the relation between the experience of these practices and what remains of them in an analysis. It is evidence, evidence which can only be fantastic and not scientific, of the disproportion between everyday tactics and a strategic elucidation. Of all the things everyone does, how much gets written down? Between the two, the image, the phantom of the expert but mute body, preserves the difference.

**Part II**

**Theories of the Art of Practice**

Everyday practices depend on a vast ensemble which is difficult to delimit but which we may provisionally designate as an ensemble of procedures. The latter are schemas of operations and of technical manipulations. On the basis of some recent and fundamental analyses (those of Foucault, Bourdieu, Vernant and Détienne, and others) it is possible, if not to define them, at least to clarify their functioning relative to discourse (or to "ideology," as Foucault puts it), to the acquired (Bourdieu's *habitus*), and to the form of time we call an occasion (the *kairos* discussed by Vernant and Détienne). These are different ways of locating a technicity of a certain type and at the same time situating the study of this technicity with respect to current trends in research.

By situating this essay in a larger ensemble and at a point that has already been written on (in spite of a persistent fiction, we never write on a blank page, but always on one that has already been written on), I seek neither to present a review of the theoretical and descriptive works that have organized the question or illuminated it obliquely (a review that would in any case be illusory), nor merely to acknowledge my debts. What is at stake is the status of the analysis and its relation to its object. As in a workshop or laboratory, the objects produced by an inquiry result from its (more or less original) contribution to the field that has made it possible. They thus refer to a "state of the question"—that is, to a network of professional and textual exchanges, to the "dialectic" of an inquiry in progress (if one takes "dialectic" in the sixteenth-century sense of the movement of relations among different procedures on the same stage, and not in the sense of the power assigned to a particular place to totalize or "surmount" these differences). From this point of view, the "objects" of our research cannot be detached from the
intellectual and social "commerce" that organizes their definition and their displacements.

In "forgetting" the collective inquiry in which he is inscribed, in isolating the object of his discourse from its historical genesis, an "author" in effect denies his real situation. He creates the fiction of a place of his own (une place propre). In spite of the contradictory ideologies that may accompany it, the setting aside of the subject-object relation or of the discourse-object relation is the abstraction that generates an illusion of "authorship." It removes the traces of belonging to a network—traces that always compromise the author's rights. It camouflages the conditions of the production of discourse and its object. For this negated genealogy is substituted a drama combining the simulacrum of an object with the simulacrum of an author. A discourse can maintain a certain scientific character, however, by making explicit the rules and conditions of its production, and first of all the relations out of which it arises.

This detour has led us back to a debt, but to a debt that is essential in any new discourse, and not merely to a borrowing that can be exorcized by homage or acknowledgment. Rabelais' Panurge, for once waxing lyrical, saw in this sort of debt the index of a universal solidarity. Every "proper" place is altered by the marks others have left on it. This fact also excludes the "objective" representation of the proximate or distant positions called "influences." They appear in a text (or in the definition of an investigation) through the effects of alteration and operation they have produced in it. Debts cannot be transformed into objects either. Every particular study is a many-faceted mirror (others reappear everywhere in this space) reflecting the exchanges, readings, and confrontations that form the conditions of its possibility, but it is a broken and anamorphic mirror (others are fragmented and altered by it).

Chapter IV  Foucault and Bourdieu

1. Scattered technologies: Foucault

From the outset we face the problem of the relation of these procedures to discourse. Procedures lack the repetitive fixity of rites, customs or reflexes, kinds of knowledge which are no longer (or not yet) articulated in discourse. Their mobility constantly adjusts them to a diversity of objectives and "coupes," without their being dependent on a verbal elucidation. Are they, however, completely autonomous with respect to the latter? Tactics in discourse can, as we have seen, be the formal indicator of tactics that have no discourse. Moreover, the ways of thinking embedded in ways of operating constitute a strange—and massive—case of the relations between practices and theories.

In Discipline and Punish, his study of the organization of the "procedures" of penitential, educational, and medical control at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Foucault offers a variety of synonyms, words that dance about and successively approach an impossible proper name: "apparatuses" ("dispositifs"), "instrumentalities," "techniques," "mechanisms," "machineries," etc. The uncertainty and the mobility of the thing in language are already significant. But the very history he narrates, that of an enormous substitution, postulates and puts in position a dichotomy between "ideologies" and "procedures" in the process of tracing their distinct evolutions and their intersections. He analyzes the process of a chiasm: the place occupied by the reformist projects of the late eighteenth century has been "colonized," "vampirized," by the disciplinary procedures that subsequently organize the social space. This detective story about a substituted body would have pleased Freud.

In Foucault's work, the drama pits against each other two forces whose relationship is reversed by the tricks of time. On the one hand, the ideology of the Enlightenment, revolutionary with regard to penal justice. For the "torture" of the Ancien Régime, a violent corporal ritual dramatizing the triumph of royal order over felons chosen for their symbolic value, the reformist projects of the eighteenth century seek to
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substitute punishments applicable to all, in proportion to the crimes, useful to society, edifying for the condemned. In fact, disciplinary procedures gradually perfected in the army and in schools quickly won out over the vast and complex judicial apparatus constructed by the Enlightenment. These techniques are refined and extended without recourse to an ideology. Through a cellular space of the same type for everyone (schoolboys, soldiers, workers, criminals or the ill), the techniques perfected the visibility and the gridwork of this space in order to make of it a tool capable of disciplining under control and “treating” any human group whatever. The development is a matter of technological details, miniscule and decisive procedures. The details overcome theory: through these procedures the universalization of a uniform penalty—imprisonment—is imposed, which inverts revolutionary institutions from within and establishes everywhere the “penitentiary” in the place of penal justice.

Foucault thus distinguishes two heterogeneous systems. He outlines the advantages won by a political technology of the body over the elaboration of a body of doctrine. But he is not content merely to separate two forms of power. By following the establishment and victorious multiplication of this “minor instrumentality,” he tries to bring to light the springs of this opaque power that has no possessor, no privileged place, no superiors or inferiors, no repressive activity or dogmatism, that is almost autonomously effective through its technological ability to distribute, classify, analyze and spatially individualize the object dealt with. (All the while, ideology babbles on!) In a series of clincial tableaux (also marvelously “panoptic”), he tries to name and classify in turn the “general rules,” “conditions of functioning,” “techniques” and “procedures,” distinct “operations,” “mechanisms,” “principles,” and “elements” that compose a “microphysics of power.” This gallery of diagrams has the twin functions of delimiting a social stratum of practices that have no discourse and of founding a discourse on these practices.

In what then does this level of decisive practices isolated by analysis consist? By a detour that characterizes the strategy of his inquiries, Foucault discerns at this level the move (le geste) which has organized the discursive space. This move is not, as in his earlier book, The History of Madness, the epistemological and social move of isolating excluded people from normal social intercourse in order to create the space that makes possible a rational order; rather it is the miniscule and ubiquitously reproduced move of “gridding” (quadriller) a visible space in such a way as to make its occupants available for observation and “information.” The procedures that repeat, amplify, and perfect this move organize the discourse that has taken the form of the “human sciences.” In that way a non-discursive move is identified which, being privileged for social and historical reasons that remain to be explained, is articulated in contemporary scientific knowledge.

To the extremely novel perspectives opened up by this analysis—which would, moreover, allow the development of another theory of “style” (style, a way of walking through a terrain, a non-textual move or attitude, organizes the text of a thought)—we may add a few questions relevant to our inquiry:

1. In undertaking to produce an archeology of the human sciences (his explicit goal since The Order of Things) and in seeking a “common matrix,” viz., a “technology of power,” which would be at the origin of both criminal law (the punishment of human beings) and the human sciences (the knowledge of human beings), Foucault is led to make a selection from the ensemble of procedures that form the fabric of social activity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This surgical operation consists in starting out from a proliferating contemporary system—a judicial and scientific technology—and tracing it back through history, isolating from the whole body the canceous growth that has invaded it, and explaining its current functioning by its genesis over the two preceding centuries. From an immense body of historical material (penal, military, educational, medical), the operation extracts the optical and panoptical procedures which increasingly multiply within it and discerns in them the at first scattered indexes of an apparatus whose elements become better defined, combine with each other, and reproduce themselves little by little throughout all the strata of society.

This remarkable historiographical “operation” raises simultaneously two questions which must nevertheless not be confused: on the one hand, the decisive role of technological procedures and apparatuses in the organization of a society; on the other, the exceptional development of a particular category of these apparatuses. It is thus still necessary to ask ourselves:

(a) How can we explain the privileged development of the particular series constituted by panoptic apparatuses?

(b) What is the status of so many other series which, pursuing their silent itineraries, have not given rise to a discursive configuration or to
a technological systematization? They could be considered as an immense reserve constituting either the beginnings or traces of different developments.

It is in any case impossible to reduce the functioning of a society to a dominant type of procedures. Recent studies have pointed to other technological apparatuses and their interplay with ideology; these studies which have also underlined the dominant character of these apparatuses, though from different points of view—thus, for example, the work of Serge Moscovici, especially on urban organization,5 or that of Pierre Legendre, on the apparatus of medieval law.6 These apparatuses seem to prevail over a more or less lengthy period of time, then fall back into the stratified mass of procedures, while others replace them in the role of "informing" a system.

A society is thus composed of certain foregrounded practices organizing its normative institutions and of innumerable other practices that remain "minor," always there but not organizing discourses and preserving the beginnings or remains of different (institutional, scientific) hypotheses for that society or for others. It is in this multifarious and silent "reserve" of procedures that we should look for "consumer" practices having the double characteristic, pointed out by Foucault, of being able to organize both spaces and languages, whether on a minute or a vast scale.

2. The final formation (the contemporary technologies of observation and discipline) which serves as the point of departure for the regressive history practiced by Foucault explains the impressive coherence of the practices he selects and examines. But can it be assumed that the ensemble of procedures exhibits the same coherence? A priori, no. The exceptional, indeed cancerous, development of panoptic procedures seems to be indissociable from the historical role to which they have been assigned, that of being a weapon to be used in combatting and controlling heterogeneous practices. The coherence in question is the result of a particular success, and will not be characteristic of all technological practices. Beneath what one might call the "monotheistic" privilege that panoptic apparatuses have won for themselves, a "polytheism" of scattered practices survives, dominated but not erased by the triumphal success of one of their number.

3. What is the status of a particular apparatus when it is transformed into the organizing principle of a technology of power? What effect does foregrounding have on it? What new relationships within the dispersed ensemble of procedures are established when one of them is institutionalyzed as a penitentiary-scientific system? The apparatus thus privileged might well lose the effectiveness that it owed, according to Foucault, to its miniscule and silent technical advances. By leaving the obscure stratum in which Foucault locates the determining mechanisms of a society, it would be in the position of institutions slowly "colonized" by still silent procedures. Perhaps in fact (this is, at least, one of the hypotheses of this essay), the system of discipline and control which took shape in the nineteenth century on the basis of earlier procedures, is today itself "vampirized" by other procedures.

4. Can one go even further? Is not the very fact that, as a result of their expansion, the apparatuses of control become an object of clarification and thus part of the language of the Enlightenment, proof that they ceased to determine discursive institutions? When the discourse can deal with some effects of the organizing apparatuses that means that they no longer play this determining role. One must ask what type of apparatus articulates the discourse in such a way that the discourse cannot make it its object. Unless it is the case that one discourse (that of Discipline and Punish), by analyzing the practices on which it itself depends, overcomes in this way the division, posited by Foucault, between "ideologies" and "procedures."

These questions, to which one could at the moment give only premature answers, indicate at least the transformations that Foucault has introduced into his analysis of procedures and the perspectives that have opened up since his study. By showing, in one case, the heterogeneity and equivocal relations of apparatuses and ideologies, he constituted as a treatable historical object this zone in which technological procedures have specific effects of power, obey their own logical modes of functioning, and can produce a fundamental diversion within the institutions of order and knowledge. It remains to be asked how we should consider other, equally infinitesimal, procedures, which have not been "privileged" by history but are nevertheless active in innumerable ways in the openings of established technological networks. This is particularly the case of procedures that do not enjoy the precondition, associated with all those studied by Foucault, of having their own place (un lieu propre) on which the panoptic machinery can operate. These techniques, which are also operational, but initially deprived of what gives the others their force, are the "tactics" which I have suggested might furnish a formal index of the ordinary practices of consumption.
2. "Docta ignorantia": Bourdieu

Our "tactics" seem to be analyzable only indirectly, through another society: the France of the Ancien Régime or the nineteenth century, in the case of Foucault; Kabylia or Béarn, in that of Bourdieu; ancient Greece, in that of Vernant and Détienne, etc. They return to us from afar, as though a different space were required in which to make visible and elucidate the tactics marginalized by the Western form of rationality. Other regions give us back what our culture has excluded from its discourse. But have tactics not been defined precisely as what we have eliminated or lost? As in Tristes tropiques, we travel abroad to discover in distant lands something whose presence at home has become unrecognizable. The tactical and rhetorical tricks condemned as illegitimate by the scientific family into which Freud long sought to be accepted as an adopted son, he also discovered through the discovery and exploration of a terra incognita, the unconscious; but they came to him from a more ancient and yet nearer region—from a Jewish foreignness he long rejected, and which rises with him into scientific discourse, but disguised as dreams and slips of the tongue. Freudianism might thus be considered as a combination of the legitimate strategies that issued from the Enlightenment and the "turns" that return from further back under the mantle of the unconscious.

Two halves

In Bourdieu's work, Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique. Précédée de trois études d'ethnologie kabyle (1972), Kabylia plays the role of a Trojan horse within a "theory of practice"; the three texts devoted to it (the three best that Bourdieu has written, especially "The Kabyle House or the World Reversed") serve as a multiple vanguard for a long epistemological discourse; like poems, these "three studies of Kabylia ethnology" lead into a theory (a sort of commentary in prose) and provide it with a fund of material that can be indefinitely cited in marvelous fragments; in the end, at the point when Bourdieu publishes his three "early" texts, their referential and poetic locus is erased from the title (which reverts to commentary: a theory); and, scattered in the effects that it produces in the authorized discourse, this Kabylan origin itself gradually disappears, a sun obscured by the speculative landscape that it still illuminates: these traits are already characteristic of the position of practice in theory.

This is no accident. Bourdieu's studies since 1972 which have been concerned with "the practical sense" are organized in the same way, except for "Avenir de classe et causalité du probable," with one variant, the study on "matrimonial strategies" (concerned precisely with the genealogical economy), which refers to the Béarn region of Southwestern France rather than Kabylia. Thus, two points of reference. Is it possible to say which—Béarn or Kabylia—is the doublet of the other? They represent two "familiarities," the one determined—and haunted—by its distance from the native land, the other by the foreignness of its cultural difference. It nevertheless seems that Béarn, in-fans (not-speaking) like every origin, had first to find a doublet in the Kabylan situation (so similar to that of his native land in the analysis Bourdieu gives of it) before it could be described. Having thus become "objectifiable," it furnishes the real (and legendary: where are the Béarnians of yesteryear?) support allowing the introduction of the concept of habitus into the human sciences, which is the personal stamp Bourdieu has put on theory. Hence the particularity of the originary experience is lost in its power of reorganizing the general discourse.

Divided into two mutually enabling parts, the Outline of a Theory of Practice is first of all an interdisciplinary operation. It is thus a metaphor in the sense that there is a passage from one genre to the other: from ethnology to sociology. Things are, however, not that simple. It is difficult to situate the book. Does it depend on the interdisciplinary confrontations Bourdieu earlier urged, confrontations that, going beyond the stage of simple exchanges of "data," sought a reciprocal and explicit expression of the assumptions peculiar to each discipline? These confrontations are supposed to provide a mutual epistemological elucidation; they labor to bring their implicit foundations to light—the ambition and the myth of knowledge. But perhaps what is at stake is different and has to do rather with the otherness introduced by the move through which a discipline turns toward the darkness that surrounds and precedes it—not in order to eliminate it, but because it is inexpungeable and determining? In that case theory would involve an effort on the part of a science to think through its relation to this exteriority and not be satisfied with correcting its rules of production or determining the limits of its validity. Is this the path that Bourdieu's discourse takes? In any event, practices shape the opaque reality out of which a theoretical question can arise beyond the frontiers of any discipline.

His "ethnological studies" have their own style. They are a sociologist's hobby, but like all hobbies, they are more serious than his regular work. They are executed with a rare precision. Bourdieu never operates with
more care for minute detail, with more perspicacity, with more virtuosity, than in these studies. His texts even have something esthetic about them, to the extent that a "fragment," a particular and "isolated" form, becomes the figure of a global relation (and not merely a general one) between the discipline and a reality that is at once alien and decisive, primitive. This fragment of a society and an analysis is first of all the dwelling, which is, as we know, the reference of every metaphor. Or better: a dwelling. Through the practices that articulate its interior space, it inverts the strategies of public space and silently organizes the language (a vocabulary, proverbs, etc.). The inversion of the public order and the generation of discourse: these two characteristics also make the Kabylia dwelling the inverse of the French school, in which Bourdieu, who made it his speciality, sees nothing but the "reproduction" of the social hierarchies and the repetition of their ideologies. In relation to the society sociology deals with, the residence situated "down there" is thus, in its peculiarity, a contrary and determining place. Bourdieu considers his study itself to be illegal with respect to the socioeconomic norms of the discipline: it plays too much on the symbolic scale. In short, it is a lapse.

"Theory" must thus reabsorb the distance between the legalities of sociology and ethnological particularities. The rationality of a scientific field and the practices that arise outside it are to be rearticulated. The Outline (and subsequent articles) effect the junction of these two elements. It is a delicate maneuver, which consists in fitting the "ethnological" exception into an empty space in the sociological system. In order to follow this operation, we must consider its working more closely: on the one hand, the analysis of these particular practices; on the other, the role they are assigned in the construction of a "theory."

Strategies

Designated as "strategies," the practices studied by Bourdieu concern, for example, the system of succession in Béarn, or the interior disposition of the Kabylia dwelling, or the distribution of tasks and periods in the course of the Kabylia year. Those are only a few genera of a species that includes "strategies" of fecundity, succession, education, hygiene, social or economic investment, marriage, etc., and also of "reconversion" when there is a gap between practices and situations. In each of the cases examined, differences permit us to specify "some of the properties" of a "logic of practice."

1. Genealogical tables or "trees," surveys and geometrical plans of habitations, linear calendar cycles—these are totalizing and homogeneous productions, results of observational distance and "neutralization" with respect to the strategies themselves that constitute as "islands" family relations practiced because they are useful, places that are distinguished by the inverted and successive movements of the body, or the periods of actions carried out one after another in rhythms that are peculiar to each and mutually incommensurable. In contrast, there can be a synoptic representation, as the instrument of summation and mastery through vision, that levels and classes all the collected "data"; it is a practice that organizes discontinuities, nodes of heterogeneous operations. Matters of family relationships, space and time are thus not the same in every case.

(I would add that this difference is situated at the borderline between two ruses. With its synthetic tables, scientific method conceals the operation of withdrawal and power that makes them possible. For their part, by providing the "data" sought by the investigators, practitioners necessarily do not reveal the practical difference created among these "data" by the operations that make use of them [or do not make use of them]; thus they collaborate in the production of general tabulations which conceal their tactics from the observer. Knowledge of practices is thus the result of a twofold deception.)

2. A "strategy" (for instance, that used in marrying a child off) is the equivalent of "taking a trick" in a card game: it depends both on the deal (having a good hand) and on the way one plays the cards (being a good cardplayer). "Taking a trick" involves both the postulates that determine a playing space and the rules that accord a value to the deal and certain options to the player, in short, an ability to maneuver within the different conditions in which the initial capital is committed. This complex ensemble is a fabric of qualitatively distinct modes of functioning:

a) There are "implicit principles" or postulates (for example, in a Béarnian marriage, the primacy of the man over the woman, or of the elder son over the younger—principles ensuring the integrity and protection of patrimony in an economy conditioned by the scarcity of money), but the fact that they are not defined (that they are not made explicit) creates margins of tolerance and the possibility of setting one against the other.

b) There are "explicit rules" (for example, the adoi, "the recompense allotted to younger sons in exchange for their renunciation of their
rights to the land”), but they are accompanied by a limit that inverts them (for example, the *tournadot*, the restitution of the *adot* in case of a marriage without issue). Every utilization of these rules must thus take into account the possibility of this threatening—because linked to the contingencies of life—rebound against it.

c) “Strategies,” subtle “combinations” (“action is tortuous”), “navigate” among the rules, “play with all the possibilities offered by traditions,” make use of one tradition rather than another, compensate for one by means of another. Taking advantage of the flexible surface which covers up the hard core, they create their own relevance within this network. More than that: like students manipulating their grade-point average, balancing a high grade in an easy course against a low grade in a difficult course, they move and slide from one function to another, short-circuiting economic, social, and symbolic divisions: for example, a small number of children (a matter of fertility) compensates for a bad marriage (a matrimonial failure); or keeping a younger son unmarried in the home as a “servant without salary” (an economic investment and a restriction on fertility) allows one to avoid having to pay him the *adot* (a matrimonial advantage). Strategies do not “apply” principles or rules; they choose among them to make up the repertory of their operations.21

3. Comparable to *transfers* and “metaphorizations,” constant passages from one genre to another, these practices presuppose a “logic.” Even more clever than usual in this case, Bourdieu, outwitting the practices themselves in order to fix them in the labyrinthine developments of his language, discerns in them several essential procedures:22

a) *polythetism*: the same thing has uses and properties that vary according to the arrangements into which it enters;

b) *substitutability*: a thing is always replaceable by another, because of the affinity of each with the others within the totality that the thing represents;

c) *euphemism*: one must hide the fact that actions conflict with the dichotomies and antinomies represented by the symbolic system. Ritual actions furnish the model for “euphemism” by combining contraries.

Finally, *analogy* is the foundation of all these procedures, which are transgressions of the symbolic order and the limits it sets. They are camouflaged transgressions, inserted metaphors and, precisely in that measure, they become acceptable, taken as legitimate since they respect the distinctions established by language even as they undermine them. From this point of view, to acknowledge the authority of rules is exactly the opposite of applying them. This fundamental chiasm may be returning today, since we have to apply laws whose authority we no longer recognize. In any event, it is not without interest that Bourdieu discovers, at the ultimate source of these practices, the very “use of analogy” which the scientists whose works he collected in 1968 (Duhem, Bachelard, Campbell, *et al.*) held to be the essence of theoretical creation.23

4. In sum, these practices are all dominated by what I shall call an *economy of the proper place* (*une économie du lieu propre*). In Bourdieu’s analysis, this economy takes two forms, equally fundamental but unarticulated: on the one hand, the maximization of the capital (material and symbolic wealth) that constitutes the essence of *patrimony*; on the other, the development of the *body*, both individual and collective, that generates duration (through its fertility) and space (through its movements). The proliferation of tricks, of their successes or failures, is related to the economy which works to reproduce and to make fruitful these two distinct, and yet complementary, forms of the “dwelling”:24 wealth and the body—land and heirs. A politics of this “place” is everywhere at the base of these strategies.

Hence we have the two characteristics that make these strategies practices entirely peculiar to the closed space in which Bourdieu examines them and to the way in which he observes them:

a) He always presupposes a twofold link between these practices and a proper place (a *patrimony*), on the one hand, and a collective principle of administration (the family, the group) on the other. What happens when this double postulate does not hold? This is an interesting question, because such is the case of our technocratic societies, with respect to which the proprietary and familial insubilities of earlier ages and other cultures have become utopian lost worlds, if not Robinson Crusoé-like adventures. When Bourdieu encounters the same type of practices among today’s “petits bourgeois,” or housewives, they are merely “short-term and short-sighted strategies,” “anarchical responses” relative to “a disparate ensemble of semi-knowledges,” to a “cultural *sabir*,” a mere “bric-à-brac of decontextualized concepts.”25 A single practical logic is nevertheless at work, but independently of the place that controls its functioning in traditional societies. That is to say, in the *Outline* the problematic of the place seems to win out over the problematic of practices.

b) The use of the term “strategy” is no less limited. It is justified by the fact that practices give an adequate response to contingent situations. But at the same time Bourdieu repeats that it is not a matter of
strategies strictly speaking; there is no choice among several possibilities, and thus no “strategic intention”; there is no introduction of correctives due to better information, and thus not “the slightest calculation”; there is no prediction, but only an “assumed world” as the repetition of the past. In short, “it is because subjects do not know, strictly speaking, what they are doing, that what they do has more meaning than they realize.”

26 "Docta ignorantia," therefore, 27 a cleverness that does not recognize itself as such.

With these “strategies,” governed by their place, knowledgeable but unknown, the most traditionalist sort of ethnology returns. In the insular reserves in which it observed them, it considered the elements of a people and its culture as coherent and unconscious: two indissociable aspects. In order for coherence to be the postulate of ethnological knowledge, to be, that is, the place it allocated for itself and the epistemological model to which it referred, it was necessary to put this knowledge at a distance from the objectified society, and thus to presuppose that it was foreign and superior to the knowledge the society had of itself. The unconsciousness of the group studied was the price that had to be paid (the price it had to pay) for its coherence. A society could be a system only without knowing it. Whence the corollary: an ethnologist was required to know what the society was without knowing it. Today, an ethnologist would no longer dare to say (if not to think) that. How can Bourdieu compromise himself in this way in the name of sociology?

“Theory”

Insofar as sociology defines “objective structures” on the basis of “regularities” provided by statistics (themselves based on empirical investigations), and insofar as it considers every “situation” or “objective conjuncture” as a “particular state” of one of these structures, 28 it must account for the adjustment—or non-adjustment—of practices with respect to the structures. Where does the harmony that one generally observes between practices and structures (the latter being present as “particular cases” constituted by conjunctures) come from? Answers to this question resort either to a reflex automatism in practices or to the subjective genius of their creators. With good reason, Bourdieu rejects both of these hypotheses. He replaces them with his “theory,” which seeks to explain the adequation of practices to structures through their genesis.

One could point out that the terms of the problem have been somewhat rigged. Of the three groups of data under consideration—structures, situations, and practices—only the second two (which correspond to each other) are observed; in contrast, the structures are inferred from statistics and are thus constructed models. Before allowing oneself to be locked into this “theoretical” problem, however, two preliminary epistemological questions need to be raised: (a) concerning the presumed “objectivity” of these “structures,” an objectivity based on the conviction that the real itself speaks through the discourse of the sociologist; and (b) concerning the limits of observed practices or situations, and especially of statistical representations of them, in relation to the totalities “structural” models claim to account for. But unfortunately these preliminary questions are forgotten, in the name of a supposed theoretical urgency.

In the terms in which he encounters the problem of adequation, Bourdieu has to find something that can adjust practices to structures and yet also explain the gaps remaining between them. He needs a supplementary category. He locates it in a process which is his forte as a specialist in the sociology of education, the acquisition of knowledge; this is the sought-for mediation between the structures that organize it and the “dispositions” it produces. This “genesis” implies an interiorization of structures (through learning) and an exteriorization of achievements (what Bourdieu calls the habitus) in practices. A temporal dimension is thus introduced: practices (expressing the experience) correspond adequately to situations (manifesting the structure) if, and only if, the structure remains stable for the duration of the process of interiorization/exteriorization; if not, practices lag behind, thus resembling the structure at the preceding point, the point at which it was interiorized by the habitus.

According to this analysis, structures can change and thus become a principle of social mobility (and even the only one). Achievements cannot. They have no movement of their own. They are the place in which structures are inscribed, the marble on which their history is engraved. Nothing happens in them that is not the result of their exteriority. As in the traditional image of primitive or peasant societies, nothing moves, there is no history other than that written on them by an alien order. The immobility of this memory guarantees for the theory that the socioeconomic system will be faithfully reproduced in practices. Thus it is not education or training (visible phenomena) that plays the
central role here, but rather their expected result: achievements, the habitus. The habitus provides the basis for explaining a society in relationship to structures. But there is a price to be paid for this explanation. In order to be able to assume that the basis has such a stability, it must be unverifiable, invisible.

What interests Bourdieu is the genesis, “the mode of generation of practices”; not, as in Foucault, what they produce, but what produces them. From the “ethnological case studies” that are to examine them to the sociology that is to develop a theory of them, there is thus a displacement, which moves the discourse in the direction of the habitus, whose synonyms (exis, ethos, modus operandi, “common sense,” “second nature,” etc.), definitions, and justifications become more and more numerous. In the transition from ethnology to sociology, the hero changes. A passive and nocturnal actor is substituted for the sly multiplicity of strategies. This immobile stone figure is supposed to be the agent that produces the phenomena observed in a society. He is an essential character, in fact, because he makes the circular movement of the theory possible: henceforth, from “structures,” it passes to the habitus (a word Bourdieu always puts in italics); from the latter, to “strategies,” which are adjusted to “conjunctions,” themselves reduced to the “structures” of which they are the results and particular states.

In fact, this circle moves from a constructed model (the structure) to an assumed reality (the habitus), and from the latter to an interpretation of observed facts (strategies and conjunctions). But what is even more striking than the heterogeneous character of the pieces the theory puts in a circle is the role it assigns to the ethnological “fragments,” which are to close the gap in the sociological coherence. The other (Kabylian or Béarnian) furnishes the element that the theory needs in order to work and “to explain everything.” This remote foreign element has all the characteristics that define the habitus: coherence, stability, unconsciousness, territoriality (achievements are the equivalent of patrimony). It is “represented” by the habitus, an invisible place where, as in the Kabylian dwelling, the structures are inverted as they are interiorized, and where the writing flips over again in exteriorizing itself in the form of practices that have the deceptive appearance of being free improvisations. It is indeed the dwelling, as a silent and determining memory, which is hidden in the theory under the metaphor of the habitus, and which, moreover, gives the supposition a certain referentiality, an appearance of reality. As a consequence of its theoretical metaphorization, this referentiality amounts, however, to no more than a plausibility. The dwelling gives the

habitus its form, but not a content. In any case, Bourdieu’s argument is concerned less to indicate that reality then to show its necessity and the advantages of his hypothesis for the theory. Thus the habitus becomes a doxic place, if one takes dogma to mean the affirmation of a “reality” which the discourse needs in order to be totalizing. No doubt it still has, like many dogmas, the heuristic value of displacing and renewing possibilities of research.

Bourdieu’s texts are fascinating in their analyses and aggressive in their theory. In reading them, I feel myself captive to a passion that they simultaneously exacerbate and excite. They are full of contrasts. Scrupulously examining practices and their logic—in a way that surely has had no equivalent since Mauss—the texts finally reduce them to a mystical reality, the habitus, which is to bring them under the law of reproduction. The subtle descriptions of Béarnian or Kabylian tactics suddenly give way to violently imposed truths, as if the complexity so lucidly examined required the brutal counterpoint of a dogmatic reason. There are contrasts also in the style, twisted and labyrinthine in its pursuits, and massively repetitive in its affirmations. A strange combination of an “I know that . . . ” (that crafty and transgressive proliferation) and an “All the same . . . ” (there must be a totalizing meaning). In order to escape from this aggressive seduction, I assume (in turn) that in this contrast something essential for the analysis of tactics must be at stake. The blanket Bourdieu’s theory throws over tactics as if to put out their fire by certifying their amenability to socioeconomic rationality or as if to mourn their death by declaring them unconscious, should teach us something about their relationship with any theory.

These tactics, through their criteria and procedures, are supposed to make use of the institutional and symbolic organization in such an autonomous way that if it were to take them seriously the scientific representation of society would become lost in them, in every sense of the word. Its postulates and ambitions could not resist them. Norms, generalizations, and segmentations would yield to the transverse and “metaphorizing” pullulation of these differentiating activities. Mathematics and the exact sciences constantly refine their logics in order to follow the aleatory and microscopic movements of non-human phenomena. The social sciences, whose object is still more “subtle” and whose tools are much cruder, would have to defend their models (that is, their ambition to dominate and control) by exorcizing such a proliferation. And in fact, in accord with the proven methods of exorcism, they consider such a proliferation to be singular (local), unconscious (alien in
principle) and, without realizing it, revelatory of the knowledge that their scientific judge has of these practices. When the “observer” is sufficiently enclosed within his judicial institution, and thus sufficiently blind, everything goes fine. The discourse he produces has every appearance of holding together.

In Bourdieu’s work, there is nothing of the kind. To be sure, at a first (only too obvious) level, he gives the impression of departing (of going toward these tactics), but only in order to return (to confirm the professional rationality). This is only a false departure, a textual “strategy.” But isn’t this hasty return an indication that he knows the danger, the perhaps mortal danger, to which these all too intelligent practices expose scientific knowledge? He reflects a (distantly Pascalian) combination of the erosion of reason and dogmatic faith. He knows a great deal about scientific knowledge and the power by which it is established, as well as about these tactics whose wiles he outwits with such virtuosity in his texts. He thus proceeds to imprison these devices behind the bars of the unconscious and to deny, through the fetish of the habitus, what reason would have to have if it is to be more than la raison du plus fort. He affirms, with the concept of habitus, the contrary of what he knows—a traditional popular tactic—and this protection (a tribute paid to the authority of reason) gives him the scientific possibility of observing these tactics in carefully circumscribed places.

If that were true (but who could say?), Bourdieu would teach us as much about it through his “dogmatism” as through his “case studies.” The discourse that hides what he knows (instead of hiding what he doesn’t know) would have “theoretical” value precisely insofar as it practices what it knows. It would be the result of a conscious relationship with an outside it cannot eliminate, and not merely the scene of an elucidation. Would it thus come down to the “docta ignorantia” claimed to be knowledgeable without knowing it precisely because it knows only too well what it does not and cannot say?

Chapter V  The Arts of Theory

A particular problem arises when, instead of being a discourse on other discourses, as is usually the case, theory has to advance over an area where there are no longer any discourses. There is a sudden unevenness of terrain: the ground on which verbal language rests begins to fail. The theorizing operation finds itself at the limits of the terrain where it normally functions, like an automobile at the edge of a cliff. Beyond and below lies the ocean.

Foucault and Bourdieu situate their enterprise on this edge by articulating a discourse on non-discursive practices. They are not the first to do so. Without going back to ancient times, we can say that since Kant every theoretical effort has had to give a more or less direct explanation of its relationship to this non-discursive activity, to this immense “remainder” constituted by the part of human experience that has not been tamed and symbolized in language. An individual science can avoid this direct confrontation. It grants itself a priori the conditions that allow it to encounter things only in its own limited field where it can “verbalize” them. It lies in wait for them in the gridwork of models and hypotheses where it can “make them talk,” and this interrogatory apparatus, like a hunter’s trap, transforms their wordless silence into “answers,” and hence into language: this is called experimentation. Theoretical questioning, on the contrary, does not forget, cannot forget that in addition to the relationship of these scientific discourses to one another, there is also their common relation with what they have taken care to exclude from their field in order to constitute it. It is linked to the pullulation of that which does not speak (does not yet speak?) and which takes the shape (among others) of “ordinary” practices. It is the memory of this “remainder.” It is the Antigone of what is not acceptable within the scientific jurisdiction. It constantly brings this unforgettable element back into the scientific places where technical constraints make it “politically” (methodologically, and in theory, provisionally) necessary to forget it. How