-ins in privileged spaces or of the intentional misuse of social objects or spaces whose social definition is thereby suspended – theatres, amphitheatres, workshops, factories, etc. – or finally, with the local or the general strike, there is the effect of the suspension of the activities which structure normal existence. The break with temporal rhythms which characterizes the strike does not produce only free, festive leisure time; just as holidays reproduce the effect of synchronization produced by the event which they commemorate, so the strike displays and amplifies the effect of synchronization produced by the crisis; by replacing the time-scales of ordinary existence – multiple time-scales specific to each field and filled with all the events written into its several calendars – with a vague and almost empty time, *common* to the different fields and to the different groups, which, like 'festive' time in Durkheim's description, is defined by the inversion of normal temporality, the strike, through the symbolic effect of its display, materializes and compounds all the actual effects of the crisis.

The effect of synchronization operates fully here: time becomes a *public time*, identical for all, measured by the same markers, by the same presences, which by impinging on everyone simultaneously, makes everyone share the same present. Moreover, just as in festivity everyone is reinforced in his festive dispositions by the display of others' enjoyment, so here everyone becomes revealed to himself, and thus reinforced or legitimated in his malaise or his revolt, by the fact of seeing and hearing expressed the revolt or the malaise of others (which sometimes gives to debates a style of psychodrama or logotherapy). It is still the case that there is never a perfect parallel, and that, behind the appearances of homogeneity which one gets from the speeches of the spokesmen, are hidden divergences in experience and expression. Thus it is for instance that, when the

malaise of the students and teachers from social categories previously little represented in the institutions of secondary and especially higher education managed to find expression, thanks to the crisis, and especially in areas of social space where these categories are most represented, as in the small provincial universities, it was possible to see that although the rebellion which it harboured was apparently less radical and universal than that of the Parisian vanguard, which was more inclined to symbolic fraternizations and revolutionary verbalism, it was no doubt more overtly directed at the immense block of silence which props up the academic institution.³⁹ But the movement unleashed by the aristocratic revolt of the students of bourgeois origins had only a slim chance of bringing to light everything which, in the phase of equilibrium, had been hidden by the spontaneous collusion between the agents and the tacit presuppositions of the institution, which is an effect of the inextricably social and academic selection of individuals possessing dispositions isomorphic to the positions constituting the university space. Indeed, the various official spokesmen of the university student movement or the unions of lecturers (or others) were hardly disposed to express a malaise which had no definition in the phraseology of the political and trade-union establishment, which was ill prepared to perceive and enunciate the specifically cultural dimension of their domination. As for the spontaneous-style speech of the grassroots leaders of the protest movement, it often found its principle – as expressed in slogans like ‘Give the Sorbonne to the workers!’ or ‘Let the workers into the Sorbonne!’ – in a magical denial of the factors causing the malaise.

In the case of the majority union of lecturers, the SNESup, the current which is no doubt the closest to the new entrants and the ‘gatecrashers’ by its social base is also the most directly inspired or controlled by executive organizations more or less totally lacking in open minds or original thoughts on the educational system. The ‘leftist’ tendency which controls the union between 1966 and 1969 and which, through Alain Geismar, then its general secretary, plays an important role in the May 1968 movement, formulates a global protest against the kind of culture channelled through the educational system, and against hierarchical relations (between heads of department and other staff, between teachers and students), analysed in terms of the model of class relations as ‘relations between oppressors and oppressed’, and considers the union as an organization for ‘struggle against the capitalist system in its university institution’. The opposite tendency, which took over the

direction of the union at the extraordinary congress of March 1969,⁴⁰ and which is dominated by militants of the Communist Party, intends to concentrate on specifically trade-union issues and places the emphasis of its claims on ‘concrete means’, reform of lecturers’ careers, democratization of access to higher education, ‘possibilities of intervention in the councils of the units of education and research’. The almost total absence of any analysis of the functioning and the specific conditions of education, the absolute refusal, justified by the desire to ‘consolidate gains’, to debate major contradictions – between the conditions affecting the scientific quality of the teachers and their teaching, and conditions affecting democratization, for instance – make this programme tend to use the imperative of ‘democratization of access to higher education’, a vague and empty slogan, as an ideology justifying the corporatist claims of the junior lecturers who make up the social base of the SNESup. And this was fostered by an amalgam, encouraged by a ‘leftist’ denunciation of ‘mandarins’ and ‘conservatives’, between the university hierarchies – which are not always completely lacking in scientific or technical rationale – and social hierarchies, between the ‘democratization’ of the population of pupils and the levelling down of the population of lecturers.

PUBLISHED OPINIONS

Through its proliferation of specifically political events, demonstrations, assemblies, meetings, etc., where political declarations, motions, petitions, alliances, manifestos, programmes, etc., are elaborated and professed publicly and collectively, the crisis leads to the constitution of a common political problematic, of a space of formal political attitudes, that is attitudes explicitly formulated and overtly associated with socially situated agents and groups, unions, parties, movements, associations, etc.;⁴¹ from this point on, whether we like it or not, whether we are aware of it or not, we can no longer avoid defining ourselves or being defined in terms of this space of potential positions.⁴² Concretely, through all the occasions which oblige us to declare ourselves or to betray ourselves in public, that is to say to ‘take sides’, whether we like it or not, and whose most exaggerated form is represented by the kind of public confession, whether free or induced, which characterized so many contributions to the assemblies of 1968, in short, through the generalized unveiling of public opinion which it encourages, the political crisis constrains each agent (also pushed in this direction by all the effects already analysed) to generate all his choices from one specifically political principle and to apply this same principle to the perception and the appreciation of the choices of the other agents.⁴³ By the same token

it tends to introduce definitive separations between people who were in agreement until then because they left out, or left implicit through a kind of tacit understanding, the differences which could separate them, especially in political matters. What we call 'politicization' designates the process which leads to the principle of political vision and division tending to prevail over all the others, bringing together people clearly separated by former criteria and distancing people who in their previous existence were quite close in their choices and judgements. Emotional excitement generated by the 'revolt of the lecturers' was thus able to drive certain 'leading academics' to link up, either in signing a petition or more permanently, with 'ordinary professors' for whom they had previously felt nothing but contempt;⁴⁴ while links, bound to appear to the other side as unnatural fraternizations, spring up, beyond differences in grade, status and officially recognized competence, between those who communed in the 'spirit of May'. The logic of the classificatory thought which thus tends to predominate persuades everyone to imagine himself as a collective person, speaking with the entire authority of the group, at the same time as investing each individual member of the opposing class with responsibility for the deeds and misdeeds of the ensemble of the group he belongs to: thus the professor debating with his students during a seminar held in May 1968 imagines himself – according to his Memoirs⁴⁵ – establishing a dialogue with 'Maoist students' or with 'leftist militants';⁴⁶ and thus another group of eminent professors who, at the same time, are working at preparing the principles of a reform of the university, welcome with the attention due to an official body the comments of an unrepresentative science student who occasionally turns up to take part in their discussions.

In ordinary existence, the specifically political principle of choice is only in one sense the *visible continuation* of factors which, like dispositions and interests, are linked to the position (in social space, in the field of power and in the academic field); but, because of its explicit and differential character as taking sides, as partisan choice, a position consciously affirmed and negatively determined by the whole set of the different or contrary positions, it permits the generalized and systematized application of specifically political criteria to the whole set of problems and, notably, to precisely those which only touch on secondary, marginal interests. (This effect of generalization and systematization is obviously all the more 'suc-

cessful' as the cultural capital is more important and the inclination and the aptitude for *coherence* greater, which placed academics and intellectuals, professionals in these matters, in a privileged position.) Thus it is that the lecturers who favour change in a fundamental issue (for themselves, and also for reproduction of the system), that is, the problem of careers, will be led by their concern to obey the explicit and objectified principle of their established political opinions to take up progressive positions on problems, whether academic ones (such as selective admission to universities) or non-academic ones which do not affect their interests directly.⁴⁷ And we can even understand in the same logic those (paradoxical) cases, whose paradigm is that of the aristocrats of the *ancien régime* converted to the new ideas, where the formal constraints of coherence prevail over the influence of their central interests. It is because we can only move from holding social positions to adopting stances on secondary issues, through the mediation of established political opinions (which does not necessarily mean that these are public and advertised), that these positions arising from an explicit principle can threaten (in an entirely theoretical manner, at least outside times of crisis) the interests inherent in the position. The crisis in the academic field as specific revolution calling directly into question the interests associated with a dominant position in the field cancels out that detachment from specifically academic interests which could be introduced by the relative autonomy of specifically political logic: primary reactions to the crisis clearly have as their principle the position of teachers in the university field, or, more precisely, the degree to which the present and future satisfaction of their specific interests depends on the conservation or subversion of the power relations constitutive of the academic field. If these political attitudes, whose social determinants are thus revealed in broad daylight, can appear as conversions or apostasies, it is because, as long as the university order is not threatened, the taking of sides, especially in the domain of general politics, but also, although within stricter limits, in the specifically academic domain, can be motivated not by the position in the academic field but, especially for the professors closest to the 'intellectual' pole, by their position in the field of power and by the political option which is traditionally attached to the subordinate positions in this field, as the necessary expression of their being and their destiny. The return to the primary interests inherent in the nearest field of membership obliges them to abandon the games

which allowed membership at different levels; and a number of positions adopted for or against the May 1968 movement are political rationalizations, necessitated by the effect of politicization, of reactions whose source is not in politics: the situation of philology or linguistics, or even of some particular trend in linguistics, may be detected through apparently purely political commitments – against the Communist Party and the leftists, or with the Communist Party and against the leftists, assimilated, in some particular case, to modernism and thereby to America or Chomskyism – where drives and impulses of individuals or groups determined to defend their social being are often expressed.

THE ILLUSION OF SPONTANEITY

The effect of *context awareness* which results from the global perception of the stances displayed (and which affects agents all the more, as political competence is more strongly attributed to them socially) tends no doubt to reduce the efficiency of the effects of *allogoxia* by rendering less vague, less confused, therefore more readable than in ordinary existence, the relation which is established between the space of political stances and the space of social positions. But it goes without saying that the different types of objectified opinions, demonstrations, slogans, petitions, manifestos, platforms and programmes, which arise in the situation of crisis, are as far removed from so-called ‘public’ opinion obtained by statistical aggregation of isolated opinions (we know the hostility of political or trade-union organizations to anonymous enquiries) as from the collective opinion which would arise spontaneously from the spontaneous dialectic of individual opinions freely expressed and confronted, in the fusion and effusion of revolutionary enthusiasm. The symbolic production of a time of crisis is neither an arithmetical addition of individual opinions nor a mystical fusion of minds exalted by collective effervescence. It is no different in its principle from what happens in ordinary times through the – often one-directional – exchange between the professional constructors and imposers of definitions of the social world, and those whom they are supposed to speak for – if it weren’t for the fact that, as we have seen, the political action of mobilizing the subordinate is reinforced by the crisis and by the effect of ‘politicization’ which it causes. The myth of the moment of awareness as foundation of the voluntary formation

of a group on the basis of common interests consciously perceived, or, in other words, as immediate coincidence of the individual minds of all the members of the theoretical class with the immanent laws of history which constitute them as a group, at the same time as assigning them the ends, both necessary and free, of their action, masks the work of construction of the group and of the collective vision of the world which is accomplished in the construction of common institutions and of a bureaucracy of *plenipotentiaries* entrusted with *representing* a potential group of agents united by affinities of dispositions and interests, and making that group exist as a political force in and through this representation.

This work is doubtless most important in times of crisis, when the meaning of a social world less totalizable than ever vacillates; and, in fact, the political apparatuses and above all the party men, experts in the social techniques of manipulation of groups because of their experience of party machines – even those which constitute almost the whole existence of so many political groupuscules and sects, richer in leaders than militants – are perhaps never more present and active than in these circumstances. In the vast, semi-anonymous assemblies of these critical moments, the mechanisms of competition for the expression and imposition of legitimate opinion, which, like market mechanisms, act ‘in spite of anarchy, in and through anarchy’, as Engels somewhere says, give an advantage to those with acquired verbal skills and those skilled in appropriating places of speech, and in using techniques producing unanimous, monopolistic meaning and its expression (such as the vote by show of hands or by acclamation of motions or petitions drawn up by a few and often only marginally inspired by the interminable discussions which they are supposed to express, etc.).⁴⁸ Paradoxically, the appearance of previously unknown spokesmen and the challenge which they have thrown down to the titular heralds of the major political and above all trade-union organizations have concealed the fact that there is doubtless no situation more favourable to professional public speakers of the political variety than the situations of crisis apparently totally abandoned to the ‘spontaneity of the masses’; and, in fact, just as the prophets of ancient Judaism were often defectors from the priestly caste, so the majority of the leaders thrown up by the ‘popular ferment’ had in fact been trained in the various political organizations, those of the students or the lecturers or the revolutionary ‘sects’ where a specific competence is acquired, usually

comprising a set of linguistic and postural instruments, enabling exploitation and control of the institutionalized places of speech. Ideally we should *evoke* the typical style of the discourse of May, a populist dramatization of 'popular' speech, whose negligent syntax and lax expression mask a formidable rhetorical violence, a soft, relaxed violence, but enveloping and penetrating, especially noticeable in the techniques of interpellation and interruption, of questioning and warning, which allow intervention in and control over the discussion, in the 'knockout' phrases, which blast aside all analytical subtleties, in the obsessional repetition, destined to encourage interruption and questioning, etc.⁴⁹ We forget in fact that *freedom of speech*, which was so much discussed during and after May 1968, is always freedom from the speech of others, or rather control of their silence, as was so cruelly demonstrated in those meetings between students and 'workers' where the spokesmen of the former orchestrated the speech and silence of the latter: indeed, faced with the president of a society of *agrégés* with hardly any members speaking in the name of all the *agrégés*, with the secretary of a trade union who commits all his members to policies which have emerged from his particular *habitus* alone or from the contagious influence of the ideal model of the revolutionary leader, or with the ephemeral leader of one day's general assembly who calls for a vote to pass a revolutionary motion in favour of the abolition of diplomas or a reform of the statutes of the university prepared by the corporate imagination of its members, the individuals who are objectively implicated as a result of categorial membership can only offer up a resigned silence, the vain revolt of uncoordinated protest or the sectarian foundation of dissident groups destined to disappear or to discover in their turn the privative effects of delegation.

But there does still exist a sort of incompatibility between situations of crisis and social and political organizations, even those, like the parties of the left or the workers' unions, which must reproduce *in ordinary times* some of the effects of 'politicization' and of mobilization, which the crisis also produces, but in a basically discontinuous and extraordinary way. Thus the *action of representation* which creates the visible existence of the class represented must be based on official institutions, provided with *headquarters* (buildings, offices, secretariats, etc.) and with *permanent staff* who must *continuously*, or with a controlled and regular periodicity, accomplish acts which are destined to maintain the state of mobilization of the group represented and of the group of the

representatives (producing tracts, displaying posters, selling newspapers, distributing cards, collecting subscriptions, organizing congresses, festivals, meetings and debates, etc.) and who, by exploiting the results of their permanent action, can produce *tailor-made crises*, such as demonstrations, strikes, work stoppages, etc. There is at least the germ of a contradiction between the immanent tendencies of the permanent organization, including those who are involved in it and its reproduction, and the ends which it is supposed to serve: the autarky of an organization which becomes its own self-sufficient end leads it to sacrifice external functions to the internal functions of self-reproduction. Thus we explain the fact that the organizations officially mandated to produce or maintain *critical* states can fail in this function when the crisis is not a controlled effect of their action, and the fact that the crisis thereby contains by the same token a threat to their internal order, if not their very existence.

No doubt the situation of crisis is more favourable than the normal order for a subversion of the space of the spokesmen, that is to say the political field as such. Indeed, however powerful the effect of the social techniques which tend to oppose or control the improvisation of the non-professionals, the latter, reinforced and sustained by the meeting of kindred homologous dispositions, can benefit from the lifting of taboos in order to contribute to what is doubtless the most important and the most durable effect of the crisis: the symbolic revolution as profound transformation of styles of thought and life, and, more particularly, of the whole symbolic dimension of everyday existence. Functioning like a sort of collective ritual of divorce from ordinary routines and attachments, its aim is *metanoia*, spiritual conversion. The crisis leads to countless simultaneous conversions which mutually reinforce and support each other; it transforms the view which the agents normally have of the symbolism of social relations, and especially the hierarchies, highlighting the otherwise strongly repressed political dimension of the most ordinary symbolic practices: formulas of politeness, gestures of deference practised between social ranks, ages or sexes, cosmetic and vestimentary habits, etc. And only the techniques of the *Bildungsroman* could enable us to show how collective crisis and personal crisis provide each other with a mutual opportunity, how political revision is accompanied by personal regeneration, attested by the changes in vestimentary and cosmetic symbolism which consecrate a total commitment to an ethico-political vision of the social world, erected into the principle of a whole lifestyle, private as much as public.