

Symbolic Capital

The theoretical construction which retrospectively projects the counter-gift into the project of the gift does not only have the effect of making mechanical sequences of obligatory acts out of the risky and but necessary improvisation of everyday strategies, which owe their infinite complexity to the fact that the giver's undeclared calculation has to reckon with the receiver's undeclared calculation, and hence satisfy his expectations without appearing to know what they are. In the same operation, it removes the conditions of possibility of the institutionally organized and guaranteed misrecognition that is the basis of gift exchange and, perhaps, of all the symbolic labour aimed at transmuting the inevitable and inevitably interested relations imposed by kinship, neighbourhood or work, into elective relations of reciprocity, through the sincere fiction of a disinterested exchange, and, more profoundly, at transforming arbitrary relations of exploitation (of woman by man, younger brother by elder brother, the young by the elders) into durable relations, grounded in nature. In the work of reproducing established relations – feasts, ceremonies, exchange of gifts, visits or courtesies and, above all, marriages – which is no less vital to the existence of the group than the reproduction of the economic bases of its existence, the labour required to conceal the function of the exchanges is as important as the labour needed to perform this function.¹ If it is true that the lapse of time interposed is what enables the gift or counter-gift to be seen as inaugural acts of generosity, without a past or a future, that is, without calculation, then it is clear that by reducing the polythetic to the monothetic, objectivism destroys the reality of all practices which, like gift exchange, tend or pretend to put the law of self-interest into abeyance. Because it protracts and so disguises the transaction that a rational contract would telescope into an instant, gift exchange is, if not the only mode of circulation of goods that is practised, at least the only one that can be fully recognized in societies that deny 'the true ground of their life', as Lukács puts it; and also the only way of setting up durable relations of reciprocity – and domination – with the interposed time representing the beginnings of institutionalized obligation.

Economism is a form of ethnocentrism. Treating pre-capitalist economies, in Marx's phrase, 'as the Fathers of the Church treated the religions which

preceded Christianity', it applies to them categories, methods (economic accountancy, for example) or concepts (such as the notions of interest, investment or capital) which are the historical product of capitalism and which induce a radical transformation of their object, similar to the historical transformation from which they arose. Economism recognizes no other form of interest than that which capitalism has produced, through a kind of real operation of abstraction, by setting up a universe of relations between man and man based, as Marx says, on 'callous cash payment' and more generally by favouring the creation of relatively autonomous fields, capable of establishing their own axiomatics (through the fundamental tautology 'business is business', on which 'the economy' is based). It can therefore find no place in its analyses, still less in its calculations, for any form of 'non-economic' interest. It is as if economic calculation had been able to appropriate the territory objectively assigned to the remorseless logic of what Marx calls 'naked self-interest', only by relinquishing an island of the 'sacred', miraculously spared by the 'icy waters of egoistic calculation', the refuge of what has no price because it has too much or too little. But, above all, it can make nothing of universes that have not performed such a dissociation and so have, as it were, an economy in itself and not for itself. Thus, any partial or total objectification of the archaic economy that does not include a theory of the subjective relation of misrecognition which agents adapted to this economy maintain with its 'objective' (that is, objectivist) truth, succumbs to the most subtle and most irreproachable form of ethnocentrism. It is the same error as that incurred when one forgets that the constitution of art as art is inseparable from the constitution of a relatively autonomous artistic field, and treats as aesthetic certain 'primitive' or 'folk' practices which cannot see themselves in this way.

Everything takes place as if the specificity of the 'archaic' economy lay in the fact that economic activity cannot explicitly recognize the economic ends in relation to which it is objectively oriented. The 'idolatry of nature' which makes it impossible to think of nature as raw material and, consequently, to see human activity as labour, that is, as man's struggle against nature, combines with the systematic emphasis on the symbolic aspect of the acts and relations of production to prevent the economy from being grasped as an economy, that is, as a system governed by the laws of interested calculation, competition or exploitation.

By reducing this economy to its 'objective' reality, economism annihilates the specificity located precisely in the socially maintained discrepancy between the 'objective' reality and the social representation of production and exchange. It is no accident that the vocabulary of the archaic economy is entirely made up of double-sided notions that are condemned to disintegrate in the very history of the economy, because, owing to their duality, the social relations that they designate represent unstable structures which inevitably split in two as soon as the social mechanisms sustaining them are weakened (see Benveniste 1973). Thus, to take an extreme example, *rahnia*, a contract by which the borrower grants the lender the

regarded as the worst form of usury when it leads to dispossession, differs only in the nature of the social relation between the two parties, and thus in the detailed terms of the agreement, from the aid granted to a distressed relative so as to save him from selling land which, even when the owner is still allowed to use it, constitutes a kind of security on the loan.² As Mauss (1966: 52) says:

'It was precisely the Greeks and Romans who, possibly following the Northern and Western Semites, drew the distinction between personal rights and real rights, separated purchases from gifts and exchanges, dissociated moral obligations from contracts, and, above all, conceived of the difference between ritual, rights and interests. By a genuine, great and venerable revolution, they passed beyond the excessively hazardous, costly and elaborate gift economy, which was encumbered with personal considerations, incompatible with the development of the market, trade and production, and, in a word, uneconomic.'

The historical situations in which the artificially maintained structures of the good-faith economy break up and make way for the clear, economical (as opposed to expensive) concepts of the economy of undisguised self-interest, reveal the cost of operating an economy which, by its refusal to recognize and declare itself as such, is forced to devote almost as much ingenuity and energy to disguising the truth of economic acts as it expends in performing them. For example, a much esteemed Kabyle mason, who had learned his trade in France, caused a scandal, around 1955, by going home when his work was finished without eating the meal traditionally given in the mason's honour when a house is built, and then demanding, in addition to the price of his day's work (1,000 francs), a bonus of 200 francs in lieu of the meal. His demand for the cash equivalent of the meal was a sacrilegious reversal of the formula used in symbolic alchemy to transmute labour and its price into unsolicited gifts, and it thus exposed the device most commonly used to keep up appearances through a collectively produced make-believe. As an act of exchange setting the seal on alliances ('I set the wheatcake and the salt between us'), the final meal at the time of the *thiwizi* of harvest or house-building naturally became a rite of alliance intended to transfigure an interested transaction retrospectively into a generous exchange (like the vendor's gifts to the purchaser which often rounded off the most tenacious haggling). The subterfuges sometimes used to minimize the cost of the meals at the end of the *thiwizi* (for example, only inviting the leading representatives of each group, or one man per family), a departure from the principles which still paid lip-service to their legitimacy, were viewed with the greatest indulgence, but the reaction could only be scandal and shock when a man took it upon himself to declare that the meal had a cash equivalent, thus betraying the best-kept and worst-kept of secrets (since everyone kept it), and breaking the law of silence that guaranteed the complicity of collective bad faith in the economy of 'good faith'.

The good-faith economy, based on a set of mechanisms tending to limit

and disguise the play of (narrowly) 'economic' interest and calculation, calls forth the strange incarnation of *homo economicus* known as *buniya* (or *bab niya*), the man of good faith (*niya* or *thiâuggants*, from *aâggun*, the child still unable to speak, as opposed to *thab'raymith*, calculating intelligence). The man of good faith would not think of selling certain fresh food products – milk, butter, cheese, vegetables, fruit – but always distributes them among his friends or neighbours. He practises no exchanges involving money and all his relations are based on complete trust. Unlike the shady dealer, he has recourse to none of the guarantees (witnesses, security, written documents) with which commercial transactions are surrounded. The closer the individuals and groups are in genealogy, the easier it is to reach agreements (and therefore the more frequent they are) and the more they are entrusted to good faith. Conversely, as the relationship becomes more impersonal, that is, as one moves out from the relation between brothers to that between virtual strangers (people from different villages), so a transaction is less and less likely to be established at all but it can, and increasingly does, become more purely 'economic', i.e. closer to its economic truth, and the interested calculation which is never absent from the most generous exchange (in which both parties count themselves satisfied, and therefore count) can be more and more openly revealed.³

Friendly transactions between kinsmen and affines are to market transactions as ritual war is to total war. The 'goods or beasts of the fellah' are traditionally opposed to the 'goods or beasts of the market', and informants will talk endlessly of the tricks and frauds that are commonplace in the 'big markets', that is to say, in exchanges with strangers. There are endless tales of mules that run off as soon as the purchaser has got them home, oxen made to look fatter by rubbing them with a plant that makes them swell (*adhris*), purchasers who band together to force prices down. The incarnation of economic war is the shady dealer, who fears neither God nor man. Men avoid buying animals from him, and from any total stranger. As one informant said, for straightforward goods, like land, it is the thing to be bought that determines the buyer's decision; for problematic goods, such as beasts of burden and especially mules, it is the choice of seller that decides, and at least an effort is made to substitute a personalized relationship for a totally impersonal, anonymous relationship. Every intermediate stage can be found, from transactions based on complete distrust, such as that between the peasant and the shady dealer, who cannot demand or obtain guarantees because he cannot guarantee the quality of his wares or find guarantors, to the exchange of honour which can dispense with conditions and rely entirely on the good faith of the 'contracting parties'. But in the great majority of transactions the notions of buyer and seller tend to be dissolved in the network of middlemen and guarantors who aim to turn the purely economic relationship into a genealogically based and guaranteed relationship. Marriage itself is no exception: it is almost always set up between families already linked by a whole network of previous exchanges, underwriting the specific new agreement. It is

significant that in the first phase of the very complex negotiations that lead to the marriage agreement, the two families bring in prestigious kinsmen or affines as 'guarantors'. The symbolic capital thus displayed serves both to strengthen their hand in the bargaining and to underwrite the agreement once it is concluded.

The true nature of production is no less repressed than the true nature of circulation. The indignant comments provoked by the heretical behaviour of peasants who have departed from traditional ways draw attention to the mechanisms which inclined the peasant to maintain an enchanted relationship with the land and made it impossible for him to see his toil as labour. 'It's sacrilege, they have profaned the earth. They have done away with fear (*elhibā*). Nothing intimidates them or stops them. They turn everything upside down, I'm sure they will end up ploughing in *lakbrif* (the fig season) if they are in a hurry and if they feel like spending *lah'lal* (the licit period for ploughing) doing something else, or in *rbiā* (spring) if they've been too lazy in *lah'lal*. It's all the same to them.' Everything in the peasant's practice actualizes, in a different mode, the objective intention revealed in ritual. The land is never treated as raw material to be exploited, but always as the object of respect mingled with fear (*elhibā*). It will 'settle its scores', they say, and take revenge for bad treatment it receives from a hasty or clumsy farmer. The accomplished peasant 'presents' himself to the land with the stance befitting one man meeting another, face to face, with the attitude of trusting familiarity he would show a respected kinsman. During ploughing, he would not think of delegating the task of leading the team, and the only task he leaves for his 'clients' (*ichikran*) is that of breaking up the soil behind the plough. 'The elders used to say that to plough properly, you had to be the master of the land. The young men were left out of it. It would have been an insult to the land to "present" it (*qabel*) with men one would not dare present to other men.' 'It is the man who faces other men', says a proverb, 'who must face the earth.'

To take up Hesiod's opposition between *ponos* and *ergon*, the peasant does not, strictly, work, he 'takes pains'. 'Give to the earth and the earth will give to you', says a proverb. This can be taken to mean that, in accordance with the logic of gift exchange, nature gives her fruits only to those who bring her their toil as a tribute. The heretical behaviour of those who leave to the young the task of 'opening the earth and ploughing into it the wealth of the new year' provokes the older peasants to express the principle of the relationship between men and the land, which could remain unformulated so long as it was taken for granted: 'The earth no longer gives because we give it nothing. We openly mock the earth and it is only right that it should pay us back with lies.' A self-respecting man should always be busy doing something: if he cannot find anything to do, 'at least he can carve his spoon'. Activity is as much a duty of communal life as an economic imperative. What is valued is activity for its own sake, regardless of its strictly economic function, inasmuch as it is seen as appropriate to the specific function of the person who performs it.

There is strong disapproval of individuals who are no use to their family or their group, 'dead men whom God has drawn from living men', in the words of a verse of the Koran often applied to them, and who 'cannot pull their weight'. To remain idle, especially when one belongs to a great family, is to shirk the duties and tasks that are an inseparable part of belonging to the group. So a man who has been out of farming for some time, because he has emigrated or been ill, is quickly found a place in the cycle of work and the circuit of the exchange of services. The group has the right to demand of each of its members that he should have an occupation, however unproductive or even purely symbolic. A peasant who provides idlers with an opportunity to work on his land is universally approved because he gives these marginal individuals a chance to integrate themselves into the group by doing their duty as men.

The distinction between productive and non-productive, or profitable and non-profitable work, is unknown. It would destroy the *raison d'être* of the countless minor tasks intended to assist nature in its labour. No one would think of assessing the technical efficiency or economic usefulness of these inseparably technical and ritual acts, the peasant's version, so to speak, of art for art's sake, such as fencing the fields, pruning the trees, protecting the new shoots from animals, or 'visiting' (*asafqadh*) and watching over the fields, not to mention practices generally regarded as rites, such as actions intended to expel evil (*as'ifedh*) or to mark the coming of spring; or of all the social acts which the application of alien categories would define as unproductive, such as the tasks that fall to the head of the family as the representative and leader of the group - co-ordinating the work, speaking in the men's assembly, bargaining in the market, reading in the mosque.⁴ 'If the peasant were to count', runs a proverb, 'he would not sow.' Perhaps this implies that the relationship between work and its product is not really unknown, but socially repressed, because the productivity of labour is so low that the peasant must refrain from counting his time and measuring (as Marx does, reasoning here as an objectivist agronomist) the disparity between the working period and the production period, which is also the consumption period, in order to preserve the meaningfulness of his work; or - and this is only an apparent contradiction - that in a world in which scarcity of time is so rare and scarcity of goods so great, his best and only course is to spend his time without counting it, to squander the one thing that exists in abundance.⁵

In short, 'pains' are to labour as the gift is to trade (an activity for which, as Benveniste points out, the Indo-European languages had no name). The discovery of labour presupposes the constitution of the common ground of production, that is, the disenchanting of a natural world reduced to its economic dimension alone. Ceasing to be the tribute paid to a necessary order, activity can be directed towards an exclusively economic goal, the one that money, henceforward the measure of all things, starkly designates. This means the end of the primal undifferentiatedness which made possible the play of individual and collective misrecognition. Measured by the yardstick of monetary profit, the most sacred activities find

...consulted negatively as symbolic, that is, in a sense the word sometimes receives, as lacking concrete, material effect, in a word, gratuitous, that is, disinterested but also useless.

In an economy which is defined by the refusal to recognize the 'objective' truth of 'economic' practices, that is, the law of 'naked self-interest' and egoistic calculation, even 'economic' capital cannot act unless it succeeds in being recognized through a conversion that can render unrecognizable the true principle of its efficacy. Symbolic capital is this denied capital, recognized as legitimate, that is, misrecognized as capital (recognition, acknowledgement, in the sense of gratitude aroused by benefits can be one of the foundations of this recognition) which, along with religious capital (see Bourdieu 1971), is perhaps the only possible form of accumulation when economic capital is not recognized.

Whatever conscious or unconscious efforts are made to regulate the routine of the ordinary course of events through ritual stereotyping and to reduce crises by producing them symbolically or ritualizing them as soon as they arise, the archaic economy cannot escape the opposition between ordinary and extra-ordinary occasions, between regular needs, which can be satisfied by the domestic community, and the exceptional needs, both material and symbolic, for goods and services, which arise in special circumstances – economic crisis, political conflict or simply the urgency of agricultural work – and which require the voluntary assistance of a more extended group. The strategy of accumulating the capital of honour and prestige which produces a clientele as much as it is produced by it, therefore provides the optimum solution to the problem that would arise from continuously maintaining the whole of the labour force that is needed during the working period (which is necessarily very short, because of the rigours of the climate and the weakness of the technical resources: 'The harvest is like lightning' – *lerzaq am lebraq*; 'When it's a bad year, there are always too many mouths to feed; when it's a good year, there are never enough hands to do the work'). It enables the great families to marshal the maximum workforce during the working period while minimizing consumption. This vital assistance provided in brief moments of great urgency is obtained at low cost since it will be rewarded either in the form of labour, but outside the period of intense activity, or in other forms, protection, the loan of animals, etc.

One is entitled to see this as a disguised form of purchase of labour power or a covert exaction of *corvées*, but only on condition that the analysis holds together what holds together in the object, namely the double reality of intrinsically equivocal, ambiguous practices. This is the pitfall awaiting all those whom a naively dualistic representation of the relationship between the 'native' economy and the 'native' representation of the economy leads into the self-mystifying demystifications of a reduced and reductive materialism. The complete truth of this appropriation of services lies in the fact that it can *only* take place in the disguise of *thiwizi*, voluntary assistance which is also a *corvée* and is thus a voluntary *corvée* and forced assistance, and that, to use a geometrical metaphor, it

presupposes a double half-rotation returning to the starting-point, that is, a conversion of material capital into symbolic capital itself reconvertible into material capital.

In reality, *thiwizi* mainly benefits the richest farmers and also the *t'aleb* (whose land is ploughed and sown collectively). The poor need no help with their harvest. But *thiwizi* can also help a poor man in the case of the building of a house (for the transporting of beams and stones). Ostracism is a terrible sanction and is more than symbolic: owing to the limited technical resources, many activities would be impossible without the help of the group (for example, house-building, with stones to be carried, or the transporting of mill-wheels, which used to mobilize forty men in shifts for several days). Moreover, in this economy of insecurity, a capital of services rendered and gifts bestowed is the best and indeed only safeguard against the 'thousand contingencies', on which, as Marx observes, depends the maintenance or loss of working conditions, from the accident that causes the loss of an animal to the bad weather that destroys the crops.

As well as the additional labour-power which it provides at the times of greatest need, symbolic capital procures all that is referred to under the term *nesba*, that is, the network of affines and relationships that is held through the set of commitments and debts of honour, rights and duties accumulated over the successive generations, and which can be mobilized in extra-ordinary circumstances. Economic and symbolic capital are so inextricably intertwined that the display of material and symbolic strength represented by prestigious affines is in itself likely to bring in material profits, in a good-faith economy in which good repute constitutes the best, if not the only, economic guarantee.⁶ It is clear why the great families never miss an opportunity to organize exhibitions of symbolic capital – processions of kinsmen and allies which solemnize the pilgrim's departure or return, the bride's escort, measured by the number of 'rifles' and the intensity of the salutes fired in the couple's honour, prestigious gifts, like the sheep given for a wedding, the witnesses and guarantors who can be mobilized at any time and any place, to attest the good faith of a transaction or to strengthen the hand of the lineage in negotiating a marriage and solemnize the contract.

Symbolic capital is valid even in the market. A man may enhance his prestige by making a purchase at an exorbitant price, for the sake of his point of honour, just to 'show he could do it'; but he may also take pride in having managed to conclude a deal without laying out a penny in cash, either by mobilizing a number of guarantors, or, even better, by virtue of the credit and the capital of trust that stems from a reputation for honour as well as wealth. Because of the trust they enjoy and the capital of social relations they have accumulated, those who are said to 'be able to come back with the whole market, even if they went out empty-handed', can afford to 'go to market with only their faces, their names and their honour for money' and even 'to bid whether they have money on them or not'. The collective judgement which makes the 'market man' (*argaz nasuq*) is a total judgement on the total man which, like such judgements in all societies, involves the ultimate values and takes into account – at least as much as wealth and solvency

– the qualities strictly attached to the person, those which ‘can neither be borrowed nor lent’.⁷

When one knows that symbolic capital is credit, but in the broadest sense, a kind of advance, a credence, that only the group’s belief can grant those who give it the best symbolic and material guarantees, it can be seen that the exhibition of symbolic capital (which is always very expensive in material terms) is one of the mechanisms which (no doubt universally) make capital go to capital.

So it is by drawing up a comprehensive balance-sheet of symbolic profits, without forgetting the undifferentiatedness of the symbolic and the material components of a family’s wealth, that it becomes possible to grasp the economic rationality of conduct which economism dismisses as absurd. For example, the decision to buy a second yoke of oxen after the harvest, on the grounds that they are needed for treading out the grain – which is a way of making it known that the crop has been plentiful – only to have to sell them again for lack of fodder, before the autumn ploughing, when they would technically be necessary, seems economically aberrant only if one forgets all the material and symbolic profit accruing from this (albeit fictitious) enhancement of the family’s symbolic capital in the late-summer period when marriages are negotiated. The perfect rationality of this strategy of bluff lies in the fact that marriage is the occasion for an (in the widest sense) economic circulation which cannot be seen purely in terms of material goods. The circulation of immediately perceptible material goods, such as the bridewealth, disguises the total circulation, actual or potential, of indissolubly material and symbolic goods of which they are only the aspect that is visible to the eye of *homo economicus*. The amount of the bridewealth would not justify the hard bargaining that takes place over it if it did not take on a symbolic value of the greatest importance, by manifesting unequivocally the value of a family’s products on the matrimonial market, as well as the capacity of its spokesmen to get the best price for their products through their bargaining skills.⁸ Thus the profits that a group is likely to derive from this total transaction increase with its material and especially its symbolic patrimony, or, in the language of banking, with the ‘credit of renown’ that it can command. This ‘credit-worthiness’, which depends on the capacity of the group’s point of honour to ensure the invulnerability of its honour, is an undivided whole, indissolubly uniting the quantity and quality of its goods and the quantity and quality of the men capable of turning them to good account. It is what enables the group, especially through marriage, to acquire prestigious affines (wealth in the form of ‘rifles’, measured not only by the number of men but also their quality, their point of honour) and defines the group’s capacity to preserve its land and its honour, particularly the honour of its women, in short, the capital of material and symbolic strength which can actually be mobilized, for market transactions, contests of honour or work on the land.

The interest at stake in the conducts of honour is one for which

economism has no name and which has to be called symbolic, although it is such as to inspire actions that are very directly material. Just as there are professions, like law and medicine, whose practitioners must be ‘above all suspicion’, so a family has a vital interest in keeping its capital of honour, its credit of honourability, safe from suspicion. The hypersensitivity to the slightest slur or innuendo (*thasalqubth*), and the multiplicity of strategies designed to belie or avert them, can be explained by the fact that symbolic capital is less easily measured and counted than land or livestock, and that the group, ultimately the only source of credit, will readily withdraw it and direct its suspicions at even the strongest, as if, in matters of honour, as in land, one man’s wealth made others that much poorer.

The defence of ‘symbolic’ capital can thus lead to ‘economically’ ruinous conduct. This is the case when, on the basis of a socially accepted definition of the symbolic patrimony, a piece of land takes on a symbolic value disproportionate to its technical, ‘economic’ qualities, those that render the closest, best kept, most ‘productive’ fields, those most accessible to the women (by private paths, *thikburadjiyin*), more valuable in the eyes of an ordinary purchaser. When land that has been in the family for a long time and is therefore strongly associated with the name of the family falls into the hands of strangers, buying it back becomes a matter of honour, akin to avenging an offence, and it may reach an exorbitant price. This price is purely theoretical in most cases, since, within this logic, the symbolic profits of the challenge are greater than the material profits that would accrue from cynical (hence reprehensible) exploitation of the situation. The new owners are as determined to hold on to the land, especially if its acquisition is sufficiently recent to remain a challenge, as the others are to buy it back and take revenge for the affront to the *h’urma* of their land. It may happen that a third group will step in with a higher bid, thus challenging not the seller, who only profits from the competition, but the ‘legitimate’ owners.

Only a partial and reductive, and therefore inconsistent, materialism can fail to see that strategies whose object is to conserve or enhance the symbolic capital of the group (like blood vengeance or marriage) are dictated by interests no less vital than inheritance or marriage strategies. The interest leading an agent to defend his symbolic capital is inseparable from tacit adherence, inculcated in the earliest years of life and reinforced by all subsequent experience, to the axiomatics objectively inscribed in the regularities of the (in the broad sense) economic order, an original investment which constitutes a given type of goods as worthy of being pursued and conserved. The objective harmony between the agents’ dispositions (here, their propensity and capacity to play the game of honour) and the objective regularities of which they are the product, means that membership of this economic cosmos implies unconditional recognition of the stakes which, by its very existence, it presents as self-evident, that is, misrecognition of the arbitrariness of the value it confers on them. This primary belief is the basis of the investments and over-investments (in both the economic and psychoanalytic senses) which, through the ensuing competition and scarcity, cannot fail to reinforce the well-grounded illusion that the value of the goods it designates as desirable is in the nature of things, just as interest in these goods is in the nature of men.

Modes of Domination

The theory of strictly economic practices is a particular case of a general theory of the economy of practices. Even when they give every appearance of disinterestedness because they escape the logic of 'economic' interest (in the narrow sense) and are oriented towards non-material stakes that are not easily quantified, as in 'pre-capitalist' societies or in the cultural sphere of capitalist societies, practices never cease to comply with an economic logic. The correspondences which are established between the circulation of land sold and bought back, revenge killings 'lent' and 'redeemed', or women given and received in marriage, in other words between the different kinds of capital and the corresponding modes of circulation, require us to abandon the economic/non-economic dichotomy which makes it impossible to see the science of 'economic' practices as a particular case of a science capable of treating all practices, including those that are experienced as disinterested or gratuitous, and therefore freed from the 'economy', as economic practices aimed at maximizing material or symbolic profit. The capital accumulated by groups, which can be regarded as the energy of social physics,¹ can exist in different kinds (in the Kabyle case, these are the capital of fighting strength, linked to the capacity for mobilization and therefore to the number of men and their readiness to fight; 'economic' capital, in the form of land, livestock and labour force, this too being linked to the capacity for mobilization; and the symbolic capital accruing from successful use of the other kinds of capital). Although they are subject to strict laws of equivalence and are therefore mutually convertible, each of these kinds of capital produces its specific effects only in specific conditions. But the existence of symbolic capital, that is, of 'material' capital misrecognized and thus recognized, though it does not invalidate the analogy between capital and energy, does remind us that social science is not a social physics; that the acts of cognition that are implied in misrecognition and recognition are part of social reality and that the socially constituted subjectivity that produces them belongs to objective reality.

An unbroken progression leads from the symmetry of gift exchange to the asymmetry of the conspicuous redistribution that is the basis of the constitution of political authority. As one moves away from perfect reciprocity, which assumes a relative equality of economic situation, the

proportion of counter-services that are provided in the typically symbolic form of gratitude, homage, respect, obligations or moral debts necessarily increases. If they had been aware of this continuity, those who, like Karl Polanyi and Marshall D. Sahlins, have realized the decisive role of redistribution in establishing political authority and in the functioning of the tribal economy (in which the accumulation-redistribution circuit fulfils a similar function to that of the State and public finances) would no doubt also have observed the central operation of this process, namely the conversion of economic capital into symbolic capital, which produces relations of dependence that have an economic basis but are disguised under a veil of moral relations. In focusing solely on the particular case of exchanges designed to consecrate symmetrical relations, or solely on the economic effect of asymmetrical exchanges, one is liable to forget the effect produced by the circular circulation in which symbolic added-value is generated, namely the legitimation of the arbitrary, when the circulation covers an asymmetrical power relationship.

It is important to observe, as Sahlins (196C, 1962-3, 1965) does, pursuing a point made by Marx,² that the pre-capitalist economy does not provide the conditions necessary for an indirect, impersonal domination secured quasi-automatically by the logic of the labour market. In fact wealth can function as capital only in relationship with a specifically economic field, presupposing a set of economic institutions and a body of specialized agents with specific interests and modes of thought. Thus, Moses Finley shows that the ancient economy lacked not resources but the means 'to overcome the limits of individual resources': 'There were no proper credit instruments - no negotiable paper, no book clearance, no credit payments . . . There was moneylending in plenty but it was concentrated on usurious loans to peasants or consumers, and in large borrowings to enable men to meet political or other expenditures of the upper classes . . . Similarly in the field of business organization: there were no long-term partnerships or corporations, no brokers or agents, no guilds . . . In short, both the organizational and the operational devices were lacking for the mobilization of private capital resources' (Finley 1965a: 37; see also 1953). This analysis is valid, *a fortiori*, for ancient Kabylia, which lacked even the most elementary instruments of an economic institution. Land was almost totally excluded from circulation - though, occasionally serving as security, it was then liable to pass from one group to another. Village or tribal markets remained isolated and there was no way in which they could be linked up in a single mechanism. The opposition between the 'sacrilegious cunning' to be expected in market transactions and the good faith appropriate to transactions among kinsmen and friends - marked by the spatial distinction between the place of residence, the village, and the place of transactions, the market - mainly served to keep the calculating dispositions favoured by the market out of the universe of relations of reciprocity, and it in no way prevented the small local market from remaining 'embedded in social relationships', as Polanyi (1968, 1944) puts it.

It is paradoxical that in his contribution to a collection of essays edited by Karl Polanyi, Francisco Benet (1957) is so concerned with the opposition between the market and the village that he virtually ignores all the factors that keep the local *suq* under the sway of the values of the good-faith economy. In fact, whether one considers the small tribal markets or the great regional markets, the *suq* represented a mode of transaction that was intermediate between two extremes, neither of them

completely realized. On the one hand, there are exchanges of the familiar universe, based on the trust and good faith that are possible when the buyer has virtually complete information about the products exchanged and the seller's strategies and when the relationship between the parties pre-exists and must survive the exchange; on the other hand, there are the rational strategies of the self-regulating market, made possible by product standardization and the quasi-mechanical necessity of processes. The *suq* no longer supplies all the traditional information, but neither does it yet offer the conditions for rational information. This is why all the strategies of the peasants were aimed at limiting the insecurity that accompanies unpredictability, by transforming the impersonal, instantaneous relations of the commercial transaction into durable relations of reciprocity through recourse to guarantors, witnesses and mediators.

In a general way, goods were never treated as capital. This can be seen in the case of a contract such as the *charka* of an ox, which has all the appearances of a loan with interest. In this transaction, which is only conceivable between individuals relatively distant from each other (for example, people from different villages), and which the partners tend to collude in disguising (the borrower prefers to conceal his poverty and pretend that the ox is his own, with the complicity of the lender, who has the same interest in hiding a transaction suspected of not strictly corresponding to the sense of equity), an ox is lent by its owner to a peasant too poor to buy one, in exchange for a certain number of measures of barley or wheat; alternatively, a poor peasant arranges with a richer peasant that the latter will buy a pair of oxen and lend them to him for one, two or three years, and if the oxen are sold, the profit is shared equally (the implicit principles governing transactions between acquaintances can generate an infinite variety of informal agreements, all placed under the same 'concept' by the native terminologies; thus each informant offers his own variant of *charka*). What we would be inclined to see as a simple loan, with the lender making an ox available in exchange for interest paid in wheat, the agents see as an equitable transaction with no extraction of surplus value: the lender gives the labour force of the ox, but equity is satisfied because the borrower feeds and looks after the animal in place of the lender, and the wheat handed over simply compensates for depreciation through aging.

The various kinds of arrangements concerning goats similarly divide the costs of depreciation through age between the two parties. The owner, a woman investing her nest-egg, entrusts her goats for three years to a distant, relatively poor, cousin who she knows will feed and care for them well. The goats are valued and it is agreed that the yield (milk, butter, fleece) will be shared. Each week, the borrower sends a gourd of milk, which is delivered by a child. The child cannot return empty-handed (*elfal*, the good luck charm or the warding-off of evil, has a magical significance because to return an empty vessel, to send back emptiness, would threaten the prosperity and fecundity of the house); he is given fruit, oil, olives or eggs, according to the season. At the end of the agreed period, the borrower returns the goats and the products are divided. In one variant, the flock having been valued at 30,000 old francs, the borrower handed over 15,000 francs and half the original flock, that is, three old goats; in another case, the borrower returned the whole flock but kept all the fleeces.

Just as economic wealth cannot function as capital except in relation to an economic field, so cultural competence in all its forms is not constituted as cultural capital until it is inserted into the objective relations set up between the system of economic production and the system producing the producers (which is itself constituted by the relationship between the educational system and the family).

When a society lacks both the literacy that would enable it to preserve and accumulate in objectified form the cultural resources inherited from the past, and also the educational system that would give its agents the aptitudes and dispositions required for the symbolic reappropriation of those resources, it can only preserve them in their incorporated state.³ Consequently, to ensure the perpetuation of cultural resources which would otherwise disappear with the agents who bear them, it has to resort to inculcation, a process which, as the example of the bards shows, may last as long as the actual period of use. The transformations that an instrument such as writing makes possible have been clearly established (see esp. Goody and Watt 1962-3: 304ff.; Goody [ed.] 1968). By detaching cultural resources from persons, literacy enables a society to move beyond anthropological limits – particularly those of individual memory – and liberates it from the constraints implied by mnemotechnic devices such as poetry, the conservation technique *par excellence* of non-literate societies;⁴ it makes it possible to accumulate the culture previously conserved in the incorporated state and, by the same token, to perform the primitive accumulation of cultural capital, the total or partial monopolizing of the society's symbolic resources in religion, philosophy, art and science, through the monopolization of the instruments for appropriation of these resources (writing, reading and other decoding techniques), henceforward preserved not in memories but in texts. But capital is given the conditions of its full realization only with the appearance of an educational system, which awards qualifications durably consecrating the position occupied in the structure of the distribution of cultural.

While there are ample grounds for re-emphasizing these negative conditions of the privileged or exclusive recourse to the symbolic forms of power, it must not be forgotten that they no more account for the logic of symbolic violence than the absence of the lightning rod or the electric telegraph, which Marx refers to in a famous passage in the introduction to the *Grundrisse*, can be used to explain Jupiter or Hermes, in other words the internal logic of Greek mythology. To go further, one has to take seriously the representation that the agents offer of the economy of their own practice when this is most opposed to its 'economic' truth. The chief is indeed, in Malinowski's phrase, 'a tribal banker' who accumulates food only to lavish it on others and so build up a capital of obligations and debts that will be repaid in the form of homage, respect, loyalty and, when the occasion arises, work and services, which may be the basis of a new accumulation of material goods. But the analogy must not mislead us: processes of circular circulation such as the levying of a tribute followed by a redistribution apparently leading back to the point of departure would be perfectly absurd if they did not have the effect of transmuting the nature of the social relationship among the agents or groups involved. Everywhere they are observed, these consecration cycles perform the fundamental operation of social alchemy, the transformation of arbitrary relations into legitimate relations, *de facto* differences into officially recognized distinctions.

A rich man is 'rich in order to give to the poor'.⁵ This saying is an exemplary expression of the practical denial of interest which, like Freud's *Verneinung*, makes it possible to satisfy interest but only in a (disinterested) form tending to show that it is not being satisfied (the 'lifting of repression')

implying no 'acceptance of the repressed'). A man possesses in order to give. But he also possesses by giving. A gift that is not returned can become a debt, a lasting obligation; and the only recognized power – recognition, personal loyalty or prestige – is the one that is obtained by giving. In such a universe, there are only two ways of getting and keeping a lasting hold over someone: debts and gifts, the overtly economic obligations imposed by the usurer,⁶ or the moral obligations and emotional attachments created and maintained by the generous gift, in short, overt violence or symbolic violence, censored, euphemized, that is, misrecognizable, recognized violence. The 'way of giving', the manner, the forms, are what separate a gift from straight exchange, moral obligation from economic obligation. To 'observe the formalities' is to make the way of behaving and the external forms of the action a practical denial of the content of the action and of the potential violence it can conceal.⁷ There is a clear connection between these two forms of violence, which exist in the same social formation and sometimes in the same relationship: when domination can only be exerted in its elementary form, from person to person, it takes place overtly and has to be disguised under the veil of enchanted relations, the official model of which is presented by relations between kinsmen; in short, to be socially recognized, it must be misrecognized. If the pre-capitalist economy is the site *par excellence* of symbolic violence, this is because the only way that relations of domination can be set up within it, maintained or restored, is through strategies which, if they are not to destroy themselves by revealing their true nature, must be disguised, transfigured, in a word, euphemized. The censorship that this economy imposes on the overt manifestation of violence, especially in its crudely economic form, means that interests can only be satisfied on condition that they be disguised in and by the very strategies aimed at satisfying them.

So it would be wrong to see a contradiction in the fact that violence is here both more present and more masked.⁸ Because the pre-capitalist economy cannot count on the implacable, hidden violence of objective mechanisms which enable the dominant to limit themselves to reproduction strategies (often purely negative ones), it resorts simultaneously to forms of domination which may strike the modern observer as more brutal, more primitive, more barbarous, and at the same time as gentler, more humane, more respectful of persons.⁹ This coexistence of overt physical or economic violence and the most refined symbolic violence is found in all the institutions characteristic of this economy and at the very heart of each social relation. It is present in both the debt and the gift, which, despite their apparent opposition, can each provide the basis of dependence and even servitude, as well as solidarity, depending on the strategies they serve (Moses Finley [1965b] shows that a debt that was sometimes set up to create a situation of slavery could also serve to create relations of solidarity between equals). This essential ambiguity of all the institutions that modern taxonomies would incline one to treat as 'economic' is evidence that the opposing strategies that may coexist, as in the master-*khammes* relationship,

are alternative, interchangeable ways of fulfilling the same function: the 'choice' between overt violence and gentle violence depends on the state of the power relations between the two parties and the integration and ethical integrity of the group that arbitrates. So long as overt violence, that of the usurer or the ruthless master, is collectively disapproved of and is liable to provoke either a violent riposte or the flight of the victim – that is, in both cases, for lack of any legal recourse, the destruction of the very relationship that was to be exploited – symbolic violence, gentle, invisible violence, unrecognized as such, chosen as much as undergone, that of trust, obligation, personal loyalty, hospitality, gifts, debts, piety, in a word, of all the virtues honoured by the ethic of honour, presents itself as the most economical mode of domination because it best corresponds to the economy of the system.

Thus, a social relationship such as that between the master and his *khammes* (a kind of sharecropper who received only a very small share of the crop, usually a fifth, with local variants), which might at first sight seem very close to a simple capital-labour relation, could not in fact be kept up without a combination or alternation of material and symbolic violence directly applied to the very person who had to be tied. The master could bind his *khammes* by a debt which forced him to renew his contract until he could find a new master willing to pay off the debt to the former employer, in other words, indefinitely. He could also resort to brutal measures such as seizing the entire crop in order to recover the value of his loan. But each particular relationship was the product of complex strategies whose efficacy depended not only on the material and symbolic strength of either party but also on their skill in arousing sympathy or indignation so as to mobilize the group. If he was not to lose what often constituted the whole profit secured by the relationship – that is to say, for many masters who were scarcely richer than their *khammes* and would have gained by cultivating their land themselves, the sheer status of master (or non-*khammes*) – the master had an interest in manifesting the virtues of his rank by excluding from the 'economic' relationship any guarantee other than the loyalty required by honour, and by making his *khammes* an associate. The *khammes*, for his part, asked nothing better than to play his part, with the complicity of the whole group, in a self-interested fiction which supplied him with an honourable representation of his position. Given that there was no real labour market and that money was rare (and therefore dear), the best way in which the master could serve his own interests was by working away, day in, day out, with constant care and attention, weaving the ethical and affective, as well as 'economic', bonds that tied his *khammes* to him. To reinforce the bonds of obligation, the master might arrange the marriage of his *khammes* (or his son) and install him, with his family, in the master's own house; the children, brought up in common, with the goods (the flock, fields, etc.) being held in common, often took a long time to discover what their real position was. It was not unusual for one of the sons of a *khammes* to go and work for wages in the town, together with one of the master's sons, and like him bring his savings to the master. In short, if the master wanted to persuade the *khammes* to devote himself over a long period to the pursuit of the master's interests, he had to associate him completely with those interests, masking the asymmetry of the relationship by symbolically denying it in all his behaviour. The *khammes* was the man to whom one entrusted one's goods, one's house and one's honour (as shown by the formula used by a master leaving to go and work in a town or in France:

'Associate, I'm counting on you; I'm going off to be an associate myself'). The *khammes* 'treated the land as if he owned it', because there was nothing in his master's conduct to belie his claim to have rights over the land on which he worked, and it was not unusual to hear a *khammes* saying, long after leaving his 'master', that the sweat of his brow entitled him to pick fruit or enter the estate. And just as he never felt entirely freed from his obligations towards his former master, so, after what he called a 'change of heart', he might accuse his master of 'treachery' in abandoning someone he had 'adopted'.

The harder it is to exercise direct domination, and the more it is disapproved of, the more likely it is that gentle, disguised forms of domination will be seen as the only possible way of exercising domination and exploitation. It would be as fallacious to identify this essentially two-sided economy with its official truth as it would be to reduce it to its 'objective' truth, seeing mutual aid as a *corvée*, the *khammes* as a kind of slave, and so on. 'Economic' capital can here only work in the euphemized form of symbolic capital. This conversion of capital which is the condition of its efficacy is no way automatic. As well as a perfect knowledge of the logic of the economy of denial, it requires constant labour in the form of the care and attention devoted to making and maintaining relations; and also major investments, both material and symbolic – political aid against attack, theft, offences and insults, and economic aid, which can be costly, especially in times of scarcity. It also requires the (sincere) disposition to give things that are more personal, and therefore more precious than goods or money, because, as the saying goes, they can 'neither be lent nor borrowed', such as time¹⁰ – the time that has to be taken to do things 'that are not forgotten', because they are done properly, at the proper time, marks of 'attention', friendly 'gestures', acts of 'kindness'. If authority is always seen as a property of the person – *fides*, as Benveniste (1973: 84ff.) points out, is not 'trust' but 'the inherent quality of a person who inspires trust and is exercised in the form of protective authority over those who entrust themselves to him' – it is because gentle violence requires those who exercise it to pay a *personal* price.

'Soft' domination is thus very costly for the person who exerts it, and first in economic terms. On the one hand, the social mechanisms that imposed the repression of economic interest and so tended to make the accumulation of symbolic capital the only recognized form of accumulation, and on the other hand, the objective obstacles linked to the weakness of the means of production and the lack of 'economic' institutions, were probably sufficient to hinder or even forbid the concentration of material capital. It was no doubt exceptional for the assembly to have to intervene directly, as in a case reported by Maunier (1930: 68), and to order a man to 'stop getting any richer'. The wealthy had to reckon with the collective judgement, because they derived their authority from it, and in particular their power to mobilize the group for or against individuals or groups. They also had to reckon with the official morality, which required them to make the greatest contributions to ceremonial exchanges, the maintenance of the poor, hospitality to strangers and the organization of feast. Responsibilities such as those of the *t'amen*, the 'spokesman' or 'guarantor' who represented his group in meetings of the men's assembly or on solemn occasions (receiving his group's share from the collective

sacrifice, etc.), were not much coveted or competed for. It was not uncommon for the most influential personalities of a group to refuse this role or to ask to be quickly replaced, since the *t'amen*'s tasks of representation and mediation demanded much time and effort. Those whom the group honoured with the name of 'wise men' or 'the great' and who, even without any official mandate, were invested with a kind of tacit delegation of its authority, 'owed it to themselves' (as we say when a sense of obligation is dictated by self-esteem) constantly to remind the group of the values it officially recognized, both by their exemplary conduct and by their interventions in disputes. If two women in their group quarrelled, the 'wise men' would separate them, even beat them (if they were widows or if the men on whom they depended lacked authority) or fine them; if there was serious conflict between members of their clan, they would invite both sides to behave reasonably, never an easy role and sometimes a dangerous one; in any situation likely to lead to conflict among the clans (serious crime, for example), they would meet together, with the marabout, to reconcile the contending parties; and it was their responsibility to look after the interests of the poor and the clients, to make them gifts after the traditional collections, to send them food at feast times, to assist widows, see that orphans were married, and so on.

In short, in the absence of an officially declared and institutionally guaranteed delegation, personal authority can only be lastingly maintained through actions that reassert it practically through their compliance with the values recognized by the group.¹¹ The 'great' can least afford to take liberties with the official norms and they have to pay for their outstanding value with exemplary conformity to the values of the group. Until a system of mechanisms automatically ensuring the reproduction of the established order is constituted, the dominant agents cannot be content with letting the system that they dominate follow its own course in order to exercise durable domination; they have to work directly, daily, personally, to produce and reproduce conditions of domination which even then are never entirely certain. Because they cannot be satisfied with appropriating the profits of a social machine which has not yet developed the power of self-perpetuation, they are obliged to resort to the elementary forms of domination, in other words the direct domination of one person over another, the limiting case of which is appropriation of persons, that is, slavery. They cannot appropriate the labour, services, goods, homage and respect of others without 'winning' them personally, 'tying' them, in short, creating a bond between persons. The transformation of any given kind of capital into symbolic capital, a legitimate possession grounded in the nature of its possessor, is the fundamental operation of social alchemy (the paradigm of which is gift exchange). It always presupposes a form of labour, a visible (if not necessarily conspicuous) expenditure of time, money and energy, a redistribution that is necessary in order to secure recognition of the prevailing distribution, in the form of the recognition granted by the person who receives to the person who, being better placed in the distribution, is in a position to give, a recognition of a debt which is also a recognition of value.

Thus, contrary to simplistic uses of the distinction between infrastructure and superstructure,¹² the social mechanisms that ensure the production of

compliant *habitus* are, here as elsewhere, an integral part of the conditions of reproduction of the social order and of the productive apparatus itself, which could not function without the dispositions that the group inculcates and continuously reinforces and which exclude, as *unthinkable*, practices which the disenchanting economy of 'naked self-interest' presents as legitimate and even self-evident. But the particularly important role played by the *habitus* and its strategies in setting up and perpetuating durable relations of domination is once again an effect of the structure of the field. Because it does not offer the institutional conditions for the accumulation of economic or cultural capital (which it even expressly discourages through a censorship forcing agents to resort to euphemized forms of power and violence), this economic order is such that strategies oriented towards the accumulation of symbolic capital, which are found in all social formations, are here the most rational ones, since they are the most effective strategies within the constraints of this universe. The principle of the pertinent differences between the modes of domination lies in the degree of objectification of capital. Social formations in which relations of domination are made, unmade and remade in and through personal interactions contrast with those in which such relations are mediated by objective, institutionalized mechanisms such as the 'self-regulating market', the educational system or the legal apparatus, where they have the permanence and opacity of things and lie beyond the reach of individual consciousness and power.

The opposition between, on the one hand, universes of social relations that do not contain within themselves the principle of their own reproduction and have to be kept up by nothing less than a process of continuous creation, and on the other hand, a social world carried along by its *vis insita* which frees agents from this endless work of creating or restoring social relations, is directly expressed in the history or prehistory of social thought. 'In Hobbes' view', writes Durkheim (1960: 136), 'the social order is generated by an act of will and sustained by an act of will that must be constantly renewed.'¹³ And there is every reason to think that the break with this artificialist vision, which is the precondition for scientific apprehension, could not be made before the constitution, in reality, of objective mechanisms like the self-regulating market which, as Polanyi points out, was intrinsically conducive to belief in determinism.¹⁴

Objectification in institutions guarantees the permanence and cumulativeness of material and symbolic acquisitions which can then subsist without the agents having to recreate them continuously and in their entirety by deliberate action. But, because the profits provided by these institutions are subject to differential appropriation, objectification also and inseparably tends to ensure the reproduction of the structure of the distribution of capital which, in its various kinds, is the precondition for such appropriation, and, in so doing, it tends to reproduce the structure of relations of domination and dependence.

Paradoxically, it is precisely because there exist relatively autonomous fields, functioning in accordance with rigorous mechanisms capable of imposing their necessity on the agents, that those who are in a position

to command these mechanisms and appropriate the material or symbolic profits accruing from their functioning are able to dispense with strategies aimed expressly and directly at the domination of individuals. The saving is a real one, because strategies designed to establish or maintain lasting relations of personal dependence are, as we have seen, extremely costly, with the result that the means eat up the end and the actions necessary to ensure the continuation of power themselves help to weaken it. Might has to be expended to produce rights, and a great deal of it may be used up in this way.¹⁵

The point of honour is politics in the pure state. It inclines agents to accumulate material riches that do not have their justification 'in themselves', that is, in their 'economic' or 'technical' function, and which, in extreme cases, may be totally useless, like the objects exchanged in a number of archaic economies, but which are valued as means of manifesting power, as symbolic capital tending to contribute to its own reproduction, that is, to the reproduction and legitimation of the prevailing hierarchies. In such a context, the accumulation of material wealth is simply one means among others of accumulating symbolic power – the power to secure recognition of power. What might be called demonstrative expenditure (as opposed to 'productive' expenditure, which is why it is called 'gratuitous' or 'symbolic') represents, like any other visible expenditure of the signs of wealth that are recognized in a given social formation, a kind of legitimizing self-affirmation through which power makes itself known and recognized. By asserting itself visibly and publicly, securing acceptance of its right to visibility, as opposed to all the occult, hidden, secret, shameful and therefore censored powers (such as those of malign magic), this power awards itself a rudimentary form of institutionalization by officializing itself. But only full institutionalization makes it possible, if not to dispense completely with 'demonstration', at least to cease depending on it completely in order to secure the belief and obedience of others and to mobilize their labour power or fighting strength. And there is every reason to think that, as in the case of feudalism according to Georges Duby, the accumulation of 'economic' capital becomes possible once symbolic capital can be reproduced durably and cheaply so that the political war for rank, distinction and pre-eminence can be pursued by other, more 'economical' means. In place of the relationships between persons indissociable from the functions they fulfil, which they can perpetuate only at direct personal cost, institutionalization sets up strictly established, legally guaranteed relations between recognized positions, defined by their rank in a relatively autonomous space, distinct from and independent of their actual and potential occupants, themselves defined by *entitlements* which, like titles of nobility, property titles or educational qualifications (*titres*), authorize them to occupy these positions.¹⁶ As opposed to personal authority, which can neither be delegated nor bequeathed, the title, as a measure of rank or order, that is, as a formal instrument of evaluation of agents' positions in a distribution, makes it possible to set up quasi-perfect relations of commensurability (or equivalence) among agents defined as aspiring to the

appropriation of a particular class of goods – real estate, precedence, offices, privileges – and these goods, which are themselves classified. Thus the relations among agents can be durably settled as regards their legitimate order of access to these goods and to the groups defined by exclusive ownership of these goods.

Thus, for example, by giving the same value to all holders of the same certificate, thereby making them interchangeable, the educational system minimizes the obstacles to the free circulation of cultural capital which result from its being incorporated in particular individuals (without, however, destroying the profits associated with the charismatic ideology of the irreplaceable individual).¹⁷ It makes it possible to relate all qualification-holders (and also, negatively, all unqualified individuals) to a single standard, thereby setting up a unified market for all cultural capacities and guaranteeing the convertibility into money of the cultural capital acquired at a given cost in time and labour. Educational qualifications, like money, have a conventional, fixed value which, being guaranteed by law, is freed from local limitations (in contrast to academically uncertified cultural capital) and temporal fluctuations: the cultural capital which they in a sense guarantee once and for all does not constantly need to be proved. The objectification performed by certificates, diplomas and, more generally, all forms of 'credentials' ('a written proof of qualification that confers credit or authority') is inseparable from the objectification that law produces by defining permanent positions which are independent of the biological individuals they call for and which may be occupied by agents who are biologically different but interchangeable in respect of the qualifications they hold. From then on, relations of power and dependence are no longer established directly between individuals; they are set up, in objectivity, among institutions, that is, among socially guaranteed qualifications and socially defined positions, and through them, among the social mechanisms that produce and guarantee both the social value of the qualifications and the distribution of these social attributes among biological individuals.

Law does no more than symbolically consecrate – by recording it in a form that renders it both eternal and universal – the structure of power relations among the groups and the classes that is produced and guaranteed practically by the functioning of these mechanisms. For example, it records and legitimates the distinction between the function and the person, between power and its holder, together with the relationship that obtains at a particular moment between qualifications and posts (depending on the bargaining power of the sellers and buyers of qualified, that is, scholastically guaranteed, labour power), a relationship that is materialized in a particular distribution of the material and symbolic profits assigned to holders (or non-holders) of qualifications. Law thus adds its specific symbolic force to the action of the whole set of mechanisms which render it superfluous constantly to reassert power relations through the overt use of force.

The effect of legitimation of the established order is thus not solely the work of the mechanisms traditionally regarded as belonging to the order of ideology, such as law. The system of cultural goods production and the

system producing the producers also fulfil ideological functions, as a by-product, through the very logic of their functioning, owing to the fact that the mechanisms through which they contribute to the reproduction of the social order and the permanence of the relations of domination remain hidden. As I have shown elsewhere, the educational system helps to provide the dominant class with a 'theodicy of its own privilege' not so much through the ideologies it produces or inculcates, but rather through the practical justification of the established order that it supplies by masking – under the overt connection that it guarantees, between qualifications and jobs – the relationship, which it surreptitiously records, under cover of formal equality, between the qualifications obtained and inherited cultural capital. The most successful ideological effects are the ones that have no need of words, but only of *laissez-faire* and complicitous silence.

It follows, incidentally, that any analysis of ideologies in the narrow sense of 'legitimizing discourses' which fails to include an analysis of the corresponding institutional mechanisms is liable to be no more than a contribution to the efficacy of those ideologies. This is true of all internal (semiological) analyses of political, educational, religious or aesthetic ideologies which forget that the political function of these ideologies may in some cases be reduced to the effect of displacement and diversion, dissimulation and legitimation, which they produce by reproducing the effects of the objective mechanisms, through their oversights and omissions, in their deliberately or involuntarily complicitous silences. This is true, for example, of the charismatic (or meritocratic) ideology, a particular form of the giving of 'gifts', which explains differential access to qualifications by reference to the inequality of innate 'gifts', thereby reinforcing the effect of the mechanisms that mask the relationship between qualifications obtained and inherited cultural capital.

If it is true that symbolic violence is the gentle, disguised form which violence takes when overt violence is impossible, it is understandable that symbolic forms of domination should have progressively withered away as objective mechanisms came to be constituted which, in rendering the work of euphemization superfluous, tended to produce the 'disenchanted' dispositions that their development demanded.¹⁸ It is equally clear why the development of the capacity for subversion and critique that the most brutal forms of 'economic' exploitation have aroused, and the uncovering of the ideological and practical effects of the mechanisms ensuring the reproduction of the relations of domination, should bring about a return to modes of accumulation based on the conversion of economic capital into symbolic capital, with all the forms of legitimizing redistribution, public ('social' policies) and private (financing of 'disinterested' foundations, donations to hospitals, academic and cultural institutions, etc.), through which the dominant groups secure a capital of 'credit' which seems to owe nothing to the logic of exploitation;¹⁹ or the thesaurization of luxury goods attesting the taste and distinction of their possessor. The denial of the economy and of economic interest which, in pre-capitalist societies, was exerted first in the very area of 'economic' transactions, from which it had to be expelled in order for 'the economy' to be constituted as such, thus

finds its favoured refuge in the domain of art and 'culture', the site of pure consumption – of money, of course, but also of time. This island of the sacred, ostentatiously opposed to the profane, everyday world of production, a sanctuary for gratuitous, disinterested activity, offers, like theology in other periods, an imaginary anthropology obtained by denial of all the negations really performed by the 'economy'.

The Objectivity of the Subjective

The established order, and the distribution of capital which is its basis, contribute to their own perpetuation through their very existence, through the symbolic effect that they exert as soon as they are publicly and officially declared and are thereby misrecognized and recognized. It follows from this that social science cannot 'treat social realities as things', in accordance with Durkheim's famous precept, without neglecting all that these realities owe to the fact that they are objects of cognition (albeit a misrecognition) within the very objectivity of social existence. Social science has to reintroduce into the full definition of the object the primary representations of the object, which it first had to destroy in order to achieve the 'objective' definition. Individuals or groups are objectively defined not only by what they are but by what they are reputed to be, a 'being-perceived' which, even if it closely depends on their being, is never totally reducible to this. Social science therefore has to take account of the two kinds of properties that are objectively attached to them: on the one hand, material properties, starting with the body, that can be counted and measured like any other thing of the physical world; and on the other hand, symbolic properties which are nothing other than material properties when perceived and appreciated in their mutual relationships, that is, as distinctive properties.¹

An intrinsically twofold reality of this kind requires one to move beyond the false choice in which social science generally allows itself to be trapped, that between social physics and social phenomenology. Social physics, which often appears in the form of an objectivist economism, seeks to grasp an 'objective reality' quite inaccessible to ordinary experience by analysing the statistical relationships among distributions of material properties, quantitative expressions of the distribution of capital (in its different kinds) among the individuals competing to appropriate it. Social phenomenology, which records and deciphers the meanings that agents produce as such by a differential perception of these same properties, which are thus constituted as distinctive signs, tends towards a kind of social marginalism. The 'social order' is thus reduced to a collective classification obtained by addition of the classifying and classified judgments through which agents classify and are classified, or, to put it another way, through aggregation of the (mental) representations that one group