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## Social Being, Time and the Sense of Existence



The scholastic situation implies, by definition, a particularly free relationship to what is normally called time, since, as a suspending of urgency, the pressure of 'things to do', of business and busyness, it inclines us to consider 'time' as a thing with which we have a relation of externality, that of a subject facing an object. This vision is reinforced by the habits of ordinary language, which make time something that one has, that one gains or wastes, lacks or has on one's hands, etc. Like the body-as-thing of the Cartesian idealist vision, time-as-thing, the time of clock-makers and scientists, is the product of a scholastic point of view which has found its expression in a metaphysics of time and history which considers history either as a pre-given reality, a thing in-itself, previous and external to practice, or as the (empty) *a priori* framework for every historical process. We can break with this point of view by reconstructing the point of view of the acting agent, of practice as 'temporalization', thereby revealing that practice is not *in* time but *makes* time (human time, as opposed to biological or astronomical time).

One cannot constitute a still non-present reality as a present centre of interest, 'presentiate' it as Husserl says, without 'depresentiating' what has just been actualized, sending it back into the non-actual, as an unperceived background, in the margins that one has had dealings with and will again have dealings with.<sup>1</sup> As a consequence, to take an

interest, to constitute some reality or other as a *centre of interest*, is to set in motion the process of 'presentation-depresentation', 'actualization-deactualization', 'interest-disinterest', in other words to 'temporalize' oneself, to *make* time, in a relationship to the directly perceived present which has nothing in common with a project. In opposition to the indifference which apprehends the world as devoid of interest and importance, the *illusio* (or interest in the game) is what gives 'sense' (both meaning and direction) to existence by leading one to invest in a game and in its forth-coming [*son à venir*], in the *lusiones*,<sup>2</sup> the chances, that it offers to those who are caught up in the game and who expect something from it (which gives a foundation to the belief that it is sufficient to define the *illusio* as illusion, and to suspend interest, and the forward rush, into 'diversion', that it determines, in order to suspend time).

And to be able to capture the truth of the ordinary experience of pre-occupation and immersion in the forth-coming in which time passes unnoticed, one also has to question the intellectualist view of temporal experience which excludes any other relation to the future than the conscious project, aiming at ends and possibles that are posited as such. This typically scholastic representation is based, as ever, on the substitution of a reflexive vision for the practical vision. Husserl did indeed clearly establish that the *project* as a conscious aiming at the future in its reality as a contingent future, must not be conflated with *protention*, a prereflexive aiming at a forth-coming which offers itself as quasi-present in the visible, like the hidden faces of a cube, that is, with the same belief status (the same doxic modality) as what is directly perceived; and that it is only when it is retrieved in scholastic reflection that it can appear, retrospectively, as a project, which it is not in practice (all the paradoxes concerning contingent futures spring from the fact that practice is being asked questions of truth – what will be true or false tomorrow must be true or false today – which arise for the observer but which, except in crisis situations, when the process of 'actualization-deactualization' is suspended, remain unknown to the agent whose sense of the game is immediately adjusted to the forth-coming of the game.).<sup>3</sup>

The imminent forth-coming is present, immediately visible, as a present property of things, to the point of excluding the possibility that it will not come about, a possibility which exists theoretically so

<sup>1</sup> E. Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1931), esp. pp. 101ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Lusiones* is, with *casus*, *alea*, *sors* and *fortuna*, one of the words used by Huyghens to designate chances (cf. I. Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability: A Philosophical Study of Early Ideas about Probability, Induction and Statistical Inference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975)).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J. Vuillemin, *Nécessité ou contingence, l'aporie de Diode et les systèmes philosophiques* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1988).

long as it has not come about. This is particularly clear in the case of emotion, fear for example, which, as is testified by the reactions of the body, especially its internal secretions, similar to those that would be provoked by the situation that is anticipated, sees the forth-coming – the threatening dog, the onrushing car – as something already-there, irremediable ('I'm done for', 'I'm a goner').<sup>4</sup> But, beyond these extreme situations in which, being really put at stake by the world, the body is snatched by the forth-coming of the world, what we aim at in ordinary action is not a contingent future: the good player is the one who, as in Pascal's example, 'places' the ball better or who places himself not where the ball is but where it is about to land. In either case, the forth-coming in relation to which he positions himself is not a possible which may happen or not happen but something which is already there in the configuration of the game and in the present positions and postures of team-mates and opponents.

#### The presence of the forth-coming

Thus, the experience of time is engendered in the relationship between habitus and the social world, between the dispositions to be and to do and the regularities of a natural and social cosmos (or a field). It arises, more precisely, in the relationship between the practical expectations or hopes which are constitutive of an *illusio* as investment in a social game, and the tendencies immanent to this game, the probabilities of fulfilment that they offer to these expectations, or, more precisely, the structure of the mathematical probabilities, *lusiones*, that is characteristic of the game in question. Practical anticipation of a forth-coming inscribed in the immediate present, protention, pre-occupation, is the most common form of the experience of time, a paradoxical experience, like that of the self-evidence of the familiar world, since time does not offer itself in it to be felt and passes in a sense unnoticed (someone who has been engrossed in an activity will say 'I didn't notice time passing').

Time (or at least what we call time) is really experienced only when the quasi-automatic coincidence between expectations and chances, *illusio* and *lusiones*, expectations and the world which is there to fulfil them, is broken. We then feel directly the breaking of the tacit collusion between the course of the world – astronomical

<sup>4</sup> Because he treats it not as protention, an anticipation endowed with the doxic modality of perception, but as a project aimed at a contingent future, Sartre cannot ground the seriousness of an emotion such as fear, which is thus reduced to a form of 'bad faith'.

movements (such as the cycle of the seasons) or biological processes (such as ageing), or social processes (such as family life cycles or bureaucratic careers), over which we have less than full power or no power at all – and the internal movements which relate to them (*illusio*). It is the discrepancy between what is anticipated and the logic of the game in relation to which this anticipation was formed, between a 'subjective' disposition (which does not mean an internal or mental one) and an objective tendency, which gives rise to relations to time such as waiting or impatience – the situation in which, as Pascal says, 'we anticipate the future as too slow in coming, as if in order to hasten its course' – regret or nostalgia – the feeling experienced when the object whose presence is desired is no longer there, or threatens to disappear, and 'we recall the past, to stop its too rapid flight'<sup>5</sup> – boredom or 'discontent' in the sense used by Hegel (as read by Eric Weil), a dissatisfaction with the present that implies the negation of the present and the propensity to work towards its supersession.

(Immersion in the forth-coming as a presence to the future which is not experienced as such contrasts with some forms of the experience of 'free time' – particularly prized by overworked executives – such as the one which consists in living the temporary *skholè* of holidays as an existence liberated from time because liberated from *illusio*, from pre-occupation, through the suspension of insertion into the field and therefore in the competition (there is much talk of 'clearing the deck' and 'cooling out') and, when the case arises, by insertion into universes without competition, such as the family and some holiday 'clubs', fictitious social universes, often experienced as 'liberated' and 'liberating' because they bring together strangers who have no stakes in common, who are stripped of their social investments – and not only of their clothes and their hierarchical attributes, as the journalistic vision would have it. In fact, unless a special effort is made, 'free time' does not readily escape from the logic of investment in 'things to do', which even when it does not go as far as the explicit concern to 'succeed in one's holidays', according to the precepts of the women's magazines, prolongs the competition for the accumulation of symbolic capital in various forms: suntan, souvenirs or anecdotes, photos or films, monuments, museums, landscapes, places to visit or explore or simply to 'do' – 'we've done Greece'... – by implementing the imperative suggestions of the tourist guides.)

What is aimed at by the pre-occupation of practical sense, an anticipated presence to what it aims at, is a forth-coming already present

<sup>5</sup> Pascal, *Pensées*, 172.

in the immediate present and not constituted as future. The project, by contrast, or premeditation, posits the end as such, that is, as one end chosen among all others and coloured by the same modality, that of the contingent future, which may happen or not happen. If one accepts Hegel's demonstration in which the design, the project, the *Vorsatz*, presupposes representation, *Vorstellung*, and intention, *Absicht*, which itself presupposes abstraction, the separation of subject and object, it is clear that one is indeed in the order of the conscious and the reflected, of action conscious of itself in its objective reality as the actualization of a possible.<sup>6</sup>

The present is the set of those things to which one is present, in other words, in which one is interested (as opposed to indifferent, or absent). It therefore cannot be reduced to a momentary instant (which only appears, it seems to me, in the critical moments when the forthcoming does not come, but is suspended, in question, objectively or subjectively): it encompasses the practical anticipations and retrospections that are inscribed as objective potentialities or traces in the immediate given. Habitus is that presence of the past in the present which makes possible the presence in the present of the forthcoming. It follows from this first that, having within itself its own logic (*lex*) and its own dynamic (*vis*), it is not mechanically subjected to an external causality, and that it gives a freedom with respect to direct and immediate determination by the present circumstances (in contrast to what is asserted by mechanistic instantaneism). The autonomy with respect to the immediate event, a trigger rather than a determinant, that is given by habitus (and which becomes manifest when a fortuitous and insignificant stimulus, such as the 'heather-mixture stocking' in *To the Lighthouse*, provokes a disproportionate reaction<sup>7</sup>) is correlative with the dependence on the past that it introduces and which orients one towards a certain forthcoming: habitus combines in a single aim a past and a forthcoming neither of which is posited as such. The already-present forthcoming can be read in the present only on the basis of a past that is itself never aimed at as such (habitus as incorporated acquisition being a presence of the past – or to the past – and not memory of the past).

The capacity to anticipate and to see in advance that is acquired in and through practice and familiarization with a field is nothing like a knowledge that can be mobilized at will by means of an act of memory.

<sup>6</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, tr. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942).

<sup>7</sup> V. Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Hogarth Press, 1927), and E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 525ff.

It is only manifested in concrete situations and is linked as if by a relation of *mutual prompting* to the occasion which calls it forth and which it causes to exist as an opportunity to be seized (whereas someone else would let it pass, unnoticed). Interest takes the form of an encounter with the objectivity of things 'full of interest'. 'We are', says Pascal, 'full of things which take us out of ourselves. Our instinct makes us feel that we must seek our happiness outside ourselves. Our passions impel us outside, even when no objects present themselves to excite them. External objects tempt us of themselves, and call to us, even when we are not thinking of them. And thus philosophers have said in vain: "Retire within yourselves, you will find your good there." We do not believe them, and those who believe them are the most empty and the most foolish.'<sup>8</sup> The things to do, things to be done (*pragmata*) which are the correlate of practical knowledge, are defined in the relationship between the structure of the hopes or expectations constitutive of a habitus and the structure of probabilities which is constitutive of a social space. This means that the objective probabilities are determinant only for an agent endowed with the sense of the game in the form of the capacity to anticipate the forthcoming of the game. (This anticipation relies on a practical pre-categorization based on the implementation of the schemes of habitus which, arising from experience of the regularities of existence, structure the contingencies of life in terms of previous experience and make it possible to anticipate in practice the probable futures previously classified as good or bad, bringing satisfactions or frustrations. This practical sense of the forthcoming has nothing in common with a rational calculation of chances – as shown by the discrepancies between an explicit appreciation of probabilities and practical anticipation, which is both more precise and more rapid, as is shown by the well-known observations of Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, or the experience, familiar to all of us, of the unexpected feeling that occurs when a lift, instead of going straight down to the ground floor, stops at the first floor, where someone has called it, showing us that we have an embodied measurement of the usual duration of the ride, a measurement which cannot be precisely expressed in seconds, although it is very accurate, since the gap between the first floor and the ground floor is only a couple of seconds.)

The sense of the game is that sense of the forthcoming of the game, of what is to be done ('it was the only thing to do' or 'he did what was needed') in order to bring about the forthcoming state of the game that is visible there for a habitus predisposed to anticipate

<sup>8</sup> Pascal, *Pensées*, 464.

it, the sense of the history of the game, which is only acquired through experience of the game – which means that the imminence and pre-eminence of the forth-coming presuppose a disposition which is the product of the past. Strategies oriented by the sense of the game are practical anticipations of the immanent tendencies of the field, never stated in the form of explicit forecasts, still less in the form of norms or rules of behaviour – especially in fields in which the most effective strategies are the ones which appear as the most disinterested. The game, which both provokes and presupposes investment in the game, interest in the game, produces the forth-coming for someone who has something to expect from the game. Conversely, investment or interest, which presupposes possession of a habitus and a capital capable of providing it with at least a minimum of profits, is what brings people into the game, and into the time that is specific to it, that is to say, the forth-coming and the urgencies that it offers. It is proportionate to capital as profit potential – disappearing when the chances of appropriation fall below a certain threshold.

(Like the future, the past is the product of investment in the present, that is, in the game and in the stakes that are constitutive of the game. People are not as surprised as they should be by the fact that a cultural object of the past – a monument, piece of furniture, a text, a painting, etc. – can be not only conserved in its material substance, like fossils, ruins or ‘archives’ forgotten in attics, but rescued from symbolic death, from the state of a *dead letter*, and kept alive, that is to say, in the ambiguous status which defines the historical object, which is at once out of use, detached from its original use, its original field – like tools, machines or religious implements converted into museum pieces – and yet continuously used and reactivated as an object of contemplation or speculation (in both senses), dissertation or meditation. We can give Heidegger credit for having raised this problem in the analysis of what causes the ‘antiquities’ conserved in a museum to be ‘past’. But he encounters the question of whether these objects are historic as ‘objects of a historiographic interest of archaeology and ethnology’ only to dismiss it with one of those inversions of which he is the master, enabling him always to situate himself outside ‘naive anthropology’: it is not the present interest of historians in history that makes the historical object, it is the historicity of *Dasein*, the proper object of existential analysis, which makes historicity and historical interest. In fact, as is recalled by the Kabyle belief that a man’s chances of surviving disappearance depend on the number and quality of the descendants that he has produced and who will be able to cite his name and so resuscitate him, the principle of the selective survival of the past lies in the present. Technical or

cultural objects can achieve the status of ancient works, deserving to be conserved and durably admired, only in so far as they become the object of competition for the monopoly of the material or symbolic appropriation, interpretation, ‘reading’, performance, that is regarded as legitimate at a given time. Thus, inherited writings – whether they be esoteric texts which only owe their survival to the conflicts of specialists, or great religious or political prophetic works capable of mobilizing groups by modifying their schemes of perception and therefore their practices, in the name of the *belief* they are granted – are never the real causes or the pure pretexts of the conflicts they arouse, although people always proceed as if the whole value of the stake had its principle not in the game, but in the intrinsic properties of the stake.)

So it is in and by practice, through the practical implication that it implies, that social agents temporalize themselves. But they can ‘make’ time only in so far as they are endowed with habitus adjusted to the field, that is, to the sense of the game (or of investment), understood as a capacity to anticipate, in the practical mode, forth-comings [*des à venir*] that present themselves in the very structure of the game; or, in other words, in so far as they have been constituted in such a way that they are disposed to see objective potentialities in the present structure which force themselves upon them as things to be done. Time is indeed, as Kant maintained, the product of an act of construction, but it is the work not of the thinking consciousness but of the dispositions and practice.

### ‘The order of successions’

Investment is associated with uncertainty, but a limited and, in a sense, regulated uncertainty (which explains the pertinence of the analogy with games). In order for the particular relationship between subjective expectations and objective chances which defines investment, interest or *illusio* to be set up, the objective chances have to be situated between absolute necessity and absolute impossibility; the agent has to have chances of winning which are neither nil (losing on every throw) nor total (winning on every throw). In other words, nothing must be absolutely sure, but not everything must be possible. There has to be some degree of indeterminacy, contingency in the game, some ‘play’, but also a certain necessity in the contingency, and therefore the possibility of knowledge, a form of reasonable anticipation, the one provided by custom, or, failing that, the ‘doctrine of chances’ which Pascal tries to work out and which, as he says, makes

it possible to 'work for the uncertain'.<sup>9</sup> (And indeed, the social order is situated between two limits: on the one hand, radical determinism, logicist or physicalist, leaving no room for the 'uncertain', on the other, total indetermination, the credo – denounced by Hegel as the 'atheism of the moral world'<sup>10</sup> – of those who, in the name of the Cartesian distinction between the physical and the mental, deny the social world the necessity they grant to the natural world – like Donald Davidson, to take but one example, who asserts that there can be 'strict' laws and 'precise' predictions, based on a 'serious' determinism, only in the physical domain.<sup>11</sup>)

It is only in the relationship with the immanent tendencies of a social universe, and the probabilities inscribed in its regularities or in the mechanisms ensuring the stability of the distributions and the principles of redistribution, and therefore of the chances of profit on the various markets, that dispositions (preferences, tastes) can be constituted that are both not indifferent to the game and capable of making differences in it, and that these dispositions can engender hope or despair, expectation or impatience, and all the other states of mind through which we experience time. More precisely, it is because it is the product of a durable confrontation with a social world presenting indisputable regularities that habitus can ensure a minimal adaptation to the probable course of this world, through 'reasonable' anticipations, roughly adjusted (outside of any calculation) to the objective chances and tending to contribute to the circular reinforcement of these regularities (thereby giving the appearances of a foundation to models, especially economic ones, based on the hypothesis of rational action<sup>12</sup>).

The social world is not a game of chance, a discontinuous series of perfectly independent events, like the spins of a roulette wheel (whose attraction, as Dostoevsky suggests in *The Gambler*, is explained by the fact that it can enable a person to move in an instant from the lowest to the highest rung of the social ladder). Those who talk of equality of opportunity forget that social games – the economic game, but also the cultural games (the religious field, the juridical field, the

<sup>9</sup> Pascal, *Pensées*, 234.

<sup>10</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*.

<sup>11</sup> D. Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>12</sup> This is one of the cases which most clearly illustrate the logic whereby social mechanisms, far from revealing themselves, disguise themselves as illusions of intentionality, rationality or even free choice. The scholastic illusion leads one to record in a naive description social realities as they appear to a gaze that is itself caught, without realizing it, in those mechanisms.

philosophical field, etc.) are not 'fair games'. Without being, strictly speaking, rigged, the competition resembles a handicap race that has lasted for generations or games in which each player has the positive or negative score of all those who have preceded him, that is, the cumulated scores of all his ancestors. And they should rather be compared to games in which the players progressively accumulate positive or negative profits, and therefore a more or less great capital, which, together with the tendencies (to prudence, daring, etc.) inherent in their habitus and partly linked to the volume of their capital, orient their playing strategies.

The social world has a history and, for this reason, it is the site of an internal dynamic, independent of the consciousness and will of the players, a kind of *conatus* linked to the existence of mechanisms which tend to reproduce the structure of the objective probabilities or, more precisely, the structure of the distribution of capital and of the corresponding chances of profit. To speak of a tendency or a *conatus* is to say that, like Popper, one regards the values taken by probability functions as measures of the strength of the propensity of the corresponding events to produce themselves – what Leibniz called their *pretentio ad existendum*. That is why, to designate the temporal logic of this social cosmos, one could speak of the 'order of successions': thanks to the double meaning of the word 'succession', Leibniz's definition of time also evokes the logic of social reproduction, the regularities and rules of the transmission of powers and privileges which is the condition of the permanence of the social order as a regular distribution of *lusiones*, of probabilities or objective expectations.

What determines this redundancy of the social world and, by limiting the space of possibles, makes it livable, capable of being practically foreseen through the practical induction of habitus? On the one hand, there are the tendencies immanent in agents in the form of habitus that are (mostly) coherent and (relatively) constant (over time) and (more or less precisely) orchestrated, which tend (statistically) to reconstitute the structures of which they are the product; and on the other hand there are the tendencies immanent in the social universes, particularly in the fields, which are the product of mechanisms independent of consciousnesses and wills, or of rules or codes explicitly designed to ensure the conservation of the established order (precapitalist societies depend mainly on habitus for their reproduction whereas capitalist societies depend principally on objective mechanisms, such as those which tend to guarantee the reproduction of economic capital and cultural capital, to which should be added all the forms of organizational constraints – one thinks of the postman discussed by

Schutz<sup>13</sup> – and codifications of practices, customs, conventions, law, some of which are expressly designed, as Weber observes, to ensure predictability and calculability.

### The relationship between expectations and chances

I have so far argued as if the two dimensions constitutive of temporal experience – subjective expectations and the objective chances, or more precisely the actual or potential power over the immanent tendencies of the social world which governs the chances attached to an agent (or his or her position) – were identical for all; as if, in other words, all agents had both the same chances of material and symbolic profit (and were therefore, in a sense, dealing with the same economic and social world) and the same dispositions to invest. But agents have powers (defined by the volume and structure of their capital) which are very unequal. As for their expectations and aspirations, these are also very unequally distributed (despite some cases of mismatch with the capacities for satisfaction), by virtue of the law that, through the dispositions of habitus (themselves adjusted, most of the time, to agents' positions) expectations tend universally to be roughly adapted to the objective chances.

This tendential law of human behaviours, whereby the subjective hope of profit tends to be adjusted to the objective probability of profit, governs the propensity to invest (money, work, time, emotion, etc.) in the various fields. So it is that the propensity of families and children to invest in education (which is itself one of the major factors of educational success) depends on the degree to which they depend on the educational system for the reproduction of their capital and their social position, and on the chances of success for these investments in view of the volume of the cultural capital they possess – these two factors combining to determine the considerable differences in attitudes towards schooling and in success at school (those for example which separate the child of a university teacher from the child of a manual worker, or even the child of a primary teacher from the child of a small shopkeeper).

One is always surprised to see how much people's wills adjust to their possibilities, their desires to the capacity to satisfy them; and to discover that, contrary to all received ideas, *pleonexia*, the desire always to have more, as Plato called it, is the exception (and can,

<sup>13</sup> A. Schutz, *Collected Papers*, vol. 2 (The Hague, Boston, London: Martinus Wijnhoff, 1962), p. 45.

moreover, be understood, as will be seen, in terms of the fundamental law). This is true even in societies where, with the generalization of schooling, generating a structural *déclassement* linked to the devaluation of educational qualifications, and the generalization of insecurity of employment, the mismatch between expectations and chances becomes more frequent. Whenever the dispositions that produce them are themselves the product of conditions identical or similar to those in which they are implemented, the strategies that agents use to defend their actual or potential position in social space and, more generally, their image of themselves – always mediated by others – are objectively adjusted to these conditions – which does not mean that they necessarily correspond to the interests of their authors. For example, the realistic, even resigned or fatalistic, dispositions which lead members of the dominated classes to put up with objective conditions that would be judged intolerable or revolting by agents otherwise disposed can have the appearances of purposiveness only if it is forgotten that, by a paradoxical counterfinality of adaptation to reality, they help to reproduce the conditions of oppression.

Thus power (that is, capital, social energy) governs the potentialities objectively offered to each player, her possibilities and impossibilities, her degrees of empowerment, of power-to-be, and at the same time her desire for power, which, being fundamentally realistic, is roughly adjusted to the agent's actual empowerment. Early and lasting insertion into a condition defined by a particular degree of power tends, through experience of the possibilities offered or denied by that condition, to institute durably in the body dispositions-to-be which are (tendentially) proportioned to these potentialities. Habitus is this 'can-be' which tends to produce practices objectively adjusted to the possibilities, in particular by orienting the perception and evaluation of the possibilities inscribed in the present situation.

To understand the realism of this adjustment, one has to take account of the fact that the automatic effects of the conditionings imposed by the conditions of existence are added to by the directly educative interventions of the family, the peer group and the agents of the educational system (assessments, advice, injunctions, recommendations), which expressly aim to favour the adjustment of aspirations to objective chances, needs to possibilities, the anticipation and acceptance of the limits, both visible and invisible, explicit and tacit. By discouraging aspirations oriented to unattainable goals, which are thereby defined as illegitimate pretensions, these calls to order tend to underline or anticipate the sanctions of necessity and to orientate aspirations towards more realistic goals, more compatible with the chances inscribed in the position occupied. The principle of all moral

education is thus set out: become what you are (and what you have to be) socially, do what you have to do, what is incumbent upon you – this is Plato's *ta autou prattein* – an 'ought to be' which may require a supersession of self ('noblesse oblige') or recall one to the limits of what is reasonable ('that's not for you').

Rites of institution, in which the social manipulation of aspirations is set out in full view because it is less masked than elsewhere by the functions of technical learning, are simply the limiting case of all the actions of suggestion, in the strong sense of the word, that the family tends to exercise. These solemn injunctions confer a collective and public form on an extra-ordinary performative act of institution (of the boy as a boy, for example, in the case of circumcision) which condenses into a discontinuous act of great social intensity all the continuous, infinitesimal and often unnoticed actions that every group exerts on its new members: I am thinking in particular of all the demands and taboos – those, for example, that are implied in all acts of nomination (terms of reference or terms of address) – which, whether implicit, insinuated or simply inscribed in the practical state in interactions, are addressed to the child and help to shape his representation of his (generic or individual) capacity to act, his value and social being.

### Digression: Still more scholastic abstractions

It is only through an abstraction tending to prevent real understanding of the mechanisms involved that one can speak, as Weber does, of 'typical' or 'average' chances (which nonetheless has the merit of making explicit a number of the postulates that economic theory implicitly applies, especially when it posits that investments tend to be adjusted to the interest rates expected or really obtained in the previous period). To hypothesize that there is a relation of intelligible causality between the generic chances 'existing objectively on average' and 'subjective expectations'<sup>14</sup> is to presuppose, first, that one can set aside the differences between agents and the principles which determine them and, secondly, that agents act 'rationally' or 'judiciously', that is, by referring to what is 'objectively valid'<sup>15</sup> or as if they

<sup>14</sup> Cf. M. Weber, 'The logic of historical explanation', in *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*, ed. W. G. Runciman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 111–31.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

had known 'all the circumstances and all the intentions of those involved',<sup>16</sup> like the scientist, alone able to construct by calculation – and generally only after the event – the system of objective chances on which an action performed in full knowledge of the situation would have to align itself.

Weber's definition of rational action as the 'rational response' of an interchangeable, indeterminate agent to 'potential opportunities' – such as the average rates of profit offered by the various markets – seems to me to be a typical example of scholastic lack of realism. How can it be denied that agents are practically never in a position to gather all the information about the situation that a rational decision would require and that they are in any case very unequally endowed in this respect? To escape this objection, it is not sufficient to tinker with the inadequate paradigm by speaking, as Herbert Simon does, of 'bounded rationality', limited by the uncertain and imperfect nature of the available information and the limits of the calculating capacity of the human mind (again in general . . .), and by redefining the aim of maximizing profit as a quest for 'acceptable minima'.

Nor can one stop at the theory of 'rational anticipations', which, even if it seems at first sight closer to the facts because it posits the correspondence between anticipations and probabilities, remains unreal and abstract. Ignoring the fact that expectations and chances are unequally distributed and that this distribution corresponds to the unequal distribution of capital in its various forms, it unwittingly universalizes the particular case of the scientist, sufficiently removed from necessity to be able to confront rationally an economic world characterized by a high degree of correspondence between economic structures and dispositions. Similarly, although it is apparently very close to the theory of habitus as the product of conditionings predisposing the agent to react to conventional and conditional stimuli, the Bayesian theory of decision,<sup>17</sup> according to which probability can be interpreted as an individual 'rational degree of belief', attributes no lasting effect to 'conditionalization' (the assimilation of new information in the structure of belief).<sup>18</sup> It presupposes that the rational degrees of belief – subjective probabilities – attributed to different events change continuously (which is true) and completely (which is

<sup>16</sup> M. Weber, 'The nature of social action', in *Selections in Translation*, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. P. Suppes, *La Logique du probable* (Paris: Flammarion, 1981). (Thomas Bayes, 1701–1761, was the author of 'Essay towards solving a problem in the doctrine of chances' (1763). *Trans.*)

<sup>18</sup> Cf. E. Ellis, *Rational Decision and Causality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

never entirely true) on the basis of new data. And while it is acknowledged that action depends on information and that this may not be complete, that rational action encounters its limits in the limits of the information available and that only well-informed rational action deserves to be called 'prudential action', the fact remains that rational action, understood as the action which makes the best consequences the most probable ones, is conceived as the product of a *decision* based on a *deliberation*, and therefore on examination of the possible consequences of choosing the different possible courses of action and on evaluation of the merits of the different courses of action in terms of their consequences.

As ever, when faced with such constructions, one can only wonder what status they should be given: is this a normative theory (how should one decide?) or a descriptive theory (how do agents decide?). Is it a rule in the sense of a regularity (it regularly happens that . . .) or a rule in the sense of a norm (the rule is that . . .)? And to escape from this, it is not sufficient to invoke the unconscious or a mysterious intuition: 'A commitment to coherence does not involve the agent in abandoning his inarticulate skills of judgement and self-knowledge in favour of conscious manipulation of a formal apparatus. . . . At its best deliberation fits Dewey's description: "The laws of mechanics underlie the skill of the cyclist who, at his best, is unconscious of them; and just so, the logic of decision underlies the skill of the moral agent who, at his best, is not conscious of it."<sup>19</sup> Such explanations, like an appeal to a 'dormitive power', explain nothing. But above all, whereas, when he explicitly used the language of 'average chances', Max Weber at least had the merit of tacitly taking account of the inequality of chances, which he placed at the centre of his theory of stratification, the typically scholastic theory of rational decision-making ignores the inequalities of economic and cultural capital and the inequalities which result from them, in the objective probabilities, in beliefs and in the available information. In fact, strategies are not abstract responses to an abstract situation, such as a state of the labour market or an average rate of profit: they are defined in relation to promptings, inscribed in the objective world, in the form of positive or negative indices which are not addressed to just anyone but which only 'speak' (as opposed to what 'says nothing to them') to agents characterized by possession of a certain capital and a certain habitus.

<sup>19</sup> R. C. Jeffrey, 'Ethics and the logic of decision', *Journal of Philosophy*, 62 (1965), pp. 528-39 (quoting John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Random House, 1930), p. 194).

### A social experiment on time and power

Thus, social scientists regularly forget the economic and social conditions which make possible the ordinary order of practices, in particular those of the social world. Now, there exists, in the social world, a category, that of the subproletarians, which highlights these conditions by showing what happens when life is turned into a 'game of chance' (*qmar*), as an unemployed Algerian put it, and when the limited desire for power which is habitus in a sense capitulates before the more or less long-lasting experience of powerlessness. Just as, as psychologists have observed, the annihilation of chances associated with crisis situations leads to the collapse of psychological defences, so here it leads to a kind of generalized and lasting disorganization of behaviour and thought linked to the disappearance of any coherent vision of the future. Thus, better than any 'imaginary variations', this analyser requires one to break with the self-evidences of the ordinary order by bringing to light the presuppositions tacitly engaged in the view of the world (which are common to phenomenological analysis and the theorizations of rational action theory or Bayesianism.<sup>20</sup>

The often disorganized and even incoherent behaviours, constantly contradicted by their discourse, of these people without a future, living at the mercy of what each day brings and condemned to oscillate between fantasy and surrender, between flight into the imaginary and fatalistic surrender to the verdicts of the given, are evidence that, below a certain threshold of objective chances, the strategic disposition itself, which presupposes practical reference to a forth-coming, sometimes a very remote one, as in the case of family planning, cannot be constituted. The real ambition to control the future (and, *a fortiori*, the project of conceiving and rationally pursuing what the theory of rational anticipations calls 'subjective expected utility') varies with the real power to control that future, which means first of all having a grasp on the present itself. It follows that, far from contradicting the law of correspondence between structures and habitus, or between positions and dispositions, the dream-like ambitions and millenarian hopes that the most deprived sometimes express still testify that, in contrast to this imaginary demand, real demand has its basis and therefore also its limits in real power. When listening to subproletarians – unemployed Algerians in the 1960s or adolescents living without prospects on desolate housing estates in the 1990s – one discovers how the powerlessness that, by destroying potentialities,

<sup>20</sup> See above, p. 219, note 17. *Trans.*

prevents investment in social stakes engenders illusions. The link between the present and the future seems to be broken, as is shown by the projects they entertain, completely detached from the present and immediately belied by it: sending a daughter to university when it turns out that she has already abandoned school, or setting up a leisure centre in the Far East, when there is no money for travelling anywhere . . .<sup>21</sup>

In losing their work, the unemployed have also lost the countless tokens of a socially known and recognized *function*, in other words the whole set of goals posited in advance, independently of any conscious project, in the form of demands and commitments – ‘important’ meetings, cheques to post, invoices to draw up – and the whole forth-coming already given in the immediate present, in the form of deadlines, dates and timetables to be observed – buses to take, rates to maintain, targets to meet . . . Deprived of this objective universe of incitements and indications which orientate and stimulate action and, through it, social life, they can only experience the free time that is left to them as dead time, purposeless and meaningless. If time seems to be annihilated, this is because employment is the support, if not the source, of most interests, expectations, demands, hopes and investments in the present, and also in the future or the past that it implies, in short one of the major foundations of *illusio* in the sense of involvement in the game of life, in the present, the primordial investment which – as traditional wisdom has always taught, in identifying detachment from time with detachment from the world – creates time and indeed *is* time itself.

Excluded from the game, dispossessed of the vital illusion of having a function or a mission, of having to be or do something, these people may, in order to escape from the non-time of a life in which nothing happens and where there is nothing to expect, and in order to feel they exist, resort to activities which, like the French *tiércé*, or *totocalcio*, *jogo de bicho* or all the other lotteries or gambling systems of all the *bidonvilles* and *favelas* of the world, offer an escape from the negated time of a life without justification or possible investment, by recreating the temporal vector and reintroducing expectation, for a moment, until the end of the game or Sunday night, in other words finalized time, which is in itself a source of satisfaction. And, to try to escape from the sense, so well expressed by the Algerian

<sup>21</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1964), pp. 352–62; *La Misère du monde* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1993), pp. 607–11, tr. in Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Those were the days’, in *The Weight of the World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

subproletarians, of being the plaything of external constraints (‘I’m like a scrap of peel on water’), and to break out from a fatalistic submission to the forces of the world, the younger of them especially may also use acts of violence which in themselves count for more than, or as much as, the profits they procure, or death-defying games with cars or motor-bikes, as a desperate way of existing in the eyes of others, for others, of achieving a recognized form of social existence, or, quite simply, of making something happen rather than nothing.

Thus, the limiting-case experience of those who, like the subproletarians, are excluded from the ordinary (economic) world has the virtues of a kind of radical doubt: it forces one to raise the question of the economic and social conditions which make possible access to time as something so self-evident as to pass unnoticed. It is indeed certain that the scholastic experience which in its very principle involves a very particular relation to time, based on a fundamental freedom with respect to the ordinary logic of action, in no way aids understanding of different experiences of the world and of time, or understanding of itself, especially as regards temporality.

The extreme dispossession of the subproletarian – whether of working age or still in that ill-defined zone between schooling and unemployment or underemployment in which many working-class adolescents are kept, often for a rather long time – brings to light the self-evidence of the relationship between time and power, by showing that the practical relation to the forth-coming, in which the experience of time is generated, depends on power and the objective chances it opens. It can be confirmed statistically that investment in the forth-coming of the game presupposes a basic minimum of chances in the game, and therefore power over the game, over the present of the game; and that the aptitude to adjust behaviour in relation to the future is closely dependent on the effective chances of controlling the future that are inscribed in the present conditions. In short, adaptation to the tacit demands of the economic cosmos is only accessible to those who possess a certain minimum of economic and cultural capital, that is, a certain degree of power over the mechanisms that have to be mastered. It is all the more necessary to make this point because, in addition to the effect of the scholastic condition, which, like gravity, affects everything we think without becoming visible, there is the specific effect of public time. Being defined in mathematical or physical terms, this astronomical time is naturalized, dehistoricized, desocialized, becoming something external which flows ‘of itself and by its nature’, as Newton put it, and which thus helps to conceal the links between power and the possible under the appearances of the consensus that it helps to produce.

### The plurality of times

In fact, really to break with the universalistic illusion fostered by analysis of essence (to which I have had to make some concessions in describing the temporal experience that I have contrasted with the intellectualist view of rational decision), one would need to describe the different ways of temporalizing oneself, relating them to their economic and social conditions of possibility. The empty time that has to be 'killed' is opposed to the full (or well-filled) time of the 'busy' person who, as we say, does not notice time passing – whereas, paradoxically, powerlessness, which breaks the relation of immersion in the imminent, makes one conscious of the passage of time, as when waiting. But it is equally opposed to *skholè*, time used freely for freely chosen, gratuitous ends which, for the intellectual or the artist, for example, may be those of work, but work that is freed, in its rhythm, moment and duration, from every external constraint and especially from the constraint imposed through direct monetary sanction. It was when the artist's life came to be invented, as a bohemian life, close to the life of the apprentice or student, that this loosely structured temporality was developed, which reverses night and day, without schedules or urgency (except what may be self-imposed), a relation to time embodied in the poetic disposition as a pure openness to the world which is in reality based on distance from the world and from all the mediocre concerns of the ordinary existence of ordinary people. And one could show, similarly, how the temporal assurances that are constitutive of the notion of career – a kind of Leibnizian essence containing the principle of the unfolding of a whole existence without drama and even without events – can favour the quite paradoxical experience of time that is authorized by university life, with, in particular, the blurring of the ordinary division between work and leisure: an exceptional experience, which can be set in relation to one of the most constant effects of the scholastic illusion, the bracketing of time – itself correlative with the tendency to transform the privation linked to exclusion from the world of practice into a cognitive privilege, with the myth of the 'impartial spectator', or the 'outsider' according to Simmel, who are exclusive beneficiaries of access to the point of view on points of view which opens perspectives on the game as a game.

Compared to these quasi-free times, or the negated time of subproletarians, experiences as different as those of the factory worker, the café waiter or the overworked executive have something in common: as well as some general conditions, already mentioned, such as the existence of constant tendencies of the economic and social order

in which one is inserted and on which one can count, there are particular conditions, such as the fact of having stable employment and of occupying a social position implying an assured future, possibly a career in the sense of a predictable trajectory. This set of assurances and guarantees, which are hidden from view by their very effects, are the necessary condition for the constitution of the stable, orderly relation to the future which underlies so-called 'reasonable' behaviours, including those aiming at a more or less radical transformation of the established order. Possession of the necessary minimum of assurances concerning the present and the future, which are inscribed in the fact of having a permanent job and the associated security, is what provides such agents with the dispositions needed to confront the future actively, either by entering into the game with aspirations roughly adjusted to their chances, or even by trying to control it, on an individual level, with a life plan, or on a collective level with a reformist or revolutionary project, fundamentally different from an explosion of millenarian revolt.<sup>22</sup>

When powers are unequally distributed, the economic and social world presents itself not as a universe of possibles equally accessible to every possible subject – posts to be occupied, courses to be taken, markets to be won, goods to be consumed, properties to be exchanged – but rather as a signposted universe, full of injunctions and prohibitions, signs of appropriation and exclusion, obligatory routes or impassable barriers, and, in a word, profoundly differentiated, especially according to the degree to which it offers stable chances, capable of favouring and fulfilling stable expectations. Capital in its various forms is a set of pre-emptive rights over the future; it guarantees some people the monopoly of some possibles although they are officially guaranteed to all (such as the right to education). The exclusive rights consecrated by law are only the visible, explicitly guaranteed form of this set of appropriated chances and pre-empted possibles, which are thereby converted, for others, into *de jure* exclusions or *de facto* impossibilities, through which present power relations are projected into the future, orienting present dispositions in return.

Thus, even if the description of temporal experience as immediate investment in the forth-coming of the world is true for all those who, unlike the subproletarians, are busy in the world because they have business in the world, who engage with the forth-coming [*l'à venir*]

<sup>22</sup> I will not repeat here the analysis I have made of the difference, in all areas of practice and especially in the relation to politics, between those who can be called subproletarians (casual workers, the unemployed) and workers with stable employment (cf. P. Bourdieu, *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*, and *Algeria 1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979)).

because they have a future [*un avenir*] in it, it remains clear that it is specified according to the form and degree of the urgency with which the necessities of the world impose themselves. Power over the objective chances governs aspirations, and therefore the relation to the future. The more power one has over the world, the more one has aspirations that are adjusted to their chances of realization, and also stable and little affected by symbolic manipulation. Below a certain level, on the other hand, aspirations burgeon, detached from reality and sometimes a little crazy, as if, when nothing was possible, everything became possible, as if all discourses about the future – prophecies, divinations, predictions, millenarian announcements – had no other purpose than to fill what is no doubt one of the most painful of wants: the lack of a future.

In contrast to subproletarians, who, since their time is not worth anything, have a deficit of goods and an excess of time, overworked executives have an excess of goods and an extraordinary lack of time. The former have time to give away, and they often 'squander' it in the tinkering, inventive to the point of absurdity, that they indulge in so as to prolong the life of objects or to produce the ingenious substitutes for manufactured goods that can be seen in the streets or in the markets of many poor countries. The latter, by contrast, are, paradoxically, always short of time, condemned to live permanently in the *askholia*, the hurry, which Plato opposed to philosophical *skholè*, and overwhelmed by goods and services which exceed their capacity to consume them and which they 'squander', in particular by economizing on the effort of maintenance and repair. If this is the case, it is because they have so many and such profitable opportunities to invest, by virtue of the economic and symbolic value of their time (and of themselves) in the various markets, that they acquire a practical sense of the rarity of time which orients all their experience.

The rarity of a person's time, and therefore the value set on his or her time, and more especially on the time he or she *gives*, which is the most precious, because most personal, gift – no one can do it in one's place, and to give one's time is a truly 'personal' act – is a fundamental dimension of the social value of that person. This value is constantly underlined on the one hand through solicitations, expectations and requests, and on the other hand through what is received in return, such as, of course, the price set on labour time, but also symbolic services such as marks of *eager attentiveness* [*empressement*], the form of deference reserved for 'important' people, who are known to be in a hurry [*pressés*] and to regard their time as precious.

The effects of the increase in the rarity and value of time which accompanies the rise in the price of labour (itself linked to the growth of productivity) are intensified by one of the direct effects of the

resulting increase in profits, namely the increased possibilities offered to consumption (of goods and services) which also takes time, reaching its limit in the biological impossibility of consuming everything. The paradox of the overwork of the privileged thus finds its explanation: the more economic and cultural capital increases, the greater the chances of succeeding in the social games and, consequently, the more the propensity to invest time and energy in this also increases, and the harder it becomes to contain all the possibilities of material or symbolic production or consumption within the limits of a biologically non-extensible time.

This model also provides a very simple explanation of a number of social changes which conservative philosophies attribute to various forms of moral decline, such as the disappearance of the 'Heideggerian' lifestyle of the old peasantry, with their 'hand-crafted' products and their measured use of speech, or the withering away of a whole system of social exchanges based on the art of giving time – to children, old people, neighbours, workmates, friends, etc. – rather than goods or even, when it is simpler and more expeditious, money.<sup>23</sup> The effort devoted to the upkeep of enchanted relationships, between equals or even between unequals, because it presupposes a considerable expenditure of time – the expense needed to bind and 'hold' someone durably, with feelings of affection, recognition, gratitude, fraternity, etc. – can only decline as the price of time rises, throughout the society or in a particular category (and as more economical ways develop of creating durable relationships, such as economic constraint or contracts). And those who speak of a 'return to individualism' as if this were an inevitability, a fashion or an elective and universal break with a detestable 'collectivism' might look to the rise in available resources to find the source of the progressive decline in a number of practical and traditional solidarities and cooperative or collective arrangements for the sharing of goods or services which is seen to occur (other things being equal) as the resources (especially monetary ones) of individuals and groups increase.

### Time and power

Power can be exerted on the objective tendencies of the social world, those which are measured by objective probabilities, and, consequently, on subjective aspirations or expectations. It is often forgotten, because it is so self-evident, that temporal power is a power to perpetuate or transform the distributions of the various forms of capital by

<sup>23</sup> V. Zelizer, *The Meaning of Money* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

maintaining or transforming the principles of redistribution. A world founded on stable principles of redistribution is a predictable world that one can count on, even in its risks. By contrast, absolute arbitrariness is the power to make the world arbitrary, mad (with for example the racist violence of Nazism, the limiting case of which is the concentration camp, where everything becomes possible); total unpredictability creates a context favouring every form of manipulation of aspirations (such as rumours), and the total disconcerting of anticipations that it induces favours strategies of despair (such as terrorism) which deviate, by excess or shortfall, from the reasonable behaviours of the ordinary order.

Absolute power is the power to make oneself unpredictable and deny other people any reasonable anticipation, to place them in total uncertainty by offering no scope to their capacity to predict. This power, an extreme that is never reached except in the theological imagination, with the unjust omnipotence of a wicked God, frees its possessor from the experience of time as powerlessness. The all-powerful is he who does not wait but who makes others wait.

Waiting is one of the privileged ways of experiencing the effect of power, and the link between time and power – and one would need to catalogue, and analyse, all the behaviours associated with the exercise of power over other people's time both on the side of the powerful (adjourning, deferring, delaying, raising false hopes, or, conversely, rushing, taking by surprise) and on the side of the 'patient', as they say in the medical universe, one of the sites par excellence of anxious, powerless waiting. Waiting implies submission: the interested aiming at something greatly desired durably – that is to say, for the whole duration of the expectancy – modifies the behaviour of the person who 'hangs', as we say, on the awaited decision. It follows that the art of 'taking one's time', of 'letting time take its time', as Cervantes puts it, of making people wait, of delaying without destroying hope, of adjourning without totally disappointing, which would have the effect of killing the waiting itself, is an integral part of the exercise of power – especially in the case of powers which, like academic power, depend significantly on the belief of the 'patient' and which work on and through aspirations, on and through time, by controlling time and the rate of fulfilment of expectations ('he has time', 'he's young' or 'too young', or 'he can wait', is sometimes an academic verdict left to speak for itself): an art of 'turning down' without 'turning off', of keeping people 'motivated' without driving them to despair.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Cf. P. Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), pp. 87–105.

Kafka's *The Trial* can be read as the model of a social universe dominated by such an absolute and unpredictable power, capable of inducing extreme anxiety by condemning its victim to very strong investment combined with very great insecurity. Despite its extraordinary appearance, the social world described in that novel could be simply the limiting case of a number of ordinary states of the ordinary social world or of particular situations within this world, such as that of some stigmatized groups – Jews in the time and place of Kafka, blacks in the American ghettos, or the most helpless immigrants in many countries – or some social islands that are subjected to the absolute arbitrariness of a chief, big or small, and which are to be found, more often than one might think, in private and even public corporations. (Joachim Unseld's analysis,<sup>25</sup> which shows that the publisher, whose verdict is needed to enable a book to be published, that is to exist publicly, occupies within the process of literary production a position analogous to that of the judge, encourages one also to see *The Trial* as a very realistic model of the fields of cultural production, governed by powers which, like those of the university world, are based on a hold over other people's time.)

K. has been slandered. At first, he carries on as if nothing had happened; then he begins to worry, and he takes a lawyer. He enters into the game, and therefore into time, into waiting and anxiety. This game is characterized by a very high degree of unpredictability: nothing at all can be relied on. The tacit contract of continuity, self-constancy, the same one which, in Cartesian theology, is guaranteed by the truthful God, is suspended. There is neither security nor objective assurance, therefore no subjective assurance, nothing to entrust oneself to. Anything can be expected; the worst is never ruled out. It is no accident that the institution ordinarily mandated to limit arbitrariness, the court, is here the site par excellence of an arbitrariness which proclaims itself as such and does not even pretend to be anything else. For example, it complains that others are late when it itself is always late, flouting the principle that a rule also applies to the person who lays it down, the tacit foundation of any universal norm. In short, it makes arbitrariness, and therefore randomness, a principle of the order of things.

Absolute power has no rules, or rather its rule is to have no rules – or, worse, to change the rules after each move, or whenever it pleases, according to its interests: heads I win, tails you lose. In contrast to the bank, the site of reasonable and effective activity, whose procedures

<sup>25</sup> J. Unseld, *Franz Kafka, ein Schriftstellerleben: die Geschichte seiner Veröffentlichungen* (Munich: C. Hanser, 1982).

are methodically organized in relation to clearly defined ends, the court functions in a totally random way, as regards both its procedures and its effects: it convenes whenever it likes and does whatever it wants; like the members of the bank, its members have only generic names, but in their case, the use of their names is taboo, and when K. asks Titorelli the name of the judge he is painting, he replies that he is 'not authorized to say'.

Faced with this instituted disorder, what can K. do as, having been at first fairly indifferent, he gradually becomes caught up in the game and discovers its extreme uncertainty? The lawyer, like most of the other characters, is someone who, on the grounds of his supposed mastery of the game, manipulates K.'s hopes and expectations, soothing him with vague hopes and tormenting him with vague threats. (Reduced in this way to schematic form, the lawyer appears as the paradigm of a very large class of agents who, like the long-standing inmates and staff of all total institutions – boarding schools, prisons, asylums, barracks, factories, concentration camps – or, more generally, all the informed intermediaries who, in the name of a supposed familiarity with a powerful and worrying institution – school, hospital, bureaucracy, etc. – can exert a hold and an influence proportionate to the anxiety felt by the 'patient', blowing hot and cold, alternately worrying and reassuring, and so intensifying the investment in the game and the incorporation of the immanent structures of the game.)

In the extreme situations where uncertainty and investment are simultaneously maximized, because, as in a despotic regime or a concentration camp, there are no longer any limits to arbitrariness and unpredictability, all the ultimate stakes, including life and death, are brought into play at every moment: everyone is exposed without defence (like K., or like the members of the subproletariat) to the most brutal forms of manipulation of their fears and expectations. The power to act on time, through the power to modify the objective chances (for example, with measures that may cancel out or reduce the chances of a whole category of persons such as a currency devaluation, or the imposition of a quota, or age limits – or any other decision aimed at transforming 'socially expected durations', as Merton calls them<sup>26</sup>), makes possible (and probable) a strategic exercise of power based on the direct manipulation of aspirations.

Outside of situations of absolute power, the games with time which can be played wherever there is power (between the publisher who

<sup>26</sup> R. Merton, 'Socially expected durations: a case study of concept formation in sociology', in W. Powell and R. Robbins (eds), *Consensus and Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1984), pp. 262–83.

delays a decision on a manuscript and the author, between the thesis supervisor who delays a decision on the date of examination and the student, between the office manager and subordinates desperate for promotion, etc.) can only be set up with the (extorted) complicity of the victim and his investment in the game. A person can be durably 'held' (so that he can be made to wait, hope, etc.) only to the extent that he is invested in the game so that the complicity of his dispositions can in a sense be counted on.

### Back to the relationship between expectations and chances

The 'causality of the probable' which tends to favour the adjustment of expectations to chances is no doubt one of the most powerful factors of conservation of the established order. On the one hand, it ensures the unconditional submission of the dominated to the established order that is implied in the doxic relation to the world, an immediate adherence which puts the most intolerable conditions of existence (from the point of view of a habitus constituted in other conditions) beyond questioning and challenge. On the other hand, it favours the acquisition of dispositions which, being adjusted to disadvantaged, declining positions, threatened with disappearance or overtaken by events, leave agents ill-prepared to face the demands of the social order, especially inasmuch as they encourage various forms of self-exploitation (I am thinking in particular of the sacrifices undertaken by the clerical workers or junior executives who have taken on enormous debts so as to become home-owners).<sup>27</sup>

The dominated are always more resigned than the populist mystique believes and even than might be suggested by simple observation of their conditions of existence – and above all by the organized expression of their demands, mediated by political and trade union spokespersons. Having adapted to the demands of the world which has made them what they are, they take for granted the greater part of their existence. Moreover, because even the harshest established order provides some advantages of order that are not lightly sacrificed, indignation, revolt and transgressions (in starting a strike, for example) are always difficult and painful and almost always extremely costly, both materially and psychologically.

And this is true, despite appearances, even of adolescents, who might be thought to be radically at odds with the social order, to

<sup>27</sup> Cf. P. Bourdieu et al., 'L'économie de la maison', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, no. 81–2 (Mar. 1990).

judge from their attitude to their 'elders', whether at home, at school or in the factory.<sup>28</sup> Thus, while he rightly emphasizes the acts of resistance, often anarchic and close to delinquency, with which working-class adolescents fight against schooling, and also against their 'elders', and through them against working-class traditions and values, Paul Willis (whose work has been enrolled on the side of 'resistance', as the term opposed to 'reproduction', in one of those pairs of opposites beloved of scholastic thought) also describes the rigidity of this harsh world, dedicated to the cult of toughness and virility (women only exist there through men, and recognize their own subordination).<sup>29</sup> He shows clearly how this cult of male strength, the extreme form of which is the exaltation of 'lads' (another focus of populist mythology, especially as regards language), is based on the affirmation of a solid, stable, constant world, collectively guaranteed – by the gang or the group – and, above all, profoundly rooted in its own self-evidences and aggressive towards anything different. As is shown by a profoundly rigid mode of speech, which refuses abstraction in favour of the concrete and of common sense, emotionally supported and punctuated by striking images, *ad hominem* appeals and dramatizing expletives, and also by a whole ritual – stereotyped terms of address, nicknames, mock fights, nudging, etc. – this world-view is profoundly conformist, especially on points as essential as everything concerned with social hierarchies, and not only between the sexes. (And one could draw quite similar conclusions from studies – notably those by Loïc Wacquant<sup>30</sup> – of blacks in the American ghettos.) Revolt, when it is expressed, stops short at the limits of the immediate universe and, failing to go beyond insubordination, bravado in the face of authority or insults, it targets persons rather than structures.<sup>31</sup>

In order not to naturalize dispositions, one has to relate these durable ways of being (I am thinking for example of 'plain speaking' or the – very moving – gruffness of moments of intense emotion) to the conditions of their acquisition. Habitus of necessity operate as a

<sup>28</sup> M. Pialoux, 'Jeunes sans avenir et travail intérimaire', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, no. 26–7 (1979), pp. 19–47.

<sup>29</sup> P. E. Willis, *Profane Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) and *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1977).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. L. Wacquant, 'The Zone: le métier de "hustler" dans le ghetto noir américain', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, no. 93 (June 1992), pp. 50–61 (see also 'Inside "The Zone": the social art of the hustler in the American ghetto', in Bourdieu et al., *The Weight of the World*).

<sup>31</sup> Among the subproletarians of Algeria, I observed the same inclination to denounce or condemn persons rather than institutions or mechanisms.

defence mechanism against necessity, which tends, paradoxically, to escape the rigours of necessity by anticipating it and so contributing to its efficacy. Being the product of a learning process imposed by the sanctions or injunctions of a social order acting also as a moral order, these profoundly realist dispositions (close sometimes to fatalism) tend to reduce the dissonances between expectations and outcomes by performing a more or less total closure of horizons. Resignation is indeed the commonest effect of that form of 'learning by doing' which is the teaching performed by the order of things itself, in the unmediated encounter with social nature (particularly in the form of the sanctions of the educational market and the labour market), next to which the intentional actions of domestication performed by all the 'ideological State apparatuses' are of little weight.

And the populist illusion which is nowadays nourished by a simplistic rhetoric of 'resistance' tends to conceal one of the most tragic effects of the condition of the dominated – the inclination to violence that is engendered by early and constant exposure to violence. There is a *law of the conservation of violence*, and all medical, sociological and psychological research shows that ill-treatment in childhood (in particular, beatings by parents) is significantly linked to increased chances of using violence against others in turn (often one's own companions in misfortune), through crime, sexual abuse and other forms of aggression, and also on oneself, especially through alcoholism and drug addiction. That is why, if we really want to reduce these forms of visible and visibly reprehensible violence, there is no other way than to reduce the overall quantity of violence which is neither noticed nor punished, the violence exerted every day in families, factories, workshops, banks, offices, police stations, prisons, even hospitals and schools, and which is, in the last analysis, the product of the 'inert violence' of economic structures and social mechanisms relayed by the active violence of people. The effects of symbolic violence, in particular that exerted against stigmatized populations, do not tend, as the lovers of humanist pastorals seem to believe, always to favour the emergence of successful realizations of the human ideal – even if, to stand up against the degradation imposed by degrading conditions, agents always find some defences, individual or collective, momentary or durable, being durably inscribed in habitus, such as irony, humour or what Alf Lüdtke calls *Eigensinn*, 'stubborn obstinacy', and so many other misunderstood forms of resistance.<sup>32</sup> (This is what makes it so difficult to talk about the dominated in an

<sup>32</sup> A. Lüdtke, 'Ouvriers, *Eigensinn* et politique dans l'Allemagne du XXe siècle', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, no. 113 (June 1996), pp. 91–101.

accurate and realistic way without seeming either to crush them or exalt them, especially in the eyes of all the do-gooders who will be led by a disappointment or a surprise proportionate to their ignorance to see condemnations or celebrations in informed attempts to describe things as they are.)

### A margin of freedom

But it would be wrong to conclude that the circle of expectations and chances cannot be broken. On the one hand, the generalization of access to education – and the consequent structural discrepancy between the qualifications attained, and therefore the positions hoped for, and the jobs actually obtained – and of occupational insecurity tends to multiply the situations of mismatch, which generate tensions and frustrations.<sup>33</sup> There will be no return to those social universes in which the quasi-perfect coincidence between objective tendencies and subjective expectations made the experience of the world a continuous interlocking of confirmed expectations. The lack of a future, previously reserved for the 'wretched of the earth', is an increasingly widespread, even modal experience. But there is also the relative autonomy of the symbolic order, which, in all circumstances and especially in periods in which expectations and chances fall out of line, can leave a margin of freedom for political action aimed at reopening the space of possibles. Symbolic power, which can manipulate hopes and expectations, especially through a more or less inspired and uplifting performative evocation of the future – prophesy, forecast or prediction – can introduce a degree of play into the correspondence between expectations and chances and open up a space of freedom through the more or less voluntarist positing of more or less improbable possibles – utopia, project, programme or plan – which the pure logic of probabilities would lead one to regard as practically excluded.

The force of the process of incorporation which tends to constitute habitus as an *esse in futuro*, a durable principle of durable investments, reinforced by the explicit and express interventions of pedagogic action, is no doubt such that even the most subversive symbolic actions, if they are not to condemn themselves to failure, must reckon with dispositions, and with the limitations these impose on innovative

<sup>33</sup> Cf. P. Bourdieu, *Distinction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 99–168.

imagination and action. They can succeed only to the extent that – acting as symbolic triggers capable of legitimating and ratifying senses of unease and diffused discontents, socially instituted desires that are more or less confused, by making them explicit and public – they manage to reactivate dispositions which previous processes of inculcation have deposited in people's bodies.

But to observe that symbolic power can only operate to the extent that the conditions of its efficacy are inscribed in the very structures that it seeks to conserve or to transform is not to deny it all independence with respect to these structures. By bringing diffuse experiences to the full existence of 'publication' and consequent officialization, this power of expression and manifestation intervenes in that uncertain site of social existence where practice is converted into signs, symbols, discourses, and it introduces a margin of freedom between the objective chances, or the implicit dispositions that are tacitly adjusted to them, and *explicit aspirations*, people's representations and manifestations.

This is a site of twofold uncertainty: *a parte objecti*, on the side of the world, whose meaning, because it remains open, like the future on which it depends, lends itself to several interpretations; and *a parte subjecti*, on the side of the agents, whose sense of the game can express itself or be expressed in various ways or recognize itself in various expressions. This margin of freedom is the basis of the autonomy of struggles over the sense of the social world, its meaning and orientation, its present and its future, one of the major stakes in symbolic struggles. The belief that this or that future, either desired or feared, is possible, probable or inevitable can, in some historical conditions, mobilize a group around it and so help to favour or prevent the coming of that future.

Whereas heresy (the word itself, containing the idea of choice, implies this) and all forms of critical prophesy tend to open up the future, orthodoxy, the discourse of the maintenance of the symbolic order, works, as is clearly seen in the periods of restoration which follow crises, in a sense to stop time, or history, by closing down the range of possibles so as to try to induce the belief that 'the chips are down' for ever, and, passing off a performative as a constative, by announcing the end of history, a reassuring inversion of all millenarian utopias. (This kind of fatalism may take the form of a sociology which constitutes sociological laws as quasi-natural iron laws or an essentialist pessimism based on belief in an immutable human nature.)

These symbolic actions merely redouble all the operations, often entrusted to rituals, which aim to inscribe the future in people's bodies, in the form of habitus. We know that a central place is everywhere

given to the rites of institution through which groups, or more precisely, (corporate) bodies aim to imprint, very early in life and for the whole of life, an irrevocable pact of immediate subscription to their demands, in the bodies of those whom they institute, often for life, as recognized members. These rites, which, for the most part, merely reinforce the automatic action of the structures, almost always play on the relation to time and seek to create the aspiration to be integrated by making the candidate wait and hope for it. In addition, by solemnly investing him with a right and a dignity, they incite the beneficiary of this exceptional treatment (even in the sometimes extreme suffering it entails) to place all his psychological energy in this dignity, right or power, or to show himself worthy of the dignity conferred by the investiture ('noblesse oblige'). In other words, they guarantee a durable social status (*dignitas*) in exchange for the durable commitment – symbolized by the rituals of *inceptio*, incorporation (in all senses of the word) – to assume in a worthy fashion the explicit and often implicit obligations of that status (the best guarantee of which is of course the appropriate habitus, the very one which the operations of co-option are designed to detect).

But the dependence of all effective symbolic action on pre-existing dispositions is also visible in the discourses or actions of subversion, which, like provocations and all forms of iconoclasm,<sup>34</sup> have the function and in any case the effect of showing in practice that it is possible to transgress the limits imposed, in particular the most inflexible ones, those which are set in people's minds. This can be the case in so far as, attentive to the real chances of transforming the power relation, they are able to work to raise expectations beyond the objective chances on which they spontaneously tend to be aligned, but without pushing them beyond the threshold where they would become unreal and foolhardy. The symbolic transgression of a social frontier has a liberatory effect in its own right because it enacts the unthinkable. But it is itself possible, and symbolically effective, instead of being simply rejected as a scandal which rebounds on its author, only if certain objective conditions are fulfilled. In order for an utterance or action (iconoclasm, terrorism, etc.) aimed at challenging the objective structures to have some chance of being recognized as legitimate (if not reasonable) and to be seen as exemplary, the structures that are contested must themselves be in a state of uncertainty and crisis that favours uncertainty about them and an awakening of critical consciousness of their arbitrariness and fragility.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. O. Christin, *Une Révolution symbolique. L'iconoclasme huguenot et la reconstruction catholique* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1991).

### The question of justification

We must go back to K. His uncertainty about the future is simply another form of uncertainty about what he is, his social being, his 'identity', as one would say nowadays. Dispossessed of the power to give sense, in both senses, to his life, to state the meaning and direction of his existence, he is condemned to live in a time orientated by others, an alienated time. This is, very exactly, the fate of all the dominated, who are obliged to wait for everything to come from others, from the holders of power over the game and over the objective and subjective prospect of gain that it can offer, being therefore masters at playing on the anxiety that inevitably arises from the tension between the intensity of the expectancy and the improbability of its being satisfied.

But what truly is the stake in this game, if not the question of *raison d'être*, the justification, not of human existence in its universality, but of a particular, singular existence, which finds itself called into question in its social being – through the initial slander, a kind of original sin without an origin, like the racist stigma? It is the question of the *legitimacy* of an existence, an individual's right to *feel justified in existing as he or she exists*; and this question is inseparably eschatological and sociological.

No one can really proclaim, either to others or, above all, to himself, that 'he dispenses with all justification'. And if God is dead, who can be asked to provide this justification? It has to be sought in the judgement of others, this major principle of uncertainty and insecurity, but also, and without contradiction, of certainty, assurance, consecration. No author – except perhaps Proust, but in a less tragic register – has better evoked than Kafka the confrontation of irreconcilable points of view, particular judgements aspiring to universality, the endless clash of suspicion and denial, backbiting and praise, slander and rehabilitation, a terrible parlour game in which the verdict of the social world is hammered out as the inexorable product of the multifarious judgement of others.

In this 'truth game' of which *The Trial* offers the model, Joseph K., innocent but slandered, struggles to reach the point of view on points of view, the highest court, the last instance. One remembers the moment where Block explains to him that the lawyer who is defending them both is wrong to call himself one of the 'great advocates': 'Anyone can naturally call himself great if it pleases him, but in this case it is the custom of the court which decides.' And the question of the *verdict*, the judgement solemnly pronounced by an authority capable of saying of each what he or she truly is, returns at the end of

the novel, in K.'s last questionings: 'Where was the judge that he had never seen? Where was the high court that he had never reached?'

What game is more vital, more total, than the symbolic struggle of all against all in which what is at stake is the power of *naming*, or categorization, in which everyone stakes his being, his value, the idea he has of himself? It may be objected that nothing forces people to enter the race, that one has to join in the game in order to have some chance of being caught up in it. As can be seen from K.'s relationship with each of his informants, the lawyer, the painter, the merchant and the priest, who are also intercessors, and who try to exercise power over him by making him believe that they have power and by using their presumed connections to encourage him to carry on when he threatens to give up, the mechanism can only work in the relationship between an expectation, an anxiety, and the objective uncertainty of the desired or feared future. As if his main function were not to defend K. but to drive him to *invest* in his trial, the lawyer endeavours to 'soothe him with vague hopes and torment him with vague fears'. If hope or fear, associated with objective and subjective uncertainty as to the outcome of the game, are the precondition for commitment to the game, then Block is the ideal client for the judicial institution: 'A person can't start a sentence without you looking at them as if they were about to pronounce your final verdict.' He is so attuned to the game that he anticipates the sanctions of the judge. The absolute recognition that he gives it is the basis of the absolute power that the institution has over him. Likewise, K. is in the grip of the apparatus of justice only in so far as he *takes an interest* in his trial, actually cares about it. When he withdraws the task of defending him from his lawyer, he frustrates the strategies through which the latter sought to encourage his investment in the game and his dependence upon him.

But while it is right to recall that the court derives its power from the recognition it is given, there is no question of suggesting that one can escape from the games in which symbolic life and death are at stake. As in *The Trial*, where the slander is present from the first phase, the most categorical categories are there, from the beginning, from entry into life, which – and Kafka, a Jew in Prague, knew this well – starts with an assignment of identity designating a category, a class, an ethnic group, a sex or, for racist eyes, a 'race'. The social world is essentialist, and one has that much less chance of escaping the manipulation of aspirations and subjective expectations when one is symbolically more deprived, less consecrated or more stigmatized, and therefore less well placed in the competition for the 'esteem of men', as Pascal put it, and condemned to uncertainty as to

one's present and future social being, which vary with one's power or impotence. With investment in a game and the recognition that can come from cooperative competition with others, the social world offers humans that which they most totally lack: a justification for existing.

Indeed, is it possible to understand the almost universal seduction of the symbolic baubles – decorations, medals, palms or ribbons – and the acts of consecration they mark or perpetuate, or even the most ordinary supports of investment in the social game – mandates or missions, ministries or magistracies – without taking note of an anthropological datum which our habits of thought tend to consign to the metaphysical, namely the contingency of human existence, and above all its finitude, of which Pascal observes that, although it is the only certain thing in life, we do everything we can to forget it, by flinging ourselves into diversion or fleeing into 'society': 'We are fools to depend upon the society of our fellow-men. Wretched as we are, powerless as we are, they will not aid us; we shall die alone. We should therefore act as if we were alone, and in that case should we build fine houses, etc.? We should seek the truth without hesitation; and, if we refuse it, we show that we value the esteem of men more than the search for truth.'<sup>35</sup>

So, without indulging in the existential exaltation of '*Sein-zum-Tode*', one can establish a necessary link between three indisputable and inseparable anthropological facts: man is and knows he is mortal, the thought that he is going to die is unbearable or impossible for him, and, condemned to death, an end (in the sense of *termination*) which cannot be taken as an end (in the sense of a *goal*), since it represents, as Heidegger put it, 'the possibility of impossibility', he is a being without a reason for being, haunted by the need for justification, legitimation, recognition. And, as Pascal suggests, in this quest for justifications for existing, what he calls 'the world', or 'society', is the only recourse other than God.<sup>36</sup>

One understands, armed with this equivalence, that what Pascal describes as the 'wretchedness of man without God', that is, without a reason for being, is sociologically attested in the form of the truly metaphysical wretchedness of men and women who have no social *raison d'être*, abandoned to the insignificance of an existence without necessity, abandoned to its absurdity. And one also understands,

<sup>35</sup> Pascal, *Pensées*, 211.

<sup>36</sup> That is why, speaking as a moralist, he describes worldly consolations or consecrations as a fallacious refuge against abandonment and solitude and as a ruse of bad faith to avoid a resolute confrontation with the human condition.

*a contrario*, the quasi-divine power of rescuing people from contingency and gratuitousness that is possessed, whether one likes it or not, by the social world, and which is exercised in particular through the institution of the State: as the central bank of symbolic capital, the State is able to confer that form of capital whose particularity is that it contains its own justification.

### Symbolic capital

Through the social games it offers, the social world provides something more and other than the apparent stakes: the chase, Pascal reminds us, counts as much as, if not more than, the quarry, and there is a happiness in activity which exceeds the visible profits – wage, prize or reward – and which consists in the fact of emerging from indifference (or depression), being occupied, projected towards goals, and feeling oneself objectively, and therefore subjectively, endowed with a social mission. To be expected, solicited, overwhelmed with obligations and commitments is not only to be snatched from solitude or insignificance, but also to experience, in the most continuous and concrete way, the feeling of counting for others, being *important* for them, and therefore in oneself, and finding in the permanent plebiscite of testimonies of interest – requests, expectation, invitations – a kind of continuous justification for existing.

But, to bring to light, perhaps less negatively and more convincingly, the effect of consecration, capable of rescuing one from the sense of the insignificance and contingency of an existence without necessity, one could, rereading Durkheim's *Suicide*<sup>37</sup> – in which he pursues his scientific faith to the point of excluding the question of the *raison d'être* of an act which raises, in the highest degree, the question of reasons for existing – observe that the propensity to commit suicide varies inversely with recognized social importance and that the more that agents are endowed with a consecrated social identity, that of husband, parent, etc., the more they are protected against a questioning of the sense of their existence (that is, the married more than the single, the married with children more than the married without children, etc.). The social world gives what is rarest, recognition, consideration, in other words, quite simply, reasons for being. It is capable of giving meaning to life, and to death itself, by consecrating it as the supreme sacrifice.

<sup>37</sup> É. Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952).

One of the most unequal of all distributions, and probably, in any case, the most cruel, is the distribution of symbolic capital, that is, of social importance and of reasons for living. And it is known, for example, that even the treatment and care that hospital institutions and agents give to the dying are varied, more unconsciously than consciously, according to their social importance.<sup>38</sup> In the hierarchy of worth and unworthiness, which can never be perfectly superimposed on the hierarchy of wealth and powers, the nobleman, in his traditional variant, or in his modern form – what I call the State nobility – is opposed to the stigmatized pariah who, like the Jew in Kafka's time, or, now, the black in the ghetto or the Arab or Turk in the working-class suburbs of European cities, bears the curse of a negative symbolic capital. All the manifestations of social recognition which make up symbolic capital, all the forms of perceived being which make up a social being that is known, 'visible', famous, admired, invited, loved, etc. are so many manifestations of the grace (*charisma*) which saves those it touches from the distress of an existence without justification and which gives them not only a 'theodicy of their own privilege', as Max Weber said of religion – which is in itself not negligible – but also a theodicy of their existence.

Conversely, there is no worse dispossession, no worse privation, perhaps, than that of the losers in the symbolic struggle for recognition, for access to a socially recognized social being, in a word, to humanity. This struggle is not reducible to a Goffmanian battle to present a favourable representation of oneself: it is competition for a power that can only be won from others competing for the same power, a power over others that derives its existence from others, from their perception and appreciation (so that one does not have to choose between Hobbes' *homo homini lupus* and Spinoza's *homo homini Deus*), and therefore a power over a desire for power and over the object of this desire. Although it is the product of subjective acts of donation of meaning (not necessarily implying consciousness and representation), this symbolic power, charm, seduction, charisma, appears endowed with an objective reality, as if determining the gazes which produce it (like *fides* as described by Émile Benveniste or charisma as analysed by Max Weber, himself a victim of the effects of fetishization both of the transcendence arising from the aggregation of gazes and above all of the concordance of objective structures and incorporated structures).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. B. G. Glaser and A. Strauss, *Awareness of Dying* (Chicago: Aldine, 1965), and *Time for Dying* (Chicago: Aldine, 1968).

Every kind of capital (economic, cultural, social) tends (to different degrees) to function as symbolic capital (so that it might be better to speak, in rigorous terms, of the *symbolic effects of capital*) when it obtains an explicit or practical recognition, that of a habitus structured according to the very structures of the space in which it has been engendered. In other words, symbolic capital (male honour in Mediterranean societies, the honourability of the *notable* or the Chinese mandarin, the prestige of the celebrated writer, etc.) is not a particular kind of capital but what every kind of capital becomes when it is misrecognized as capital, that is, as force, a power or capacity for (actual or potential) exploitation, and therefore recognized as legitimate. More precisely, capital exists and acts as symbolic capital (securing profits – as observed, for example in the maxim ‘honesty is the best policy’) in its relationship with a habitus predisposed to perceive it as a sign, and as a sign of importance, that is, to know and recognize it on the basis of cognitive structures able and inclined to grant it recognition because they are attuned to what it is. Produced by the transfiguration of a power relation into a sense relation, symbolic capital rescues agents from insignificance, the absence of importance and of meaning.

To be known and recognized also means possessing the power to recognize, to consecrate, to state, with success, what merits being known and recognized, and, more generally to say what is, or rather what is to be thought about what is, through a performative act of speech (or prediction) capable of making what is spoken of conform to what is spoken of it (a power of which the bureaucratic variant is the legal act and the charismatic variant is the prophetic pronouncement). Rites of institution, acts of symbolic investiture intended to justify the consecrated being in being what it is, existing as it exists, literally *make* the person to whom they are applied by raising him or her from illegal exercise, the delirious fiction of the imposter (the limiting case of which is the madman who thinks he is Napoleon) or the arbitrary imposition of the usurper. This it does by declaring publicly that he is indeed what he claims to be, that he is legitimated to be what he claims, that he is entitled to enter into the function, fiction or imposture which, being proclaimed before the eyes of all as deserving to be universally recognized, becomes a ‘legitimate imposture’, in Austin’s phrase,<sup>39</sup> in other words *misrecognized*, denied as an imposture by all, not least by the imposter himself.

In solemnly imposing the name or title which defines him in an inaugural ceremony of enthronement – the *inceptio* of a medieval

master, the ordination of a priest, the dubbing of a knight, the crowning of a king, an inaugural lecture, the opening session of a court, etc., or, in a quite different order of things, circumcision or marriage – these acts of performative magic both enable and require the recipient to become what he is, that is, what he has to be, to enter, body and soul, into his function, in other words into his *social fiction*, to take on the social image or essence that is conferred on him in the form of names, titles, degrees, posts or honours, and to incarnate it as a legal person, the ordinary or extraordinary member of a group, which he also helps to make exist by giving it an exemplary incarnation.

Despite its apparent impersonality, the rite of institution is always highly personal. It must be performed in person, in the presence of the person (barring an extraordinary exception, attendance at a consecration ceremony cannot be delegated), and the person who is installed in the dignity, of which it is said that it cannot die (*dignitas non moritur*), to signify that it will survive the body of its holder, must indeed assume it in his whole being, that is, with his body, in fear and trembling, in preparatory suffering or painful test. He must be personally invested in his investiture, that is, engage his devotion, his belief, his body, give them as pledges, and manifest, in all his conduct and his speech – this is the function of the ritual words of recognition – his faith in the office and in the group which awards it and which confers this great *assurance* only on condition that it is fully assured in return. This guaranteed identity requires its recipient to give in return guarantees of identity (‘noblesse oblige’), of conformity to the social being which the social definition is supposed to produce and which must be maintained by an individual and collective work of representation aimed at making the group exist as a group, at producing it by making it known and recognized.

In other words, the rite of investiture is there to reassure the recipient as to his existence as a full member of the group, his legitimacy, but also to reassure the group as to its own existence as a consecrated group, capable of consecrating, and as to the reality of the social fictions – names, titles, honours – which it produces and reproduces and which the recipient causes to exist by consenting to receive them. The representation, through which the group *produces itself*, can only fall to agents who, being called upon to symbolize the group that they represent in the theatrical sense but also in the legal sense, as proxies endowed with *procuratio ad omnia facienda*, must be committed bodily and give the guarantee of a habitus naively invested in an unconditional belief. (By contrast, a reflexive disposition, particularly towards the ritual of investiture and what it institutes, would constitute a threat to the successful circulation of symbolic power and

<sup>39</sup> J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

authority, or even a kind of misappropriation of symbolic capital to the benefit of an irresponsible and alarming subjectivity.)<sup>40</sup> As biological persons, plenipotentiaries, proxies, delegates and spokespersons are subject to sickness and passion, and mortal. As representatives, they partake of the eternity and ubiquity of the group which they help to make exist as permanent, omnipresent and transcendent, and which they temporarily incarnate, giving it voice through their mouths and representing it in their bodies, converted into symbols and emblems to rally around.

As Eric Santner shows with reference to the case, made famous by Freud's analysis, of President Daniel Paul Schreber, who fell into a paranoid delirium when appointed in June 1893 as *Senatspräsident*, chairman of the third chamber of the Supreme Court of Appeal, the possibility, or threat, of crisis is always present, potentially, in inaugural moments when the arbitrariness of the institution may become apparent.<sup>41</sup> If this is so, it is because the appropriation of the function by the nominee is also appropriation of the nominee by the function: the nominee enters into possession of his function only if he consents to be possessed bodily by it, as is asked of him in the rite of investiture, which, by imposing the adoption of particular clothing – often a uniform – a particular language, itself standardized and stylized, like a uniform, and an appropriate body *hexis*, aims to fasten him durably to an impersonal manner of being and to manifest by this quasi-anonymization that he accepts the – sometimes exorbitant – sacrifice of his private person. It is no doubt because this appropriation by the heritage, the precondition of the right to inherit, is sensed in advance (or suddenly discovered, in the arbitrariness of the beginning) that it cannot be taken for granted. And the rites of institution are there, concentrating all the actions and words – countless, imperceptible and invisible, because they are often infinitesimal – which tend to recall each person to order, to the social being that the social order assigns to him or her ('she's your sister', 'you are the first-born'), that of a man or a woman, eldest son or younger son, and so to ensure the maintenance of the symbolic order by regulating the circulation of symbolic capital between the generations, first within the family and then within institutions of all kinds. By giving himself 'body and soul' to his function and, through it, to the *corporate body* which entrusts it – *universitas*, *collegium*, *societas*, as the canonists put it – the legitimate successor, whether dignitary or functionary, helps to

ensure the eternity of the function which pre-exists him and will outlive him, and of the mystic body which he incarnates and of which he partakes, partaking thereby of its eternity.

Rites of institution give an enlarged and particularly visible image of the effect of the institution, an arbitrary being which has the power to rescue from arbitrariness, to confer the supreme *raison d'être*, the one constituted by the affirmation that a contingent being, vulnerable to sickness, infirmity and death, is worthy of the dignity, transcendent and immortal, like the social order, that he is given. And acts of nomination, from the most trivial acts of bureaucracy, like the issuing of an identity card, or a sickness or disablement certificate, to the most solemn, which consecrate nobilities, lead, in a kind of infinite regress, to that realization of God on earth, the State, which guarantees, in the last resort, the infinite series of acts of authority certifying by delegation the validity of the certificates of legitimate existence (as a sick or handicapped person, an *agrégé* or a priest). And sociology thus leads to a kind of theology of the last instance: invested, like Kafka's court, with an absolute power of truth-telling and creative perception, the State, like the divine *intuitus originarius* according to Kant, brings into existence by naming and distinguishing. Durkheim was, it can be seen, not so naive as is claimed when he said, as Kafka might have, that 'society is God'.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. P. Bourdieu, *Leçon sur la leçon* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1982).

<sup>41</sup> E. L. Santner, *My Own Private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber's Secret History of Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).