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## Algeria 1960

The disenchantment of the world

The sense of honour

The Kabyle house or the world reversed

Essays by

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## Preface

The present text of my first essay, written in 1963 for a foreign-language edition, is a shortened version of *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (published in 1963), which presented the findings of a series of ethnographic and statistical studies carried out in Algeria between 1958 and 1961.<sup>1</sup>

It was not by chance that the relationship between structures and habitus<sup>2</sup> was constituted as a theoretical problem in relation to a historical situation in which that problem was in a sense presented by reality itself, in the form of a permanent *discrepancy* between the agents' economic dispositions and the economic world in which they had to act. In situations of transition between a pre-capitalist economy and a capitalist economy, the objectivist abstraction in which neo-marginalists join hands with structural-Marxists is so flagrantly inadequate that one has to be blind to reality to reduce the economic agents to mere reflections of the economic structures and to fail to pose the problem of the genesis of economic dispositions and of the economic and social conditions of their genesis. A particular class of material conditions of existence, grasped objectively in the form of a particular structure of objective probabilities – an *objective future* – generates determinate dispositions towards the future. These dispositions are structured structures which function as structuring structures, orienting and organizing the economic practices of daily life – purchases, saving,

1. The apparatus of supporting material – statistical tables, extracts from interviews, documents, etc. – is not reprinted here. The reader should therefore consult *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1963) for this information; also for details of the survey methodology (sampling, questionnaire, etc.) and analysis of the findings. "The Disenchantment of the World" was published in French under the title *Algérie 60* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1978).
2. The habitus is a system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices.

and credit – and also political representations, whether resigned or revolutionary. Those who have no future before them, as the phrase goes, are unlikely to form the individual project of bringing about their future, or to work for the coming of a new collective future. The relation to a future objectively inscribed in the material conditions of existence contains the basis of the distinction between the sub-proletariat and the proletariat – between the uprooted, demoralized masses' disposition to revolt and the revolutionary dispositions of organized workers who have sufficient control over their present to undertake to reappropriate the future.

Rereading this text, written more than a decade ago, I more than once felt the wish to refine and systematize the analyses, by investing in them all that subsequent work has yielded (particularly *Outline of a Theory of Practice*).<sup>3</sup> But, conscious of the futility of all forms of “theoretical labour” that are not accompanied by empirical work on the things themselves (which would mean, in this case, a return to fieldwork which is not possible at present), I have refrained from doing so. I have added two further essays, “The Sense of Honour” and “The Kabyle House or the World Reversed”, previously available in English but in an unsatisfactory form; though they belong more closely to the line of anthropological research presented in the *Outline*, they should help to give the reader a clearer idea of the cultural presuppositions of the logic of the Kabyle economy.

P.B.

Paris  
December 1976

3. See P. Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (Geneva and Paris: Droz, 1972) (*Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977; *Entwurf einer Theorie der Praxis*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976).

## The disenchantment of the world

For nothing is more certain, than that despair has almost the same effect on us with enjoyment, and that we are no sooner acquainted with the impossibility of satisfying any desire, than the desire itself vanishes.

David Hume, Introduction to *A Treatise of Human Nature*

### Introduction

Those who pose the ritual question of the cultural obstacles to economic development are generally concerned exclusively, that is to say abstractly, with the “rationalization” of economic conducts, and they describe as resistances, solely imputable to the cultural heritage (or, worse, to one or another of its aspects, Islam for example), every failure to meet the requirements of an abstract model of “rationality” as defined by economic theory. Paradoxically, the philosophy of economic development which reduces anthropology to a dimension of economics leads to the ignoring of the *economic conditions* for the adoption of “rational” economic behaviour and expects the man of pre-capitalist societies to start by converting himself into a “developed” man in order to be able to enjoy the economic advantages of a “developed” economy.

Nor does cultural anthropology escape abstraction when it sees a simple effect of “culture contact” in the transformations of pre-capitalist societies which it describes as “culture change” or “acculturation”. It tends to ignore the fact that transformation of the system of cultural models and values is not the result of a simple logical combination between the imported models and the original models but that, being both the consequence and the precondition of economic transformations, this transformation takes place only through the mediation of the experience and practice of individuals differently situated with respect to the economic system. Thus, within the apparently most homogeneous peasant society,