

Postscript

The Categories of Professorial Judgement

At the suggestion of the Marxist students' section, Lenin had to give three lectures at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes on the agrarian question, organized in Paris by professors expelled from Russian universities. . . . I remember that before the first discussion, Vladimir Ilich was very nervous. But, once on the rostrum, he became quite self-confident, or, at least, appeared to be. Professor Gambarov, who had come to listen to him, told Deutsch quite succinctly what he felt: 'a real professor'. He evidently felt that this was paying him the greatest possible compliment.

Leon Trotsky, My Life

We may admit that practice always implies a process of knowledge far removed from any passive recording, without thereby presenting it as a purely intellectual construction. Practical knowledge is an operation of construction which sets up systems of classifications (taxonomies) in terms of practical functions. These systems organize perception and appreciation, and provide a structure for practice. Produced by the practice of successive generations, in given types of conditions of existence, these schemata of perception, appreciation and action which are acquired through practice, and set in motion on a practical level, without acceding to explicit representation, function as practical operators through which the objective structures which produce them tend to reproduce themselves in the various practices.

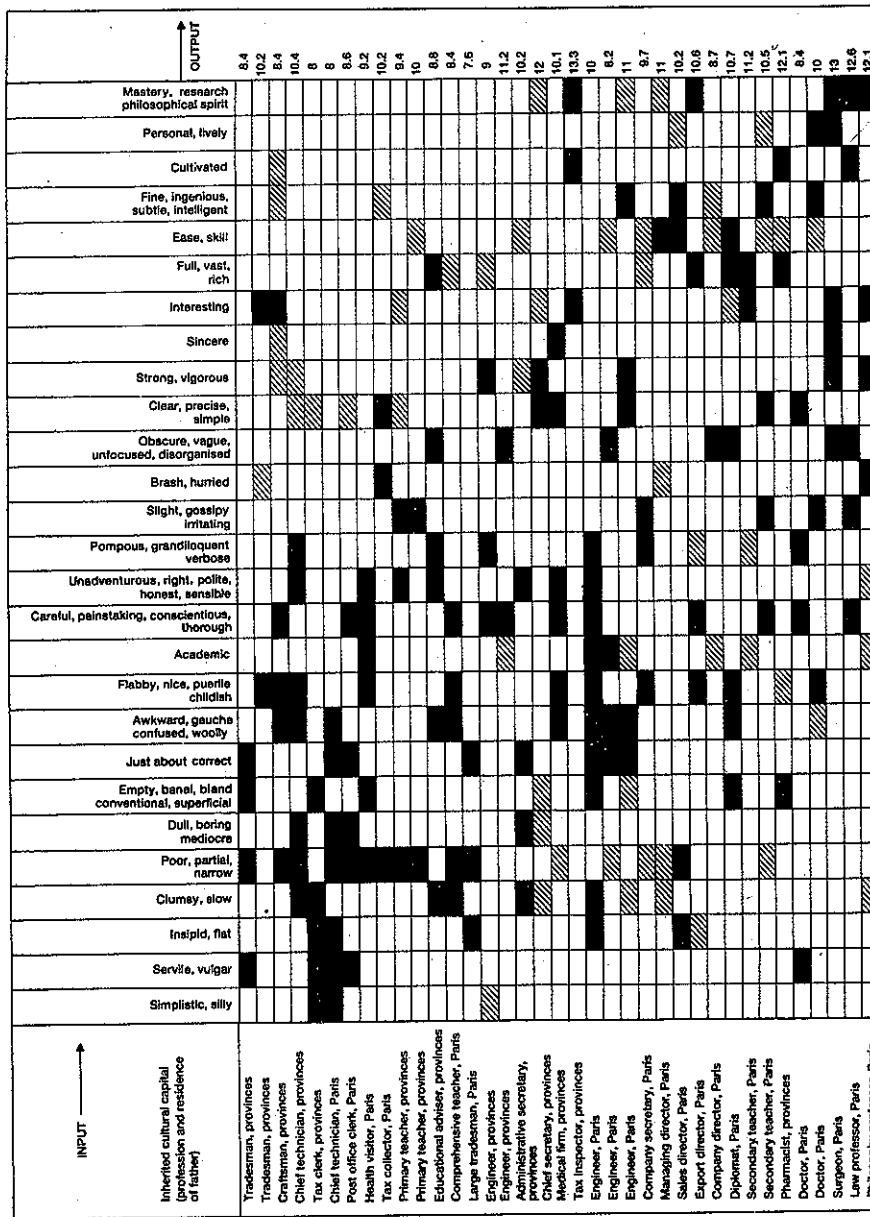
The practical taxonomies, instruments of knowledge and communication which are the condition of the establishment of meaning and of a consensus of meaning, exercise their *structuring* efficacy only

in so far as they are themselves *structured*. Which does not mean that they are answerable to a strictly *internal* analysis ('structural', 'componential' or other), which, by tearing them artificially away from their conditions of production and use, prevents itself from understanding their social function. In order to demonstrate this, it should suffice to submit to analysis not one or another of the exotic *curiosities* which distance neutralizes – terminologies of kinship, classifications of plants or diseases – but the classifications which the professors produce every day, as much in their judgements on their actual or potential pupils or colleagues as in their specific productions (textbooks, theses and scholarly works) and in all their practice. Indeed, it is more difficult in this case to bracket out the social functions of the deeply buried system of classification which lies behind all these academic classifications, and the social classifications which they determine or legitimate.

PROFESSORIAL JURISPRUDENCE

The analysis of an exceptional document, that is the set of individual files kept for four successive years by a philosophy professor in a *première supérieure* in Paris, should allow direct verification of the hypotheses already formulated to account for the implicit criteria of professorial judgement in its traditional form:¹ the taxonomies which are revealed by the ritual formulas of the evidence for professorial judgement ('progress reports') and which, we may suppose, structure professorial judgement as much as they express it, can be set in relation to the numerical sanctions (the marks) and the social origins of the pupils who are the object of these two forms of evaluation.

At this level of the academic career, and since the objective is to evaluate pupils who are for the most part destined to constitute the elite of the professors, the operations of classification are *operations of co-optation*. Invested with a function analogous to that which is incumbent upon *strategies of succession* in other milieux, they are doubtless the place where it is easiest to grasp the organizing principles of the teaching system as a whole, that is, not only the selection procedures which produce, among other things, the properties of the professorial body, but also the true hierarchy of the properties being reproduced, and thus the fundamental 'options' of the system reproduced.



Thus we shall find at work *academic forms of classification* which, like the 'primitive forms of classification' mentioned by Durkheim and Mauss, are essentially transmitted in and through practice, beyond any specifically pedagogical intention. These forms of thought, expression and appreciation owe their specific logic to the fact that, being produced and reproduced by the academic system, they are the product of the transformation imposed by the specific logic of the university field on the forms which organize the dominant thought and expression.

The construction of the diagram

We had at our disposal 154 individual pupils' files from a girls' *première supérieure* in Paris.² In these documents, established in the 1960s, we find on the one hand a record of the date of birth, the profession and address of the parents and the secondary school attended, and, on the other hand, the *marks* (five or six exercises marked for each pupil) awarded for their written work and oral contributions, along with supporting remarks. Given the nature of this material, it is understandable that it was not possible to obtain similar information for other classes and determine rigorously what the object studied owes to the specific characteristics of the institution, of its (female) population and of the professor. Everything seems to guarantee, however, that *the principles of classification used are universally valid.*

1 Having first of all established, through a diagonalization of the data (according to the principles proposed by Jacques Bertin in his *Sémiologie graphique*), a hierarchy of epithets (from the most pejorative to the most appreciative) and a hierarchy of social origins, linked by a simple and clearly visible relation, and having noted that the hierarchy according to social origins was very close to that obtainable *a priori* by taking as criterion the cultural capital of the family, we ordered the pupils of one of the years studied according to the importance of the cultural capital which they had inherited from their families (or, in other words, according to their closeness to or distance from the educational system, relying, in the absence of more precise criteria, on the profession and the place of residence (Parisian or provincial) of the parents). Thus we progress from the pupils whose origins are in the middle classes to the pupils

from the upper classes, and, among the latter, from the (relatively) least endowed with cultural capital (managers and executives) to the richest (university professors), the liberal professions holding an intermediate position.

2 Each line of the diagram represents *the universe of judgements liable to be made on a pupil* by the professor: we ordered the adjectives, arranged into twenty-seven classes, from the most pejorative to the most appreciative (grouping in the same class adjectives of related significance which are used in association with each other). We have marked with a *black square* the presence of one of the adjectives of the class considered in the professor's remarks on a given pupil; with a *shaded square* the case where the epithet is accompanied by a nuance or restriction or meaning (for instance, 'fluent but nervous delivery' [*élocution aisée mais saccadée*], 'conscientious but servile' [*de l'application mais servile*], 'incomplete but correct and well argued'; [*partiel mais juste et bien conduit*], 'thin and unexciting, but well organized' [*forme diffuse et plate, mais de l'organisation*]).

3 We placed on the far right of the diagram the *average of all the marks* obtained during the year by each pupil.

We can see straight away that the black squares form approximately a diagonal: the most favourable epithets appear more and more frequently as the social origins of the pupils rise. We may also note that the average marks rise, as we rise in the social hierarchy, that is, the frequency of commendatory judgements rises. Everything seems to indicate that Parisian origins constitute an extra advantage, the Parisian girls, given the same social origins, always obtaining a slightly higher rate of select epithets – despite the fact that the provincial girls are, at this level of career and in a preparatory class reserved for the academic elite, highly overselected. The pupils from the middle classes (who make up more than half the group of those with marks situated between 7.5 and 10 and who are totally absent from the small group with marks over 12) are the prime target of negative judgements – and of the most negative among them, such as 'simplistic' [*simplet*], 'servile' [*servile*] or 'vulgar' [*vulgaire*]. It should suffice to group the epithets which they seem to elicit to see how the bourgeois image of the petty bourgeois as a lesser bourgeois is composed: 'poor' [*pauvre*], 'narrow' [*étroit*], 'mediocre' [*médiocre*], 'just about correct' [*correct sans plus*], 'awkward' [*maladroit*], 'clumsy'

[*gauche*], 'confused' [*confus*], etc. Even the virtues which are attributed to them are negative too: 'academic' [*scolaire*], 'painstaking' [*soigneux*], 'careful' [*attentif*], 'conscientious' [*sérieux*], 'methodical' [*méthodique*], 'cautious' [*timide*], 'polite' [*sage*], 'honest' [*honnête*], 'sensible' [*raisonnable*]. On occasions that their rarer qualities, like 'lucidity' [*clarté*], 'strength' [*fermeté*], 'finesse' [*finesse*], 'subtlety' [*subtilité*], 'intelligence' [*intelligence*] or 'culture' [*culture*], are acknowledged, it is almost always with reservations (note, for example, comment 1b in the synoptic table, chosen for its ideal-typical character). The pupils whose origins are in the least culturally rich fraction of the dominant classes entirely escape the most insulting comments, and the pejorative labels which they earn are often qualified; they receive the most appreciative epithets but still very often expressed with reservations. As for the pupils from the fractions of the dominant class with the richest cultural capital, they almost entirely avoid the most negative judgements, even in their euphemistic forms, as they do the petty-bourgeois virtues, and they most often find themselves granted the most sophisticated qualities.

In fact the mode of classification adopted tends to minimize the differences between the classes. The great dispersal of the distribution of the adjectives which hold a median position in the taxonomy is not entirely imputable to the effect of this position nor even to the effect of the grouping of different adjectives, however close. It lies no doubt essentially in the fact that the same adjective can enter into different *combinations* and thereby receive very different meanings: this is the case in particular with epithets like 'thorough' [*solide*], which associated with 'painstaking' [*soigneux*] and 'careful' [*attentif*], may be only a euphemistic way of acknowledging the merits of impeccable petty-bourgeois mediocrity (which is admirably expressed in the 'just about' [*sans plus*] of 'just about correct' [*correct sans plus*]), whereas, combined with 'intelligent' [*intelligent*] or 'subtle' [*subtil*], it may express the perfect synthesis of academic virtues.

Moreover, we note that, where the marks are the same or equivalent, the remarks are all the more severe and more brutally expressed, less euphemistic, as the social origins of the pupils decrease. To get a concrete idea of this effect, we need only read in the synoptic table the judgements made on pupils of different social origins who have obtained similar marks (that is, situated on the same line, for instance 1b, 2b, 3b). We can see that the *judgemental evidence* seems more strongly linked to social origins than the *mark*

in which they are expressed; this is no doubt because they betray more directly the professor's representation of her pupils, using her extraneous knowledge of their *bodily 'hexis'*, and her evaluation of this in terms of criteria quite alien to those which are explicitly recognized in the technical definition of the performance demanded.

The professorial judgement is in fact generally based on a whole collection of disparate criteria, never clarified, hierarchized or systematized, which the professor derives from academic exercises, or from the physical person of their authors. 'Handwriting', which is sometimes explicitly mentioned, when its 'ugliness' [*laideur*] or 'puerility' [*puérité*] is striking, is perceived with reference to a practical taxonomy of writings which is far from being socially neutral, and which is organized around oppositions such as 'distinguished' [*distinguée*] and 'intellectual' [*intellectuelle*] or 'puerile' [*puérite*] and 'vulgar' [*vulgaire*]. 'Appearance' [*présentation*], which is only rarely mentioned, is also apprehended through a socially marked grid: excessive negligence and meticulous care (childish underlining in bright colours) are equally condemned. 'Style' and 'general culture' are explicitly taken into consideration, but to differing degrees and with varying criteria according to discipline (for instance, in philosophy and French).

We can see that specialized culture – which, in the specific case of philosophical authors, implies mastery of the technical vocabulary of philosophy, aptitude in constructing an argument and making rigorous demonstrations, etc. – in fact accounts for only a minority of the comments. The 'external' criteria, most often implicit and even rejected by the institution, have even greater importance in the remarks on oral work, since the criteria already mentioned are compounded with all those concerning speech, and, more specifically, *accent, elocution and diction*, which are the surest, because the most indelible, marks of social and geographical origins, *the style of the spoken language*, which can differ radically from written style, and finally and above all the *bodily 'hexis'*, manners and behaviour, which are often designated, very directly, in the remarks.

Thus there is no doubt that the judgements which claim to apply to *the whole person* take into account not only physical appearance as such, which is always socially marked (through indices such as weight, complexion, facial features) but also the *socially processed body* (with clothes, jewellery, make-up and above all manners and behaviour) which is perceived through socially constituted

taxonomies, and thus read as the *sign* of the quality and value of the person. (Because of the poor quality of the photos attached to the files, we had to abandon our intention of showing the relation between the adjectives used and the perception that the professor might have of the pupils through their physical appearance.) The *bodily hexis* is the principal prop of a class judgement which fails to recognize itself as such: it is as if a concrete intuition of the properties of the body, grasped and designated as properties of the person, motivated the global perception and appreciation of the intellectual and moral qualities.

We can see the diagram as the model of a machine which, from an input of socially classified products, produces academically classified products. But this would be to overlook the essential feature of the operation of transformation which it effects: in fact, this machine ensures a very close correspondence between the classification at entry and the classification at exit, without ever (officially) knowing or acknowledging the principles and criteria of the social classification. This means that the official, specifically academic, taxonomy, which is objectified in the form of a series of adjectives, fulfils a dual and contradictory function: it allows the operation of a social classification while simultaneously masking it; it serves at once as relay and screen between the classification at entry, which is overtly social, and the classification at exit, which claims to be exclusively academic. In short, it functions according to a logic of *negation* [*Verneinung*]: it does what it does in forms tending to show that it is not doing them.

The taxonomy which expresses and structures academic perception is a neutralized and misconstruable, that is to say euphemized, form of the dominant taxonomy:³ it is organized according to the hierarchy of 'inferior' (lower-class) qualities – servility [*servilité*], vulgarity [*vulgarité*], clumsiness [*lourdeur*], slowness [*lenteur*], poverty [*pauvreté*], etc.; 'medium' (petty-bourgeois) qualities – pettiness [*petitesse*], narrowness [*étroitesse*], mediocrity [*médiocrité*], accuracy [*correction*], conscientiousness [*sérieux*], etc.; and 'superior' qualities – sincerity [*sincérité*], expansiveness [*ampleur*], richness [*richesse*], facility [*aisance*], expertise [*savoir-faire*], finesse [*finesse*], ingenuity [*ingéniosité*], subtlety [*subtilité*], intelligence [*intelligence*], culture [*culture*], etc. Apart from a few adjectives which can designate properties of the academic exercise ('incomplete' [*partiel*], 'sketchy' [*sommaire*], 'confused' [*confus*], 'rambling' [*diffus*], 'methodical'

Table 9. Synoptic table of some professorial epithets

Average mark	1 Middle classes	2 Poorest in cultural capital	3 Richest in cultural capital
a	<p><i>Father chief technician, Paris</i></p> <p>Silly, mediocre, allusive, badly organized, a series of disconnected points.</p> <p>Summary correct but servile.</p> <p>Absolutely insipid.</p> <p>Some good (second-hand?) points but thin and unfocused.</p>	<p><i>Father engineer, mother secretary, Paris region</i></p> <p>Confused; some philosophical flotsam for the sake of effect, but no research, purely academic work.</p> <p>Disorganized, vivacious, fluent but nervous delivery.</p> <p>Disorganized, patchy knowledge, worse than lack of knowledge.</p> <p>Some ideas, but very badly developed.</p> <p>Satisfactory work.</p> <p>Better.</p>	<p><i>Father doctor, Paris</i></p> <p>Some knowledge, but uses philosophical concepts for their stylistic effect: hollow rhetoric.</p> <p>Otherwise shows evidence of learning and organization.</p> <p>Servile summary.</p> <p>Some knowledge, and clarity of expression, but no direct analysis.</p> <p>Some good points, but not well developed, heteroclitc quotations.</p>
b	<p><i>Father craftsman (carpenter), mother postal worker, provinces</i></p> <p>Not stupid but rather childish, incomplete, awkward but interesting, some culture.</p> <p>Knowledge misapplied; strong views, but very one-sided.</p>	<p><i>Father assistant export director, Paris</i></p> <p>Rich, long, fairly correct, rather verbose, however.</p> <p>Conscientious, thoughtful, embarrassed, gets bogged down in problems.</p>	<p><i>Father teacher of physics and chemistry, mother teacher of natural science, Paris region</i></p> <p>Precise, scrupulous, clear but somewhat narrow.</p> <p>Some foolish blunders, but some qualities.</p>
c	<p>Sincere, conscientious, rather shy; good use of German.</p> <p>Same comment: awkward but sincere, conscientious, good examples.</p>	<p>Woolly and dull in form, but not disorganized, quite well constructed survey of the topic, handwriting untidy, with words crossed out.</p> <p>Fairly good: conscientious, but fails to define clearly enough.</p> <p>Flabby and somewhat foolish, with some good points.</p> <p>Misuses and misunderstands terms.</p> <p><i>Father senior administrative executive, mother primary teacher, provinces</i></p> <p>Good, some culture and thought, fairly well written, sometimes tries to move beyond limits of her knowledge.</p> <p>Fairly good.</p> <p>Interesting and confident.</p>	<p>Precise, irritating: some conviction, some sophistry.</p> <p>Fine, fairly well written, not always very accurate.</p> <p><i>Father surgeon, Paris</i></p> <p>Interesting but disorganized.</p> <p>Very vigorous and well argued: conclusion a trifle too mystical, but sincerely philosophical.</p> <p>Very personal and well developed, but badly written.</p> <p>Vigorous, fairly well written.</p> <p>Interesting but obscure, badly expressed.</p>

We have recorded here all the professor's remarks on the files of a few pupils, together with their average mark. The number of remarks recorded for each pupil is different, since the professor did not add a commentary after the mark for each piece of written or oral work.

[*méthodique*], 'obscure' [*obscur*], 'vague' [*vague*], 'nebulous' [*flou*], 'disorganized' [*désordonné*], 'clear' [*clair*], 'precise' [*précis*], 'simple' [*simple*]), almost all of the adjectives used designate *personal qualities*, as if the professor felt authorized by the conventions of academic narrative to judge, like a literary critic or art critic, not the pupil's technical aptitude to conform to rigorously defined technical norms, but a general, and moreover undefinable, disposition, a unique combination of lucidity, firmness and strength, of sincerity, facility and expertise, of finesse, subtlety and ingenuity.

The very vagueness and nebulosity of the adjectives, which, like the adjectives used in the appreciation of a work of art, are the equivalent of *interjections* which convey virtually no information (except about a state of mind), suffice to bear witness to the fact that the qualities which they designate would remain imperceptible and indiscernible for anyone who was not already familiar, on a practical level, with the systems of classification which are written into ordinary language. Thus we would not understand the 'vague, emotive meaning' of the word *vulgar* [*vulgaire*] ('totally lacking distinction, betraying crude taste, independently of social class', as the *Robert* dictionary defines it), if we did not take into account the primary, primitive meaning, which is overtly situated in the social domain: 'of mediocre and low condition and taste, of ordinary thought, as opposed to those of the elite . . . ; proper to the lowest levels of society'. Working as an ideology in a state of practice, producing logical effects which are inseparable from political effects, the academic taxonomy entails an implicit definition of excellence which, by constituting as excellent the qualities possessed by those who are socially dominant, consecrates their manner of being and their lifestyle.

The homology between the structures of the educational system (hierarchy of disciplines, of sections, etc.) and the mental structures of the agents (professorial taxonomies) is the source of the functioning of the *consecration of the social order* which the education system performs behind its mask of neutrality. It is indeed through the medium of this system of classification that the academic system establishes a correspondence between the social properties of the agents and academic positions themselves hierarchized according to the order of teaching (primary, secondary, higher), according to the establishment or the section (*grandes écoles* or faculties, superior sections or inferior sections⁴), and, for the teachers, according to

their grade and to the location of their establishment (Paris or the provinces). This allotment of agents to hierarchized academic positions constitutes in its turn another mediation between social class and academic class. But this mechanism can only function if the homology remains hidden and if the taxonomy which in practice expresses and structures perception uses the most socially neutral antitheses of the dominant taxonomy ('brilliant'/'dull' [*brillant/terne*], 'graceful'/'clumsy' [*léger/lourd*], etc.) or euphemized forms of these antitheses: 'clumsy' [*lourd*] thus yields to 'laboured' [*lourdaud*] or 'clearly constructed' [*charpenté*] or 'painstaking' [*appuyé*], 'simple' [*simple*] to 'simplistic' [*simplet*], 'graceful' [*léger*] to 'easy to read' [*qui se lit bien*], apparently pejorative forms, but in fact attenuated by the gruff, paternalistic benevolence which they betray.

The manifest brutality of some epithets – which would not be permissible in ordinary usage: where 'servile' [*servile*], for example, would be replaced by 'humble' [*humble*] (as in 'humble occupation') or 'modest' [*modeste*] (as in 'modest conditions') – should not deceive us: the academic excuse which maintains that the judgement is applied to a piece of work and not its author, the fact that these are adolescents who may still improve, and who therefore may be treated more roughly and frankly (cf. 'nice' [*gentil*], puerile [*puénil*], childish' [*enfantin*]), the situation of correction and sanction which authorizes the infliction of a symbolic punishment as in other times and other places physical punishment was inflicted, the tradition of strictness and discipline which all the 'elite schools' have in common ('per ardua ad astra'), none of these suffices to explain the complacency and freedom in symbolic aggression observable in all examination situations. It is the academic field as such, functioning as if it were censored, which makes it unthinkable, as much for those pronouncing them as for those who are their object, to decipher the social significance of the judgements, which are thus reduced to simple gestures in the unreal and unrealistic ritual of academic initiation, just like any other collective anathema. Academic neutrality is indeed no more than this extraordinary collective negation which, for instance, allows the professor, in the name of the authority delegated to her/him by the academic institution, to condemn as academic' [*scolaire*] those productions and expressions which are merely what the academic institution requires, and merely what it produces from pupils whose only mode of acquisition is their

academic training. This negation is produced in and through each individual professor who attributes marks to pupils as a function of an academic perception of their academic expression (dissertations written, papers read out, etc.) and of their whole personality: what is judged is an academically qualified product, a 'dull' [*terne*] script, a 'just about acceptable' [*passable sans plus*] paper, and so on; never a petty bourgeois. The negation is reproduced in and through each of the pupils who, because s/he perceives her/himself as s/he is perceived, that is as 'dull' [*terne*], 'lacking philosophical talent' [*peu doué pour la philosophie*], concentrates on Latin prose composition or on geography.

Is this to say that the collective misconstrual is only the result of aggregating a number of individual denials? In fact, it is the whole structure of a field organized and divided according to the very classifications that it is supposed to produce (faculty and *grandes écoles*, disciplines, sections, etc.) which is expressed either in the taxonomy operated by the practical operations of classification and very regularly used, although it is *never explicitly codified*, each time that a classification has to be expressed (marks for homework, end-of-term grades, etc.). As a *neutralized form* of the dominant taxonomy which is produced by and for the functioning of a relatively autonomous field, and which raises to a second degree of neutrality the taxonomies of ordinary language, academic language helps to make possible the functioning of mechanisms which can only operate by persuading agents to adopt their logic, which supposes that these objectives are offered to the agents in a misconstruable form.

Reproducing in transposed form the social division of labour in its own organizational divisions, the educational system operates classifications which are first of all expressed in the attribution of academic classes (classes, sections, etc.) and later of social classes. It is no doubt through the medium of the successive *classifications* which have made them what they are, from the viewpoint of the academic taxonomy, that the classified products of the academic system, pupils or professors, have acquired, to varying degrees according to their position in these structures, their practical mastery of classificatory systems, adjusted circumstantially to objective classes, which allow them to classify everything – starting with themselves – according to academic taxonomies, and which function within each one of them – in all good faith and genuine belief – as a machine for transforming social classifications into academic

classifications, as recognized-yet-misconstrued social classifications. As objective structures which have become mental structures through a process of apprenticeship which is accomplished through a world organized according to its structures and submitted to sanctions formulated in a language also structured according to the same oppositions, the academic taxonomies classify according to the logic of the structures whose product they are. Because they find constant confirmation in a social world organized in accordance with the same principles, they are deployed with the feeling of obviousness which characterizes doxic experience of the social world, and its underside of the unthought and the unthinkable.

The agents entrusted with the operations of classification can fulfil their function of social classification only because this is performed *in the guise* of an operation of academic classification, that is, through a specifically academic taxonomy. They successfully perform what they (objectively) have to do only because they *believe* that they are doing something different from what they are actually doing; because they are actually doing something different from what they believe they are doing; and because they *believe* in what they *believe* they are doing. As mystified mystifiers, they are the *first victims* of the operations which they perform. It is because they think that they are operating a purely academic or even specifically 'philosophical' classification, because they think that they are issuing certificates for charismatic qualities ('the philosophical mind' [*esprit philosophique*], etc.), that the system is able to perform a genuine *distortion of the meaning* of their practices, persuading them to do what they would not do deliberately for 'all the money in the world'. It is also because they believe that they are making a strictly academic judgement that the social judgement which is masked by the euphemistic implications of academic (or, more specifically, philosophical) language can produce its characteristic effect: by persuading those who are its objects that this judgement applies to the pupil or the philosophical apprentice within them, to their 'persona' or their 'intelligence', and never in any instance to their social personage or, more crudely, to themselves as sons of professors or shopkeepers, the academic judgement elicits a recognition – in fact a misconstrual – which would no doubt not be elicited by the social judgement of which it is a euphemized form. The transmutation of social truth into academic truth (from 'you are a petty bourgeois' to 'you work hard but lack brilliance' [*vous êtes travailleur mais pas brillant*]) is not a simple

game of writing of no consequence but an operation of social alchemy which confers on words their symbolic efficiency, their power to have a lasting effect on practice. A proposition, which in its untransformed guise ('you come from a working-class family') or even at a higher level of transformation ('you are vulgar') would lack all symbolic effectiveness and which would even be liable to incite rebellion against the institution and its personnel (if such an appellation were even 'imaginable', as people would say, 'from the mouth of a professor'), becomes acceptable and accepted, admitted and personally internalized, in the *misconstruable form* imposed on it by the specific censorship of the social field ('I have no philosophical talent' [*je ne suis pas doué pour la philo*]). The academic taxonomy of academic qualities (offered as an index of human excellence) intervenes between each agent and his 'vocation'. It is this taxonomy which, for instance, directs orientation towards one discipline or section rather than another, entailed in advance by the academic verdict ('I'm really keen on geography' [*j'aime beaucoup la géo*]).

In order to disentangle ourselves from discoursing on the power of discourse, we have, as we see, to relate language to the social conditions of its production and use, and, unless we accept in the social order the equivalent of magical power, we must seek beyond words, in the mechanisms of production of these words and the people who emit and receive them, the motive force of a power which a certain way of using words allows us to mobilize. Conventional usage of conventional language is only one of the conditions of effectiveness of symbolic power, and a condition which works only under certain conditions. We only ever preach to the converted. The power of the academic euphemism is absolute only when it works on agents selected in such a way that the social and academic conditions of their production dispose them to recognize it absolutely.

EUPHEMISM IN ACADEMIC RHETORIC

The truth of euphemism is revealed in the use made of it by professorial rhetoric any time that an unfavourable judgement has to be delivered within the limits of academic etiquette and/or prudence. In book reviews or references, reports on theses, or

panegyrics pronounced in favour of candidates for co-optation, speeches intended for equals able to read between the lines and understand the unspoken, the paean can subvert itself by dealing in 'subordinate' and 'minimal' qualities (in the following quotations: 'conscientious and hardworking' [*sérieuse et travailleuse*], 'intellectual honesty' [*honnêteté intellectuelle*], 'unassuming' [*discrète*] which imply the absence of the complementary category ('brilliant' [*brillant*], etc.) or which use transparent devices to signal their own conventional and circumstantial nature ('honourable' [*aux alentours de la moyenne*], 'encouraging prospect' [*encourageant pour l'avenir*], 'the further effort necessary' [*après un nouvel effort*], 'rather too dependent on secondary material' [*un peu trop près des fiches*]).

References for (rejected) candidates, September 1972:

I have known Miss X from the start of her university studies: she has always impressed me as an extremely conscientious and hardworking student. On several occasions she asked me to mark her work for the *agrégation*; and her marks were honourable. This is an encouraging prospect. For this reason, I trust that she will be able to make the further effort necessary for success in the *agrégation*.

Miss X wrote her master's thesis under my supervision in 1970-1; this dissertation studied the idea of nobility in Euripides' theatre and was awarded a mark of 15 out of 20 (*cum laude [mention bien]*). It was an extremely conscientious piece of work, carefully researched and showing considerable intellectual honesty. Its only fault was that it remained rather too dependent on secondary material, and lacked an original overview. I can attest to Miss X's qualities, which lead me to believe that she has the ability to be a worthwhile *agrégation* candidate, despite her first, unsuccessful attempt. I would like her to be able to prepare the *agrégation* under favourable conditions. I should add that she is both hardworking and unassuming, which may well help your assessment.

The academic dialectic of recognition and misconstrual attains its most accomplished form when the structure of the system of categories of perception and thought, which organize the expressions of academic judgement and this judgement itself, is in perfect harmony with the structure of the contents which the academic system is entrusted with transmitting, as is the case with literary or philosophical culture in its academic form. In cases where philosophical discourse is reduced to what is often offered in philosophy classes

as ethics or psychology, the harmony is more or less perfect between the structure of the discourse transmitted and the structures of perception and appreciation that the academic field imposes on the emitters as well as the receivers of the discourse. We can see, for instance, the elective affinity which unites the system of representations and values objectively written into the academic taxonomy and the Heideggerian discourse on 'the ordinary' or 'everyday chatter' when, reduced to its most simple expression, that is to its objective truth, for the purposes of academic communication, it is limited to the aristocratic affirmation of the distance of the thinker from the 'vulgar' and from 'common sense' which is behind the professorial philosophy of philosophy and the facile enthusiasm it engenders in adolescents.⁵ Starting with the transposition produced by the expression of the dominant vision of the social world in the esoteric language of traditional philosophy, the *oblique legitimation* comes full circle with the academic enterprise of exoterization of the esoteric. With the legitimate divulgation for a small number of legitimate addresses (which makes *all* the difference between teaching and mere 'popularization') of a more or less simplified version (and explicitly given as such) of the esoteric form of the official vision of the social world, the circular circulation which defines religious alchemy finds its end and fulfilment. The effect of *autonomization* and, thereby, of *legitimation* produced by the work of euphemization and esoterization required by the censorship implicit in the specific laws of a relatively autonomous field of production like the philosophical field (or, more generally, the religious field, the artistic field, etc.) is not cancelled out by the reverse operation of the exoterization of the esoteric discourse. The distinguished and the vulgar, the rare and the common, are no longer what they are, euphemized but still over-transparent expressions of class interests, when, after their orbit through the heavens of the philosophical idea, they return in the neither 'common' nor yet quite bourgeois style of what is 'personal' and what is 'general', 'authentic' and 'inauthentic', *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigentlichkeit*, according to the degree of initiation of the master and his disciples.

ACADEMIC ETHICS AND THE JUDGEMENT OF PEERS

In the following diagram, the first analysis of the obituary notices published in *L'Annuaire de l'Association amicale des anciens élèves*

de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure for the years 1962, 1963, 1964 and 1965, we have ranked the thirty-four 'old boys' whose social origins were indicated in the notices according to the importance of their original cultural and social capital as far as they can be evaluated from the available information, that is, chiefly, the profession of the father and, if applicable, of the mother, the place of residence of the parents at the time of birth, and more or less precise indications of the cultural atmosphere of the family.

The alumni studied were for the most part born around 1880–90 and were in employment between 1905 and 1955. The result is that the image of the *normalien* evoked by the obituary writers corresponds to a relatively old state of the system. From a check which was only possible after this analysis had been carried out, we note that the former pupils whose social origins are not recorded in the notices do not differ significantly in this respect from the population studied (six are from the middle classes, five from the upper classes, and for another five there is no information available) and the epithets applied to them follow exactly the same laws as those revealed by this analysis (an archival search has even allowed us to discover very close correlation between the academic reports which remain on file and those contained in the obituaries). Moreover, the former pupils who are the object of an obituary notice do not seem to be any different from the whole set of deceased pupils except perhaps for their devotion to the *école*. Thus it seems that the life members are rather more numerous among those who are the object of an obituary notice than among the others. Finally, everything seems to indicate that the relation between the author and the object of the obituary notice is not arbitrary, and that in general they share the same origins, discipline and type of career, roughly defined.

As in the case of pupils of the preparatory classes, this classification is obviously not entirely free of all arbitrariness, in particular in respect of pupils whose origins are in the upper petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie: the paucity of information available is not the only problem (we do not always know the rank of officers, nor even their training – Saint-Cyr or Polytechnique, for instance; we do not always know the exact status of professors; we do not know the size of industrial and commercial firms, etc.); a social history of the structure of the dominant class and of the development of the different professions within this structure is the precondition (to which all studies of 'social mobility' are blissfully blind) of any rigorous analysis of social trajectories (and, *a fortiori*, of any

CAREER	<p>a <i>Taupe</i>, physics, provinces Khagne, Latin, Paris Khagne, literature, Paris Sorbonne, physics Lycée German, Paris Headmaster lycée, provinces Taupex, maths, provinces Lycée, physics, Paris Lycée, German, provinces Khagne, literature, Paris Faculty dean, chemistry, provinces Khagne - librarian, ENS Sorbonne, English Khagne - Sorbonne, English Lycée (?) Lycée, literature, Paris Lycée, philosophy, Paris Sorbonne, geology Director of French Institute, German Sorbonne, art history Diplomat, German Philosopher, Paris Faculty dean, philosophy, provinces Collège de France, art University lecturer, English Collège de France, oriental lang. Sorbonne, Egyptology Faculty dean, literature, provinces Faculty dean, mechanics, Paris Journalist, review editor, Paris Collège de France, maths Diplomat Sorbonne, philosophy Collège de France, psychology</p>
Great philosopher, theoretician	
Great scholar	
Writer, poet, essayist	
Original, creative	
Master	
Witty, lucid (charm)	
Rigorous	
Clear, intelligent	
Fine, brilliant	
Open, not a specialist	
Erudite	
Good administrator	
Methodical, precise	
Sense of humour	
Good teacher	
Hardworking	
Reliable, conscientious	
Upright, honest	
Thorough, trustworthy, faithful	
Militant	
Devoted	
Good friend, loyal to grande école	
Good father, good husband (family)	
Simple, modest	
Acoustic (mountain)	
Resigned, wise (garder)	
ORIGINAL CULTURAL CAPITAL	<p>Farmers, provinces Farmers, provinces Tinmith, provinces Railway worker, provinces Tradesman, provinces Minor civil servant, provinces Salesman, provinces Primary teacher, provinces Primary teacher, provinces Primary teacher, provinces Primary teacher, provinces Primary teacher, Paris region Primary head, provinces Post, primary teacher, provinces Secondary English teacher, provinces Legal scholar, provinces Consultant engineer, provinces Bailiff, provinces Officer, provinces Office, provinces General, provinces Large tradesman, Paris Industrialist, Paris Consular official, provinces Cultured parents, Paris Secondary teacher, provinces Secondary philosophy teacher, provinces University professor, provinces Secondary Latin teacher, Paris region Philosopher, Paris Family of normaliens, provinces Family of normaliens, Paris</p>

Classification 2 Classificatory machine no. 2: from academic classification to social classification

^a*Taupe* = preparatory class (science). [Tr.] ^b*Khagne* = preparatory class (arts). [Tr.]

establishment of any linear hierarchy, such as the one attempted here for the purposes of our analysis). Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to evaluate the relative importance of the professional situation of the family and its place of residence: everything leads us to believe that at this very high career level, where the qualities associated with the university image of excellence are most imperatively required, the opposition between Parisian origins and provincial origins (reinforced by the difference between the people from the south of France and those from the north, which remains ingrained in their *habitus* in the form of different accents) plays a decisive role.⁶

After scrutinizing about ten years' issues of the Annual, and establishing twenty-six classes of epithets, we marked with a black square (without ever exceeding ten notations) the qualities (usually evoked by adjectives) which appeared to be endowed with the greatest relative importance in the notices considered (because, in the longer notices, they were evoked more than once, or, in the shorter ones, they were underlined by the vigour or emphasis of the expression used: for instance, 'of the race of great philosophers' [*de la race des grands philosophes*]; 'a great figure in French science' [*une grande figure de la science française*]). The final judgement which the group makes on one of its members through the medium of a duly mandated spokesman (the elegy is incumbent upon a friend from the same matriculation year, and it is only in case of dire necessity that it is entrusted to anyone else, usually a pupil, but *always a normalien*, as in the boards of examiners for the Ecole Normale entrance examination) is always the result of a collective labour whose trace sometimes appears when the author compiles or integrates information given by different people. The author of the obituary notice obviously takes into account the point attained at the end of the university career, which can, in some cases, correct the 'first impression', often resumed in the evocation of a bodily *hexis* and an accent: that is to say that it is not possible to suppose that between the system of epithets and the final social achievement there is a relation that is perfectly identical with that established between social origins, academic reports and grades. In fact, what the obituary restores, as does the professorial report at a different stage of the career, is the academically constituted social representation of the person, which is the principle behind all academic operations of appreciation and co-optation: it is through the mediation and *in*.

the guise of this representation – in which the academically constituted representation of the bodily *hexis* plays a decisive part – that social origins have their impact, although they are never taken as such to form a basis for judgement (indeed, it is significant that, despite the conventions of the biographical genre, it is missing from many of the obituaries – in this case, sixteen out of fifty – and that their closest academic colleagues often say that they were obliged to undertake specific research in order to be able to reveal this information).

If the discourse entrusted with evoking *the departed* gives such prominence to the description of their physical appearance, it is because this functions not only as a kind of remembrance, but also as a palpable *analogon* for the whole person, as revealed at the first meeting:

His whole being gave one the impression that he lived in a body only because one is forced to do so, even if one is not too sure what to do with it. His elongated neck supported a head which was pleasant but odd, being almost always tilted to one side or the other. He had a bland, fair complexion, typical of the delicate child, cared for, or even pampered, by anxious women past their prime, enormous, vaguely nautical eyes, of an indefinable shade of blue, a nose if not quite imperial, at least most classical, and a splendidly developed, although not disproportionate, brow.⁷

And if the general intuition expressed in this portrait supports the evocation of the intellectual and moral qualities of the man so effectively, it is because the bodily *hexis* provides the system of indices through which class origins are *recognized-yet-misconstrued*: 'finely distinguished' [*fine distinction*], 'poetic' [*un poète*], 'unique qualities partly concealed by an expressive shyness' [*qualités si originales et partiellement dissimulées par une timidité communicative*], 'a delicate, emotive intelligence' [*esprit ombrageux et sensible*]. Similarly, the enumeration of virtues attributed to another character ('professional stamina' [*puissance de travail*], 'varied and productive scientific activity' [*activité scientifique variée et féconde*], 'dedication' [*dévouement*], 'great intellectual honesty' [*grande honnêteté intellectuelle*], 'prodigious but discreet activity' [*prodigieuse et discrète activité*], 'tough, hardworking, cheerful and kind' [*robuste, laborieux, souriant et bon*]) is only a long paraphrase of the scattered notations which evoke his *hexis*: 'a cast-iron constitution in a sportsman's

body' [*une santé de fer dans un corps athlétique*], 'healthy and energetic lover of life' [*vigoureux gaillard*].⁸

The system of adjectives used maps out the *world of professorial virtues*, which, like the university careers to which they grant access, are hierarchized. The truth of this world, which, in itself, tends to be closed in upon itself, would be completely revealed only by comparison with other worlds of virtues, associated with other positions in the field of power (we intend to work towards capturing the variants of the dominant ethics which correspond to the different fractions of the dominant class, by making a comparative analysis of a whole set of celebratory discourses – funeral elegies, welcoming speeches, etc – in which different groups celebrate each other by celebrating one of their members). At all events, we quite palpably set limits to a taxonomy which takes itself to be universal when we note that it turns out to be totally absent in the description and praise of the virtues of those *normaliens* who left the university sector – the two diplomats, whose elegy is entrusted to other famous defectors: we enter a world of discourse ('devotion to his country' [*dévouement à son pays*], 'a career entirely devoted to the service of the state' [*carrière vouée au service exclusif de l'État*]) which introduces an entirely different world, antagonistic or even antinomial ('no vocation for teaching' [*pas la vocation de l'enseignement*], 'felt limited by the musty atmosphere of the classroom' [*se trouvant à l'étroit dans le cadre vieillot d'une classe*], 'all his aspirations led him towards wider horizons' [*toutes ses aspirations l'entraînaient vers de plus larges horizons*]), that of the senior civil service or bourgeois big business.

We see that the system of academic classification (captured here in the adjectives used in the funeral elegy) has not ceased to function throughout the university career as a hidden instrument of social classification: it is remarkable that, among all the 'old boys', who are both formally equal and really rendered equal – as far as academic criteria are concerned – by the effect of overselection, the academic system has continued to establish, as a function of the very same criteria which enabled their election to the status of *normalien*, the hierarchies directly displayed in university careers. Everything indeed happens as if the *normaliens* were being promised academic careers very closely proportionate to their social origins in an academic space very rigorously organized according to institution (from the Collège de France to the *lycée*), place of residence (from Paris to the small

provincial town) and discipline (from philosophy to modern languages and from maths to chemistry). Out of the fifteen 'old boys' of working- or middle-class origins, twelve became teachers in secondary education or professors in advanced secondary education (*khagne* and *taupe* [preparatory classes for the *grandes écoles*]) and only three became professors in higher education, but in disciplines considered professionally inferior (modern languages, chemistry, physics) and/or in the provinces; on the contrary, out of the nineteen 'old boys' from the upper classes, only two became teachers in secondary education, whereas two became diplomats, two others became writers and thirteen became professors in higher education, mostly in Paris, and four of them at the Collège de France.

We must beware of establishing a mechanical causal relation between social origins and academic success: as classified products, professors never cease classifying themselves and each other in terms of academic taxonomies – in a permanent self-appraisal where 'ambitions' and self-esteem are inseparably defined; in other words, their 'aspirations' and 'career decisions' anticipate the judgements that the academic system will pass on their ambitions. In this sense, the obituary notices are only superficially deceptive when they praise the modesty of those who have sacrificed 'a brilliant career' in the university or in Paris to provincial and family delights: so involved is the dialectic linking objective opportunities to aspirations that it is useless to try to distinguish the objective determinisms from the subjective determination. The provincials didn't want a Paris which didn't want them; the secondary teachers rejected the university as much as it excluded them. Any successful socialization tends to persuade agents to collaborate with their own destiny.

The minutest choices (registering a thesis topic or not, sooner or later, on one author rather than another, with this or that supervisor, etc.), which map out an itinerary leading to positions assigned in advance, already constitute so many contributions to the work of disinvestment which will end, at the cost of a few pirouettes of self-deception, in *amor fati*, that sinister virtue praised in obituary notices. The relative independence of the different principles of hierarchization (institution, place of residence, discipline) produces a scrambling effect which contributes very strongly to facilitating the work of disinvestment, allowing us to convert failure into refusal and to come to terms with abandoned hopes: the teacher of philosophy in a Parisian *lycée* has no trouble convincing himself, as

long as he writes for the intellectual weeklies or reviews, that he has little to envy the professor of English in a provincial university. And vice versa. Thus it is that the work of a celebration which is imposed by the laws of the obituary genre gives a reasonably fair idea of the work of mourning by means of which those who believed themselves 'destined for the highest achievements' can always repair their own self-esteem.

The classifications produced by academic taxonomies are linked by relations which are never purely logical because these taxonomies tend to reproduce the structure of the objective relations of the social universe which produces them in the first place. In the case in point, the hierarchy observed in the universe of professorial virtues, that is, in the world of ways of realizing academic excellence, corresponds very closely to the hierarchy of possible careers, that is, to the hierarchy of educational institutions. Everything happens as if, within this world of hierarchized qualities which the professorial body recognizes as its own by recognizing them in its best members, each agent found himself objectively situated by the quality of his virtues. The series of adjectives recorded map out the field of professorial qualities, from the minimal qualities, expected of any 'educator of youth' – domestic virtues of the good father and the good husband or professorial virtues in their most elementary form, dedication to one's pupils or professional integrity – right up to the supreme qualities, implying a negation of the negative aspect of the more ordinary virtues, but which never goes as far as negating the positive principles behind these virtues (the great philosopher is also praised for his qualities as family man and his dedication to the *Ecole Normale*).⁹

It is the same system of classification which continues to function throughout an academic *career*, which is a strange obstacle race where everyone classifies and everyone is classified, the best classified becoming the best classifiers of those who enter the race. This is always the case from the entrance examination to the *Ecole Normale* to the *agrégation*, from the *agrégation* to the doctorate, from the doctorate to the Sorbonne, and from the Sorbonne to the Institute, the winning post, where those best classified in all the competitions rule *de facto* over all the operations of classification by controlling access to the agency of classification of the level immediately below, which in its turn controls the next, and so on. This process of external regulation which is set in motion throughout the institutional

hierarchy – the academic anxious to improve his classification having to appear respectful of the classifications in force, as much in his statements as in his academic practice – only reinforces the effects of the adaptable, conformist dispositions which have been selected and inculcated through all the previous operations of classification.

Obituary notices – particularly those published in the *Annuaire de l'Association amicale des anciens élèves de l'École Normale Supérieure* – are first-rate documents for an analysis of university values. In the last judgement made by the group on one of its deceased members, they still display the principles of classification which determined his assimilation to the group. It is hardly surprising if, in this last examination, the 'absent friends' find themselves classified as they were always classified during their lifetimes, that is, as a function of subtly hierarchized academic qualities which, at this final point of their career, still maintain an immediately visible relation with social origins. In the most obscure, minor provincial teachers, the minimal qualities are detected, those of the good teacher, most often associated with those of the good father and husband. Then come the lower intellectual qualities, conscientiousness, erudition, integrity, or superior qualities applied to inferior activities, like translations, critical editions, those rather 'educational' works which the educational system, as we know, never fully acknowledges. Beyond these minor virtues of the humble servants of culture are the qualities which distinguish academics able to demonstrate their excellence by transgressing the limits of the academic definition of excellence: the supreme homage, which, through the medium of someone (academically) close to him, the group awards to the person who fulfils its ideal of excellence, is paid by allowing him that transcendence of academic categories which is always catered for in academic classification.

We can see an illustration of this in these three obituary notices taken from the *Annuaire de l'Association amicale des anciens élèves de l'École Normale Supérieure*.¹⁰

Paul SUCHER

Born at Versailles, 10 January 1886

Father: tradesman

Teacher of German in a *lycée* in the provinces

After his [master's] thesis on Hoffmann, his many translations are witness to the ease, elegance and accuracy with which he could

transpose a text, while his long introductions always decanted the essence of a literary problem, however potentially embroiled and controversial.

... Sucher could easily have written an excellent doctoral thesis which would have gained him a university post, to the delight of his former teachers, I doubt whether he was inhibited by any problems – these he would easily have resolved; nor by the demands of the labour or erudition, which he was quite capable of accomplishing with skill and pleasure when he wanted to. His inner life was sufficient: reading, meditation, travel, long cross-country walks or cycle-rides, spectacular Alpine views discovered by dint of the climber's muscular efforts, a peaceful family life founded in 1926 with his marriage to one of our colleagues in the state school system, were sufficient to animate and enrich his existence, to his heart's content.

Roger PONS

Born at Equeurdreville, 28 August 1905

Mother: primary teacher. Grandparents: farmers

Literature professor for preparatory classes at Lycée Louis-le-Grand [Paris].

The explanation of his unique success must be sought in his perpetual self-abnegation. Roger Pons was a distinguished humanist who put himself at the service of a text or an author, striving, whether for Pascal or for Diderot, for Claudel or for Gide, to allow them to be understood and appreciated according to their own lights, without taking their place, without trying to catch them out, in a spirit of simplicity and enthusiasm. As a scrupulous *agrégation* examiner, and an inspector of schools, Roger Pons was always a teacher, and one who put his experience and knowledge at the disposal of teaching and teachers. . . . Roger Pons was a prolific writer, and, in the briefest notes as in the most handsomely developed essay, he wrote with infinite care, as a perfectionist in detail and accuracy, and an unfailingly vigorous, lucid and moving stylist. And yet this careful craftsman who constantly made artefacts that would be useful for others, who was entirely dedicated to his profession, his friendships and his duties, was finally betrayed by destiny: he produced only the introduction, only the preliminaries and the outlines of the great ethical and critical work that he had within him. His academic asceticism allied with a Christian humility prevented him (for virtue may perchance be cruel and destructive) from saying the most important, the most personal things, which are everywhere implicit in his writings but nowhere explicitly expressed.

Maurice MERLEAU-PONTY

Born Rochefort-sur-mer, 1908

Father: artillery officer

Member of the board of examiners of the entrance examination for the Ecole Normale Supérieure

Professor of philosophy at the Collège de France

I can clearly remember now how he used to be then, with his reserved manner, his way of listening so attentively, his apt but somewhat enigmatic replies, punctuated with periods of silence; there was something aristocratic in him, a distance, which still left room for profundity of friendship. . . . Maurice Merleau-Ponty was one of the race of great philosophers; in some ways he was the successor of Alain and Bergson, in another he was close to J.-P. Sartre, and, like him, he had felt the influence of Husserl and Heidegger.

Thus it is through reference to the structure of this field of the qualities offered objectively to every *normalien* embarking upon a professorial career that we may objectively define the *social value* of the virtues attributed to each of them. In the same way, the series of posts available, which in the sample studied range from teacher of modern languages in a *lycée* in the provinces to professor of philosophy at the Collège de France, defines the field of possible trajectories, for a given cohort of *normaliens*,¹¹ the space of possibilities, to which the initial indifferentiation of careers gives a feeling of lived reality, and in relation to which the social value of the individual careers is objectively defined (the value which provides the objective foundation of the experience of success or failure). It follows that the virtues and the careers indiscriminately praised by the obituary notices are the object of a twofold perception and appreciation. Grasped in themselves and for themselves, the lower virtues, minimal but also indispensable, elementary and banal but also primordial components of the academic definition of excellence, are the object of an absolute and unconditional recognition, the absence of these qualities being sufficient to jeopardize membership of the group. But on the one hand one can never entirely forget the truth of academic asceticism, making a virtue out of necessity, and the entirely negative form of academic excellence which is reduced to this asceticism; these simple, modest lives, composed entirely of wisdom and inner serenity, of rectitude and dedication, the oft-praised virtues of the man who 'cultivates his own garden', dons his rucksack to go mountaineering, and looks after his children, cannot

help appearing for what they are as soon as they are situated in the field of possible careers. The lower virtues, and also the middling virtues, already more specific and less exclusively moral, such as the pedagogical skills, lucidity, fluency, coherence [*clarté, aisance, méthode*], or the lower intellectual qualities, erudition (memory), precision [*érudition (mémoire), précision*], are never more than *subordinate virtues*, mutilated forms of the dominant virtues which can attain their full value only when they are associated with the dominant virtues, which offer atonement and salvation for their traces of laborious effort and mean scholarship: erudition is fully valued only if it is 'cloaked in elegance' [*parée d'élégance*], and the scholar is really recognized only if he is 'not a prisoner of his specialization' [*pas enfermé dans sa spécialité*]. Gradually taking over the whole space of the elegies as the higher virtues become rarer, the moral virtues can only be what allows us to accept the limits of intellectual virtues in a world which places these virtues at its peak. There, too, the most cynical truth is always detectable beneath the most dithyrambic incantation? it is indeed significant that these panegyrics almost always associate the subordinate virtues with the virtues of resignation which allow people to accept an inferior position without succumbing to the resentment which is the normal counterpoint to frustrated over-investment, these virtues being the refusal of honours, moral rectitude, modesty, discretion. And the obscure toilers have on their side the utter complicity of a professional body which honours modesty and disdain for honours when, exchanging positive for negative in a characteristic strategy of reversal, they attempt to transform their obscurity into a positive choice of virtue, and thus to cast into disrepute or suspicion the inevitably ill-gotten prestige of over-glittering glory.¹²

The resignation and wisdom praised by the official memorialists find an objective grounding in the relative autonomy enjoyed by the different teaching orders within a globally hierarchized field. Each of these sub-fields offers a mode of fulfilment specific to the ambition of the highest career which is implied in membership of the class of *normaliens* (as the right to pre-empt the field of opportunities) in the guise of a career at least subjectively incomparable to any other: it is the *agrégé* teaching philosophy in a small provincial *lycée*, who wins the respect of his less qualified colleagues through the simplicity of his manners and the entirely philosophical wisdom of his lifestyle; it is the professor of a *khagne* or a *taupe*, basking in the absolute

adoration of successive generations of claimants to the title of *normalien* who include him in their idolatrous vision of the Ecole Normale and who, through their high academic quality, make him participate in a world of academic dignity superior even to that of the university (cf. the case of [the philosopher] Alain); and so on, at every level.

Two examples will speak for a thousand others:

Another day, taking a lorryload of compost to Saint-André, dressed for the occasion, he stopped halfway along the winding road to sit on a bench to enjoy the view and smoke a cigarette, to relax for a moment. Along came a city family, on holiday, who came and sat down next to him. The father pointed out the beauty of the view and the countryside to his children, and quoted a line from 'Virgil's *Georgics* in Latin for their benefit. Passeron stood up, recited the rest of the verse, and climbed back on to his lorry, leaving the tourists open-mouthed with admiration for the farmers of the county of Nice, who know Virgil, and by heart!¹³

It was then that he discovered that he had been preceded by a German who had hurriedly published his results. . . . This discovery left him profoundly discouraged and somewhat bemused, and, despite all the encouragement that he received, he asked to go back into secondary teaching. . . . In the town of La Flèche as well as at its school he lived rather unobtrusively, interested only in his family, on the fringes of official life, and yet he was very well known and greatly esteemed in the town. For he knew how to be of service, and always discreetly, when the occasion arose. . . . This extreme modesty and lack of ambition (he never sought favours) characterized the 35 years he spent at La Flèche until his retirement.¹⁴

Thus every *normalien* participates, to differing degrees, in this world of virtues to which the *normaliens* attribute quite naturally the epithet *normalien* (a *normalien* sense of humour): in that unique combination of the intellectual and moral virtues in which the 'elite' of the professorial body sees its own reflection, and which underpin its belief that it constitutes both a moral and an intellectual elite, the full position of this body in social space is expressed. Holding a temporally dominant position (in relation to artists) in a subordinate fraction of the dominant class, professors constitute a sort of upper petty bourgeoisie committed to an *ethical and intellectual aristocratism*. The dispositions which characterize the professors specifically as opposed to the 'bourgeoisie' (the dominant fraction)

and the 'artists' (the temporally subordinate fraction of the subordinate fraction) are explained by the fact that they are situated halfway up each of the two hierarchies into which the fractions of the dominant class fall, the hierarchy of economic and political power and the hierarchy of intellectual authority and prestige: too 'bourgeois' in the eyes of the writers and artists, from whom they are separated by their living conditions and lifestyle, too 'intellectual' in the eyes of the 'bourgeoisie', whose lifestyle they cannot wholly share (except in the realm of cultural consumption), they can only find compensation for their double half-failure in an aristocratic resignation or in the satisfactions associated with domestic life, which are encouraged by their living conditions, by the dispositions linked to their social career and by their concomitant matrimonial strategies.¹⁵ Through their domestic virtues, through the aristocratic asceticism which underlies their lifestyle, and which forms a last rampart of self-esteem when all other principles of legitimation have disappeared, and also through their support for society and the hierarchy of values of society illustrated by that sort of spirit of 'public service' [*service public*] and 'dedication' [*dévouement*], often rewarded by decorations, which leads to administrative careers, the professors are closer to the senior civil service than to the intellectuals and artists whose praises they sing. The dual truth of this professorial body, which cannot fulfil the values it recognizes and preaches without sacrificing those which correspond to its real function, can be read in the assessment made by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lille on [the novelist] Jules Romains, when he was a young philosophy teacher in a *lycée*: 'A cultivated, original mind; perhaps rather distracted by his literary ambitions, which are of course quite justified' [*esprit cultivé, original, peut-être un peu distrait par ses ambitions littéraires, d'ailleurs fort légitimes*].¹⁶

This contradiction is inherent in the very definition of the post and is reproduced by the social characteristics of the agents. The only people who have any chance of overcoming it are those who realize the proclaimed ideal of intellectual excellence, but by moving outside the university field (or settling in 'free territories' inside it like the Collège de France). Even more than the twin intellectual and temporal renunciation, which their subordinate position in a temporally subordinate universe imposes on the lower levels of the professorial body, it is the temporal demi-consecration of the intermediate categories which reveals the truth of professorial

asceticism and disdain for honours, in a symbolic reversal of their dispossession: those who realize the intellectual ideal within the limits of the university, thus reaching this kind of inferior form (in terms of the very criteria which they recognize) of the intellectual glory which can be obtained from the university field; and those (often the same people) who take hold of and come to terms with the powers offered by the world of powerlessness, recognizing thus the dual ambition which is inherent in their double half-failure.

The professorial schemata of perception and appreciation thus function as generative schemata which structure their whole practice, and in particular the production of that specific category of cultural products constituted by specifically academic works: courses, textbooks or doctoral theses. Indeed, we find the equivalent in the order of intellectual virtues of the contradictions encountered in the order of moral qualities, if we analyse what these productions can owe to the social conditions of their production and use, and in particular to the contradiction between the imperative of culture and eclecticism, in the encyclopaedic tradition, and the imperative of originality: this contradiction is inherent within the very objectives of an *enterprise of cultural production for the purposes of reproduction* which, because of this, always comprises a proportion of simple reproduction (increasingly weak and above all increasingly dissimulated as we go from the inferior forms, like the textbook, to the superior, like doctoral theses, encyclopaedias, monographs, dictionaries, etc.). But the dispositions constitutive of the *academica mediocritas*, this cult of the virtues of moderation and even-handedness in things intellectual which implies the refusal of all kinds of excess, even in questions of intelligence and originality, are no doubt inherent in the intermediate position, of double negation, which the academic holds between the artist and the bourgeois.

The secondary teachers had not written any books (except for one of them, who had published translations); the literary production of the professors of preparatory classes was almost exclusively composed of manuals, and other kinds of educational textbook. 'These works, which are well thought out and clearly written, are always accurate summaries, and excellent aids for pupils' [*Ces livres, bien conçus et clairement écrits, sont, quand ils paraissent, de précises mises au point et d'excellents outils pour les élèves*].¹⁷ As for the production of the higher civil servants of the education system, general inspectors, or vice-chancellors, we can apply to it the terms that are used to

characterize the work of Hardy, a faculty dean: 'But the great task, for Hardy, as soon as he arrived in Dakar, was to provide their educational system with the textbooks and other works necessary to put into operation the various study programmes. Hardy set the example, showed the way, launched the series. He published educational works ranging from the textbook or the didactic exposition to the work of provisional synthesis.'¹⁸ The majority of professors in higher education had produced theses and works of synthesis ('A genuinely successful work of luminous synthesis and vast but discreet erudition' [*Une vraie réussite de synthèse lumineuse et de vaste érudition discrète*]);¹⁹ very occasionally novels, 'original' [*originaux*] essays written with 'wit', 'finesse', 'charm', 'lucidity' [*esprit, finesse, charme, lucidité*]. The 'work' [*œuvre*] proper, in the sense given to the word by the intellectual milieu, or the 'great work' [*grande œuvre*], is mentioned only in connection with the professors of the Collège de France.

The schemata of perception and appreciation unearthed by sociological analysis of obituary notices may also be detected in academic readings of Epicurus and Spinoza, of Racine or Flaubert, of Hegel or Marx. The works whose conservation and consecration are incumbent on the educational system are thus continually reproduced at the cost of a distortion all the greater, as the schemata which engendered the works are the further removed from those applied to them by the *authorized interpreters*, convinced that their highest ambition should be to read them through 'spectacles tinted with their whole outlook', as Weber said,²⁰ and thus create them in their own image. These generic dispositions are in fact made specific by the position held by each reader in the university field. We see, for instance, what the most common reading of the classical texts (O Epicurean garden!) may owe to the virtues of provincial gardeners, and what ordinary and extraordinary interpretations of Heidegger may owe to that aristocratic asceticism which, on forest path or mountain pass, flees the flabby, vulgar crowds or their concrete *analogon*, the continually renewed (bad) pupils who have to be endlessly saved from the temptations of society in order to inculcate in them the recognition of true value.