

THE PRACTICE OF  
EVERYDAY LIFE

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Steven Rendall has succeeded in the long and painstaking enterprise of leading this population of French experiences and expressions on its migration into the English language. He has my warm thanks, as do Luce Giard, who was "a guide for the perplexed" in the revision of the translation, and John Miles, who has kindly attended to so many details along the route. For the rest, the work may symbolize the object of my study: within the bounds imposed by another language and another culture, the art of translation smuggles in a thousand inventions which, before the author's dazzled eyes, transform his book into a new creation.

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## General Introduction

**T**HIS ESSAY IS part of a continuing investigation of the ways in which users—commonly assumed to be passive and guided by established rules—operate. The point is not so much to discuss this elusive yet fundamental subject as to make such a discussion possible; that is, by means of inquiries and hypotheses, to indicate pathways for further research. This goal will be achieved if everyday practices, "ways of operating" or doing things, no longer appear as merely the obscure background of social activity, and if a body of theoretical questions, methods, categories, and perspectives, by penetrating this obscurity, make it possible to articulate them.

The examination of such practices does not imply a return to individuality. The social atomism which over the past three centuries has served as the historical axiom of social analysis posits an elementary unit—the individual—on the basis of which groups are supposed to be formed and to which they are supposed to be always reducible. This axiom, which has been challenged by more than a century of sociological, economic, anthropological, and psychoanalytic research, (although in history that is perhaps no argument) plays no part in this study. Analysis shows that a relation (always social) determines its terms, and not the reverse, and that each individual is a locus in which an incoherent (and often contradictory) plurality of such relational determinations interact. Moreover, the question at hand concerns modes of operation or schemata of action, and not directly the subjects (or persons) who are their authors or vehicles. It concerns an operational logic whose models may go as far back as the age-old ruses of fishes and insects that disguise or transform themselves in order to survive, and which has in any case been concealed by the form of rationality currently dominant in Western culture. The purpose of this work is to make explicit the systems of operational combination (les combinaisons d'opérations) which also compose a "culture," and to bring to light the models of action characteristic of users whose status as the dominated

element in society (a status that does not mean that they are either passive or docile) is concealed by the euphemistic term "consumers." Everyday life invents itself by *poaching* in countless ways on the property of others.

### 1. Consumer production

Since this work grew out of studies of "popular culture" or marginal groups,<sup>1</sup> the investigation of everyday practices was first delimited negatively by the necessity of not locating cultural *difference* in groups associated with the "counter-culture"—groups that were already singled out, often privileged, and already partly absorbed into folklore—and that were no more than symptoms or indexes. Three further, positive determinations were particularly important in articulating our research.

#### Usage, or consumption

Many, often remarkable, works have sought to study the representations of a society, on the one hand, and its modes of behavior, on the other. Building on our knowledge of these social phenomena, it seems both possible and necessary to determine the use to which they are put by groups or individuals. For example, the analysis of the images broadcast by television (representation) and of the time spent watching television (behavior) should be complemented by a study of what the cultural consumer "makes" or "does" during this time and with these images. The same goes for the use of urban space, the products purchased in the supermarket, the stories and legends distributed by the newspapers, and so on.

The "making" in question is a production, a *poiēsis*<sup>2</sup>—but a hidden one, because it is scattered over areas defined and occupied by systems of "production" (television, urban development, commerce, etc.), and because the steadily increasing expansion of these systems no longer leaves "consumers" any *place* in which they can indicate what they *make* or *do* with the products of these systems. To a rationalized, expansionist and at the same time centralized, clamorous, and spectacular production corresponds another production, called "consumption." The latter is devious, it is dispersed, but it insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisibly, because it does not manifest itself through its own

products, but rather through its ways of using the products imposed by a dominant economic order.

For instance, the ambiguity that subverted from within the Spanish colonizers' "success" in imposing their own culture on the indigenous Indians is well known. Submissive, and even consenting to their subjection, the Indians nevertheless often *made of* the rituals, representations, and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept. They were *other* within the very colonization that outwardly assimilated them; their use of the dominant social order deflected its power, which they lacked the means to challenge; they escaped it without leaving it. The strength of their difference lay in procedures of "consumption." To a lesser degree, a similar ambiguity creeps into our societies through the use made by the "common people" of the culture disseminated and imposed by the "elites" producing the language.

The presence and circulation of a representation (taught by preachers, educators, and popularizers as the key to socioeconomic advancement) tells us nothing about what it is for its users. We must first analyze its manipulation by users who are not its makers. Only then can we gauge the difference or similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilization.

Our investigation is concerned with this difference. It can use as its theoretical model the *construction* of individual sentences with an *established* vocabulary and syntax. In linguistics, "performance" and "competence" are different: the act of speaking (with all the enunciative strategies that implies) is not reducible to a knowledge of the language. By adopting the point of view of enunciation—which is the subject of our study—we privilege the act of speaking; according to that point of view, speaking operates within the field of a linguistic system; it effects an appropriation, or reappropriation, of language by its speakers; it establishes a present relative to a time and place; and it posits a contract with the other (the interlocutor) in a network of places and relations. These four characteristics of the speech act<sup>3</sup> can be found in many other practices (walking, cooking, etc.). An objective is at least adumbrated by this parallel, which is, as we shall see, only partly valid. Such an objective assumes that (like the Indians mentioned above) users make (*bricolent*)

innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules. We must determine the procedures, bases, effects, and possibilities of this collective activity.

### The procedures of everyday creativity

A second orientation of our investigation can be explained by reference to Michel Foucault's Discipline and Punish. In this work, instead of analyzing the apparatus exercising power (i.e., the localizable, expansionist, repressive, and legal institutions), Foucault analyzes the mechanisms (*dispositifs*) that have sapped the strength of these institutions and surreptitiously reorganized the functioning of power: "miniscule" technical procedures acting on and with details, redistributing a discursive space in order to make it the means of a generalized "discipline" (*surveillance*).<sup>4</sup> This approach raises a new and different set of problems to be investigated. Once again, however, this "microphysics of power" privileges the productive apparatus (which produces the "discipline"), even though it discerns in "education" a system of "repression" and shows how, from the wings as it were, silent technologies determine or short-circuit institutional stage directions. If it is true that the grid of "discipline" is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also "miniscule" and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them, and finally, what "ways of operating" form the counterpart, on the consumer's (or "dominee's"?) side, of the mute processes that organize the establishment of socioeconomic order.

These "ways of operating" constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production. They pose questions at once analogous and contrary to those dealt with in Foucault's book: analogous, in that the goal is to perceive and analyze the microbe-like operations proliferating within technocratic structures and deflecting their functioning by means of a multitude of "tactics" articulated in the details of everyday life; contrary, in that the goal is not to make clearer how the violence of order is transmuted into a disciplinary technology, but rather to bring to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and make-shift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of

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to the subject

"discipline." Pushed to their ideal limits, these procedures and ruses of consumers compose the network of an antidiscipline<sup>5</sup> which is the subject of this book.

### The formal structure of practice

It may be supposed that these operations—multiform and fragmentary, relative to situations and details, insinuated into and concealed within devices whose mode of usage they constitute, and thus lacking their own ideologies or institutions—conform to certain rules. In other words, there must be a logic of these practices. We are thus confronted once again by the ancient problem: What is an art or "way of making"? From the Greeks to Durkheim, a long tradition has sought to describe with precision the complex (and not at all simple or "impoverished") rules that could account for these operations.<sup>6</sup> From this point of view, "popular culture," as well as a whole literature called "popular,"<sup>7</sup> take on a different aspect: they present themselves essentially as "arts of making" this or that, i.e., as combinatory or utilizing modes of consumption. These practices bring into play a "popular" ratio, a way of thinking invested in a way of acting, an art of combination which cannot be dissociated from an art of using.

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In order to grasp the formal structure of these practices, I have carried out two sorts of investigations. The first, more descriptive in nature, has concerned certain ways of making that were selected according to their value for the strategy of the analysis, and with a view to obtaining fairly differentiated variants: readers' practices, practices related to urban spaces, utilizations of everyday rituals, re-uses and functions of the memory through the "authorities" that make possible (or permit) everyday practices, etc. In addition, two related investigations have tried to trace the intricate forms of the operations proper to the recomposition of a space (the Croix-Rousse quarter in Lyons) by familial practices, on the one hand, and on the other, to the tactics of the art of cooking, which simultaneously organizes a network of relations, poetic ways of "making do" (*bricolage*), and a re-use of marketing structures.<sup>8</sup>

The second series of investigations has concerned the scientific literature that might furnish hypotheses allowing the logic of unselfconscious thought to be taken seriously. Three areas are of special interest. First, sociologists, anthropologists, and indeed historians (from E. Goffman to P. Bourdieu, from Mauss to M. D tienne, from J. Boissevain to E. O.

apparently governed by another kind of logic. Through the presentation of our investigation along these three lines, the overly schematic character of the general statement can be somewhat nuanced.

### Trajectories, tactics, and rhetorics

As unrecognized producers, poets of their own acts, silent discoverers of their own paths in the jungle of functionalist rationality, consumers produce through their signifying practices something that might be considered similar to the "wandering lines" ("*lignes d'erre*") drawn by the autistic children studied by F. Deligny (17): "indirect" or "errant" trajectories obeying their own logic. In the technocratically constructed, written, and functionalized space in which the consumers move about, their trajectories form unforeseeable sentences, partly unreadable paths across a space. Although they are composed with the vocabularies of established languages (those of television, newspapers, supermarkets, or museum sequences) and although they remain subordinated to the prescribed syntactical forms (temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic orders of spaces, etc.), the trajectories trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop.<sup>18</sup>

Even statistical investigation remains virtually ignorant of these trajectories, since it is satisfied with classifying, calculating, and putting into tables the "lexical" units which compose them but to which they cannot be reduced, and with doing this in reference to its own categories and taxonomies. Statistical investigation grasps the material of these practices, but not their *form*; it determines the elements used, but not the "phrasing" produced by the *bricolage* (the artisan-like inventiveness) and the discursiveness that combine these elements, which are all in general circulation and rather drab. Statistical inquiry, in breaking down these "efficacious meanderings" into units that it defines itself, in reorganizing the results of its analyses according to its own codes, "finds" only the homogenous. The power of its calculations lies in its ability to divide, but it is precisely through this analytical fragmentation that it loses sight of what it claims to seek and to represent.<sup>19</sup>

"Trajectory" suggests a movement, but it also involves a plane projection, a flattening out. It is a transcription. A graph (which the eye can master) is substituted for an operation; a line which can be reversed (i.e., read in both directions) does duty for an irreversible temporal series, a

tracing for acts. To avoid this reduction, I resort to a distinction between tactics and strategies.

I call a "strategy" the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an "environment." A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as [proper] (propre) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, "clientèles," "targets," or "objects" of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model.

I call a "tactic," on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other.<sup>20</sup> A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The "proper" is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing." Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into "opportunities." The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them. This is achieved in the propitious moments when they are able to combine heterogeneous elements (thus, in the supermarket, the housewife confronts heterogeneous and mobile data—what she has in the refrigerator, the tastes, appetites, and moods of her guests, the best buys and their possible combinations with what she already has on hand at home, etc.); the intellectual synthesis of these given elements takes the form, however, not of a discourse, but of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity is "seized."

Many everyday practices (talking, reading, moving about, shopping, cooking, etc.) are tactical in character. And so are, more generally, many "ways of operating": victories of the "weak" over the "strong" (whether the strength be that of powerful people or the violence of things or of an imposed order, etc.), clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, "hunter's cunning," maneuvers, polymorphic simulations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike. The Greeks called these "ways of operating" (*mētis*).<sup>21</sup> But they go much further back, to the immemorial

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see also pp. 35-37

strategy -  
place

tactic -  
time

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intelligence displayed in the tricks and imitations of plants and fishes. From the depths of the ocean to the streets of modern megalopolises, there is a continuity and permanence in these tactics.

In our societies, as local stabilities break down, it is as if, no longer fixed by a circumscribed community, tactics wander out of orbit, making consumers into immigrants in a system too vast to be their own, too tightly woven for them to escape from it. But these tactics introduce a Brownian movement into the system. They also show the extent to which intelligence is inseparable from the everyday struggles and pleasures that it articulates. Strategies, in contrast, conceal beneath objective calculations their connection with the power that sustains them from within the stronghold of its own "proper" place or institution.

The discipline of rhetoric offers models for differentiating among the types of tactics. This is not surprising, since, on the one hand, it describes the "turns" or tropes of which language can be both the site and the object, and, on the other hand, these manipulations are related to the ways of changing (seducing, persuading, making use of) the will of another (the audience).<sup>22</sup> For these two reasons, rhetoric, the science of the "ways of speaking," offers an array of figure-types for the analysis of everyday ways of acting even though such analysis is in theory excluded from scientific discourse. Two logics of action (the one tactical, the other strategic) arise from these two facets of practicing language. In the space of a language (as in that of games), a society makes more explicit the formal rules of action and the operations that differentiate them.

In the enormous rhetorical corpus devoted to the art of speaking or operating, the Sophists have a privileged place, from the point of view of tactics. Their principle was, according to the Greek rhetorician Corax, to make the weaker position seem the stronger, and they claimed to have the power of turning the tables on the powerful by the way in which they made use of the opportunities offered by the particular situation.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, their theories inscribe tactics in a long tradition of reflection on the relationships between reason and particular actions and situations. Passing by way of *The Art of War* by the Chinese author Sun Tzu<sup>24</sup> or the Arabic anthology, *The Book of Tricks*,<sup>25</sup> this tradition of a logic articulated on situations and the will of others continues into contemporary sociolinguistics.

Reading, talking, dwelling, cooking, etc.

To describe these everyday practices that produce without capitalizing, that is, without taking control over time, one starting point seemed

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strategies

inevitable because it is the "exorbitant" focus of contemporary culture and its consumption: reading. From TV to newspapers, from advertising to all sorts of mercantile epiphanies, our society is characterized by a cancerous growth of vision, measuring everything by its ability to show or be shown and transmuting communication into a visual journey. It is a sort of epic of the eye and of the impulse to read. The economy itself, transformed into a "semiococracy" (26), encourages a hypertrophic development of reading. Thus, for the binary set production-consumption, one would substitute its more general equivalent: writing-reading. Reading (an image of a text), moreover, seems to constitute the maximal development of the passivity assumed to characterize the consumer, who is conceived of as a voyeur (whether troglodytic or itinerant) in a "show biz society."<sup>27</sup>

In reality, the activity of reading has on the contrary all the characteristics of a silent production: the drift across the page, the metamorphosis of the text effected by the wandering eyes of the reader, the improvisation and expectation of meanings inferred from a few words, leaps over written spaces in an ephemeral dance. But since he is incapable of stockpiling (unless he writes or records), the reader cannot protect himself against the erosion of time (while reading, he forgets himself and he forgets what he has read) unless he buys the object (book, image) which is no more than a substitute (the spoor or promise) of moments "lost" in reading. He insinuates into another person's text the ruses of pleasure and appropriation: he poaches on it, is transported into it, pluralizes himself in it like the internal rumblings of one's body. Ruse, metaphor, arrangement, this production is also an "invention" of the memory. Words become the outlet or product of silent histories. The readable transforms itself into the memorable: Barthes reads Proust in Stendhal's text;<sup>28</sup> the viewer reads the landscape of his childhood in the evening news. The thin film of writing becomes a movement of strata, a play of spaces. A different world (the reader's) slips into the author's place.

This mutation makes the text habitable, like a rented apartment. It transforms another person's property into a space borrowed for a moment by a transient. Renters make comparable changes in an apartment they furnish with their acts and memories; as do speakers, in the language into which they insert both the messages of their native tongue and, through their accent, through their own "turns of phrase," etc., their own history; as do pedestrians, in the streets they fill with the forests of their desires and goals. In the same way the users of social

- reading  
stories of  
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for instance

codes turn them into metaphors and ellipses of their own quests. The ruling order serves as a support for innumerable productive activities, while at the same time blinding its proprietors to this creativity (like those "bosses" who simply can't see what is being created within their own enterprises).<sup>29</sup> Carried to its limit, this order would be the equivalent of the rules of meter and rhyme for poets of earlier times: a body of constraints stimulating new discoveries, a set of rules with which improvisation plays.

Reading thus introduces an "art" which is anything but passive. It resembles rather that art whose theory was developed by medieval poets and romancers: an innovation infiltrated into the text and even into the terms of a tradition. Imbricated within the strategies of modernity (which identify creation with the invention of a personal language, whether cultural or scientific), the procedures of contemporary consumption appear to constitute a subtle art of "renters" who know how to insinuate their countless differences into the dominant text. In the Middle Ages, the text was framed by the four, or seven, interpretations of which it was held to be susceptible. And it was a book. Today, this text no longer comes from a tradition. It is imposed by the generation of a productivist technocracy. It is no longer a referential book, but a whole society made into a book, into the writing of the anonymous law of production.

It is useful to compare other arts with this art of readers. For example, the art of conversationalists: the rhetoric of ordinary conversation consists of practices which transform "speech situations," verbal productions in which the interlacing of speaking positions weaves an oral fabric without individual owners, creations of a communication that belongs to no one. Conversation is a provisional and collective effect of competence in the art of manipulating "commonplaces" and the inevitability of events in such a way as to make them "habitable."<sup>30</sup>

But our research has concentrated above all on the uses of space,<sup>31</sup> on the ways of frequenting or dwelling in a place, on the complex processes of the art of cooking, and on the many ways of establishing a kind of reliability within the situations imposed on an individual, that is, of making it possible to live in them by reintroducing into them the plural mobility of goals and desires—an art of manipulating and enjoying.<sup>32</sup>

Extensions: prospects and politics

The analysis of these tactics was extended to two areas marked out for study, although our approach to them changed as the research

proceeded: the first concerns prospects, or futurology, and the second, the individual subject in political life.

The "scientific" character of futurology poses a problem from the very start. If the objective of such research is ultimately to establish the intelligibility of present reality, and its rules as they reflect a concern for coherence, we must recognize, on the one hand, the nonfunctional status of an increasing number of concepts, and on the other, the inadequacy of procedures for thinking about, in our case, space. Chosen here as an object of study, space is not really accessible through the usual political and economic determinations; besides, futurology provides no theory of space.<sup>33</sup> The metaphorization of the concepts employed, the gap between the atomization characteristic of research and the generalization required in reporting it, etc., suggest that we take as a definition of futurological discourse the "simulation" that characterizes its method.

Thus in futurology we must consider: (1) the relations between a certain kind of *rationality* and an imagination (which is in discourse the mark of the locus of its production); (2) the difference between, on the one hand, the tentative moves, pragmatic ruses, and successive *tactics* that mark the stages of practical investigation and, on the other hand, the *strategic representations* offered to the public as the product of these operations.<sup>34</sup>

In current discussions, one can discern the surreptitious return of a rhetoric that metaphorizes the fields "proper" to scientific analysis, while, in research laboratories, one finds an increasing distance between actual everyday practices (practices of the same order as the art of cooking) and the "scenarios" that punctuate with utopian images the hum of operations in every laboratory: on the one hand, mixtures of science and fiction; on the other, a disparity between the spectacle of overall strategies and the opaque reality of local tactics. We are thus led to inquire into the "underside" of scientific activity and to ask whether it does not function as a collage—juxtaposing, but linking less and less effectively, the theoretical ambitions of the discourse with the stubborn persistence of ancient tricks in the everyday work of agencies and laboratories. In any event, this split structure, observable in so many administrations and companies, requires us to rethink all the tactics which have so far been neglected by the epistemology of science.

The question bears on more than the procedures of production: in a different form, it concerns as well the status of the individual in technical systems, since the involvement of the subject diminishes in proportion to the technocratic expansion of these systems. Increasingly



constrained, yet less and less concerned with these vast frameworks, the individual detaches himself from them without being able to escape them and can henceforth only try to outwit them, to pull tricks on them, to rediscover, within an electronicized and computerized megalopolis, the "art" of the hunters and rural folk of earlier days. The fragmentation of the social fabric today lends a political dimension to the problem of the subject. In support of this claim can be adduced the symptoms represented by individual conflicts and local operations, and even by ecological organizations, though these are preoccupied primarily with the effort to control relations with the environment collectively. These ways of reappropriating the product-system, ways created by consumers, have as their goal a therapeutics for deteriorating social relations and make use of techniques of re-employment in which we can recognize the procedures of everyday practices. A politics of such ploys should be developed. In the perspective opened up by Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, such a politics should also inquire into the public ("democratic") image of the microscopic, multiform, and innumerable connections between manipulating and enjoying, the fleeting and massive reality of a social activity at play with the order that contains it.

Witold Gombrowicz, an acute visionary, gave this politics its hero—the anti-hero who haunts our research—when he gave a voice to the small-time official (Musil's "man without qualities" or that ordinary man to whom Freud dedicated *Civilization and Its Discontents*) whose refrain is "When one does not have what one wants, one must want what one has": "I have had, you see, to resort more and more to very small, almost invisible pleasures, little extras. . . . You've no idea how great one becomes with these little details, it's incredible how one grows."<sup>35</sup>

## Part I A Very Ordinary Culture

### Chapter I A Common Place: Ordinary Language

THE EROSION AND DENIGRATION of the singular or the extraordinary was announced by *The Man Without Qualities*: "Perhaps it is precisely the petit-bourgeois who has the presentiment of the dawn of a new heroism, a heroism both enormous and collective, on the model of ants."<sup>1</sup> And indeed, the advent of this anthill society began with the masses, who were the first to be subjected to the framework of levelling rationalities. The tide rose. Next it reached the managers who were in charge of the apparatus, managers and technicians absorbed into the system they administered; and finally it invaded the liberal professions that thought themselves protected against it, including even men of letters and artists. The tide tumbles and disperses in its waters works formerly isolated but today transformed into drops of water in the sea, or into metaphors of a linguistic dissemination which no longer has an author but becomes the discourse or indefinite citation of the other.

#### "Everyman" and "nobody"

There are, of course, antecedents, but they are organized by a community in "common" madness and death, and not yet by the levelling of a technical rationality. Thus at the dawn of the modern age, in the sixteenth century, the ordinary man appears with the insignia of a general misfortune of which he makes sport. As he appears in an ironical literature proper to the northern countries and already democratic in inspiration, he has "embarked" in the crowded human ship of fools and mortals,

a sort of inverse Noah's Ark, since it leads to madness and loss. In this vessel he is trapped in the *common* fate. Called *Everyman* (a name that betrays the absence of a name), this anti-hero is thus also *Nobody*, *Nemo*, just as the French *Chacun* becomes *Personne*, or the German *Jedermann Niemand*.<sup>2</sup> He is always the other, without his own responsibilities ("It's not my fault, it's the other: destiny") or particular properties which limit a home (death effaces all differences). Nevertheless, on this humanist stage, he still laughs. In this respect he is wise and mad, lucid and ridiculous, in the destiny which all must undergo and which reduces to *nothing* the exemption which *every man* claims.

In fact, by producing a certain kind of anonymous laughter a literature defines its own status: because it is only a simulacrum, it is the truth of a world of honors and glamor destined to die. The "anyone" or "everyone" is a common place, a philosophical *topos*. The role of this general character (everyman and nobody) is to formulate a universal connection between illusory and frivolous scriptural productions and death, the law of the other. He plays out on the stage the very definition of literature as a world and of the world as literature. Rather than being merely represented in it, the ordinary man acts out the text itself, in and by the text, and in addition he makes plausible the universal character of the particular place in which the mad discourse of a knowing wisdom is pronounced. He is both the nightmare or philosophical dream of humanist irony and an apparent referentiality (a common history) that make credible a writing that turns "everyone" into the teller of his ridiculous misfortune. But when elitist writing uses the "vulgar" speaker as a disguise for a metalanguage about itself, it also allows us to see what dislodges it from its privilege and draws it outside of itself: an Other who is no longer God or the Muse, but the anonymous. The straying of writing outside of its own place is traced by this ordinary man, the metaphor and drift of the doubt which haunts writing, the phantom of its "vanity," the enigmatic figure of the relation that writing entertains with all people, with the loss of its exemption, and with its death.

#### *Freud and the ordinary man*

Our contemporary references offer examples of this "philosophical" character that are no doubt even more pregnant. When Freud takes *der gemeine Mann* (the ordinary man) as the starting point and subject of his analyses of civilization (in *Civilization and Its Discontents*) and

religion (in *The Future of an Illusion*),<sup>3</sup> those two forms of culture, he remains faithful to the Enlightenment and does not limit himself to opposing the illumination of psychoanalysis ("a method of investigation, an impartial instrument, that one could consider similar to the [infinitesimal] calculus"<sup>4</sup>) to the obscurantism of "the large majority" and to articulating common beliefs in a new knowledge. He not only adopts the old schema that inevitably combines the "illusion" of the mind and social misfortune with "the common man" (such is the theme of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, but in Freud, contrary to the tradition, the ordinary man no longer laughs); he wants to link his pioneering "elucidation" (*Aufklärung*) with this "infantile" majority.<sup>5</sup> Leaving aside the "small number" of "thinkers" and "artists" capable of transforming work into pleasure through sublimation, thus excluding that "rare elect" who nevertheless designate the place in which his text is elaborated, he signs a contract with "the ordinary man" and weds his discourse to the masses whose *common* destiny is to be duped, frustrated, forced to labor, and who are thus subject to the law of deceit and to the pain of death. It seems that this contract, analogous to the contract linking Michelet's history to "the People"—who, however, never speak in it—<sup>6</sup> ought to allow the theory to be universalized and to be based on the reality of history. It provides the theory with a secure place.

It is true that the ordinary man is accused of yielding—thanks to the God of religion—to the illusion of being able to "solve all the riddles of this world" and of being "assured that a Providence watches over his life."<sup>7</sup> In this way, he confers on himself at small expense a knowledge of the totality and a guarantee of his status (by guaranteeing his future). But is it not also true that Freudian theory derives an analogous advantage from the general experience it invokes? As the representative of an abstract universal, the ordinary man in Freudian theory still plays the role of a god who is recognizable in his effects, even if he has humbled himself and merged with superstitious common people: he furnishes Freud's discourse with the means of generalizing a particular knowledge and of guaranteeing its validity by the whole of history. He authorizes it to transcend its limits—those of a psychoanalytic competence circumscribed within a few cures, and also those of language itself as a whole, deprived of the reality which, as referential, it posits. He assures it of both its difference ("enlightened" discourse remains distinct from "common" discourse) and of its universality (enlightened discourse expresses and explains common experience). Despite Freud's personal opinion of

"the mob"<sup>8</sup> (the opposite opinion is to be found in Michelet's optimistic views about the People), the ordinary man renders a service to Freud's discourse, that of figuring in it as a principle of totalization and as a principle of plausibility. This principle permits Freud to say, "It is true of *all*" and "It is the *reality* of history." The ordinary man functions here in the same way as the God of former times.

But Freud himself suspected as much in his old age. He ironically describes *Civilization and Its Discontents* and *The Future of an Illusion* as the result of "a completely superfluous" leisure activity ("One can't smoke and play cards all day long"), a "pastime" concerned with "elevated subjects" which cause him "to rediscover the most commonplace truths."<sup>9</sup> He distinguishes it from his "earlier works," which were organized in accord with the rules of a method and constructed on the basis of particular cases. Here we are no longer concerned with Little Hans, Dora, or Schreber. The ordinary man represents first of all Freud's temptation to be a moralist, the return of ethical generalizations into the professional field, an excess or a falling-short with respect to psychoanalytic procedures. In that way, he makes explicit an overturning of knowledge. In fact, if Freud mocks this introduction to a future "pathology of civilized societies," it is because he is himself the ordinary man of whom he speaks, with a few "commonplace" and bitter truths in his hands. He ends his reflections with a pirouette. "The complaint that I offer no consolation is justified,"<sup>10</sup> he writes, for he has none. He is in the same boat as everyone else and begins to laugh. An ironic and wise madness is linked to the fact that he has lost the singularity of a competence and found himself, anyone or no one, in the common history. In the philosophical tale that is *Civilization and Its Discontents*, the ordinary man is the speaker. He is the point in the discourse where the scientist and the common man come together—the return of the other (everyone and no one) into the place which had been so carefully set apart from him. Freud once again traces the way in which banality overflows speciality and brings knowledge back to its general presupposition: I don't have solid knowledge of anything. I'm like everyone else.

"Privation," "repression," "Eros," "Thanatos," etc.: these tools of technical work mark the stages of the movement in *Civilization and Its Discontents* from a triumphant "Aufklärung" to commonplaces, but the Freudian analysis of culture is characterized first of all by the trajectory of this overturning movement. An apparently minor and yet fundamental

difference distinguishes its result from the trivalities retailed by cultural specialists, for their trivialities no longer designate the object of discourse, but rather its place. In Freud the trivial is no longer the other (which is supposed to ground the exemption of the one who dramatizes it); it is the productive experience of the text. The approach to culture begins when the ordinary man becomes the narrator, when it is he who defines the (common) place of discourse and the (anonymous) space of its development.

This place is no more given to the speaker of the discourse than to anyone else. It is the endpoint of a trajectory. It is not a state, an initial flaw or grace, but something which *comes into being*, the product of a process of deviation from rule-governed and falsifiable practices, an overflowing (*débordement*) of the common in a particular position. Such is the case for Freud, when at the end of the investigation he finishes off (as one "finishes off" a condemned man) with his last stories concerning the ordinary man: he performs a work of mourning by putting knowledge into the realm of fiction.<sup>11</sup>

The important thing here is the fact that the work of overflowing operates by the insinuation of the ordinary into established scientific fields. Far from arbitrarily assuming the privilege of speaking in the name of the ordinary (it cannot be spoken), or claiming to be in that general place (that would be a false "mysticism"), or, worse, offering up a hagiographic everydayness for its edifying value, it is a matter of restoring historicity to the movement which leads analytical procedures back to their frontiers, to the point where they are changed, indeed disturbed, by the ironic and mad banality that speaks in "Everyman" in the sixteenth century and that has returned in the final stages of Freud's knowledge. I shall try to describe the erosion that lays bare the ordinary in a body of analytical techniques, to reveal the openings that mark its trace on the borders where a science is mobilized, to indicate the displacements that lead toward the *common place* where "anyone" is finally silent, except for repeating (but in a different way) banalities. Even if it is drawn into the oceanic rumble of the ordinary, the task consists not in substituting a representation for the ordinary or covering it up with mere words, but in showing how it introduces itself into our techniques—in the way in which the sea flows back into pockets and crevices in beaches—and how it can reorganize the place from which discourse is produced.

*The expert and the philosopher*

The technical path to be followed consists, in a first approximation, in bringing scientific practices and languages back toward their native land, everyday life. This return, which is today more and more insistent, has the paradoxical character of also being a going into exile with respect to the disciplines whose rigor is measured by the strict definition of its own limits. Ever since scientific work (*scientificité*) has given itself its own proper and appropriable places through rational projects capable of determining their procedures, with formal objects and specified conditions under which they are falsifiable, ever since it was founded as a plurality of limited and distinct fields, in short ever since it stopped being theological, it has constituted the *whole as its remainder*; this remainder has become what we call culture.

This cleavage organizes modernity. It cuts it up into scientific and dominant islands set off against the background of practical "resistances" and symbolizations that cannot be reduced to thought. Even if the ambition of "Science" is to conquer this remainder by starting out from the areas where the powers of our knowledge can be exercised, even if, in order to prepare the full realization of this empire, reconnaissance missions are already exploring the frontier regions and linking the light to the darkness (there are the gray discourses of mixed sciences called "human," accounts of expeditions that tend to make assimilable—if not thinkable—and determine the frontiers of the dark regions of violence, superstition, and otherness: history, anthropology, pathology, etc.), the gap scientific institutions have opened between the artificial languages of a regulated operativity and the modes of speech of social groups has always been the scene of battles and compromises. This line of demarcation, which is, moreover, unstable and changing, remains strategic in the struggles to increase or contest the influence of artificial techniques on social practices. It separates artificial languages, articulating the procedures of a specific kind of knowledge, from natural languages, organizing common signifying activity.

A few of these debates (which concern precisely the relation of each science to culture) can be made more explicit, and their possible outcomes indicated, by examining two figures, curiously similar and contrasting, who are facing them: the Expert and the Philosopher. Both have the task of mediating between society and a body of knowledge, the first insofar as he introduces his speciality into the wider and more complex

arena of socio-political decisions, the second insofar as he re-establishes the relevance of general questions to a particular technique (mathematics, logic, psychiatry, history, etc.). In the Expert, competence is transmuted into social authority; in the Philosopher, ordinary questions become a skeptical principle in a technical field. The Philosopher's ambiguous relation to the Expert (sometimes one of fascination, sometimes one of rejection) often seems to subtend his procedures: sometimes philosophical enterprises aim enviously at the Expert's realization of their ancient utopia (to maintain access to general problems in the name of a specific kind of scientific knowledge); sometimes, defeated by history but still rebellious, these enterprises turn their backs on what has been taken away from them by science in order to accompany the Subject, the king of yesteryear, today driven out of a technocratic society into its exile (O memories! O symbolic transgressions! O unconscious kingdoms!).

It is true that the Expert is growing more common in this society, to the point of becoming its generalized figure, distended between the exigency of a growing specialization and that of a communication that has become all the more necessary. He blots out (and in a certain way replaces) the Philosopher, formerly the specialist of the universal. But his success is not so terribly spectacular. In him, the productivist law that requires a specific assignment (the condition of efficiency) and the social law that requires circulation (the form of exchange) enter into contradiction. To be sure, a specialist is more and more often driven to also be an Expert, that is, an interpreter and translator of his competence for other fields. That is obvious even within the laboratories themselves: as soon as decisions regarding objectives, promotions, or financing are to be made, the Experts intervene "in the name of"—but outside of—their particular experience. How do they succeed in moving from their technique—a language they have mastered and which regulates their discourse—to the more common language of another situation? They do it through a curious operation which "converts" competence into authority. Competence is exchanged for authority. Ultimately, the more authority the Expert has, the less competence he has, up to the point where his fund of competence is exhausted, like the energy necessary to put a mobile into movement. During the process of conversion, he is not without some competence (he either has to have some or make people think he has), but he abandons the competence he possesses as his authority is extended further and further, drawn out of its orbit by social demands and/or political responsibilities. That is the

(general?) paradox of authority: a knowledge is ascribed to it and this knowledge is precisely what it lacks where it is exercised. Authority is indissociable from an "abuse of knowledge"<sup>12</sup>—and in this fact we ought perhaps to recognize the effect of the social law that divests the individual of his competence in order to establish (or re-establish) the capital of a collective competence, that is, of a common verisimilitude.

Since he cannot limit himself to talking about what he knows, the Expert pronounces on the basis of the *place* that his specialty has won for him. In that way he inscribes himself and is inscribed in a *common* order where specialization, as the *rule* and hierarchically ordering *practice* of the productivist economy, has the value of *initiation*. Because he has successfully submitted himself to this initiatory practice, he can, on questions foreign to his technical competence but not to the power he has acquired through it, pronounce with authority a discourse which is no longer a function of knowledge, but rather a function of the socio-economic order. He speaks as an ordinary man, who can receive authority in exchange for knowledge just as one receives a paycheck in exchange for work. He inscribes himself in the common language of practices, where an overproduction of authority leads to the devaluation of authority, since one always gets more in exchange for an equal or inferior amount of competence. But when he continues to believe, or make others believe, that he is acting as a scientist, he confuses social *place* with technical *discourse*. He takes one for the other: it is a simple case of mistaken identity. He misunderstands the order which he represents. He no longer knows *what* he is saying. A few individuals, after having long considered themselves experts speaking a scientific language, have finally awoken from their slumbers and suddenly realized that for the last few moments they have been walking on air, like Felix the Cat in the old cartoons, far from the scientific ground. Though legitimized by scientific knowledge, their discourse is seen to have been no more than the ordinary language of tactical games between economic powers and symbolic authorities.

#### *The Wittgensteinian model of ordinary language*

For all that, the "universal" discourse of earlier philosophy does not recover its rights. Insofar as it concerns language, the philosophical question in our technical societies has to do with the *distinction between discursivities regulating specialization (they maintain a social reason by*

those of  
university  
administrators  
who are  
former  
professors

means of an operative partitioning) and the narrativities of exchange on a massive scale (they multiply the ruses permitting or restraining a *circulation* within a power network). Independently of the analyses that have brought both of these under the common rubric of linguistic *practices*<sup>13</sup>, or of research which reveals *either* the insinuation of beliefs, of the verisimilar, of metaphors, that is, of the "common," into scientific discourse, *or* the complex logics implied by ordinary language<sup>14</sup>—efforts to rejoin pieces of language which were disconnected and abusively hierarchized—it is also possible to turn to a philosophy which furnishes a "model" and which undertakes to carry out a rigorous examination of ordinary language: that of Wittgenstein. From the perspective in which I place myself, it can be considered as a radical critique of the Expert. The corollary: it is also a critique of the *Philosopher as Expert*.

If Wittgenstein intends "to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use,"<sup>15</sup> a project which he developed especially during his later period, he does not allow himself, or any philosopher, a metaphysical overflow beyond what speech *can* say. This is his constant program: "To say nothing except what can be said . . . and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions".<sup>16</sup> Wittgenstein set himself the task of being the scientist of the activity of signifying in the common language. Anything else can be considered as language only by analogy or comparison with "the apparatus of our ordinary language."<sup>17</sup> But the problem is to treat it in such a way as not to state anything that exceeds the competence of this language and thus never to become an expert, or an interpreter, in another linguistic field (for example, metaphysics or ethics), never to speak *elsewhere* "in its name." In that way the conversion of competence into authority is to be rendered impossible.

What is fascinating in the enterprise of this Hercules who set out to clean the Augean stables of contemporary intellectual life is not so much his restrictive procedures, which are the effects of the passion for exactitude that he puts at the service of a certain reserve in the analysis of "everyday" language (this "everyday" replaces, in the linguistic approach, the *Everyman* of Renaissance ethics, but bears the same question); but rather, more fundamentally, the way in which Wittgenstein draws "from the inside" of this language (to use his expression) the limits of that which, whether ethical or mystical, exceeds it.<sup>18</sup> It is exclusively from the inside that he recognizes an outside which itself remains

ineffable. His work thus operates a **double erosion**: one which, from the interior of ordinary language, makes these limits appear; another which reveals the unacceptable character (the nonsense) of any proposition that attempts to escape toward "that which cannot be said." The analysis locates the empty places that sap language, and it destroys the statements that claim to fill them in. It works with what language shows without being able to *say* it. Wittgenstein examines a play of regional and combined syntaxes whose foundations, coherence, and overall significance depend on questions that are pertinent, and even essential, but cannot be treated in their "proper" place because language cannot become the object of a discourse. "We do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words."<sup>19</sup> Rarely has the reality of language—that is, the *fact* that it defines our historicity, that it dominates and envelops us in the mode of the ordinary, that no discourse can therefore "escape from it," put itself at the distance from it in order to observe it and tell us its meaning—been taken seriously with so much rigor.

In this way, Wittgenstein maintains himself in the present of his historicity without having recourse to the "past" of the historian. He would reject even historiography because, by separating a past from the present, it privileges in effect a *proper* and productive place from which it claims to "command a clear view" of linguistic facts (or "documents") and to distinguish itself from the *given*, a *product* which is alone supposed to be subject to common rules. Wittgenstein recognizes that he is "caught" in *common* linguistic historicity. Accordingly, he will not allow this dependence to be *localized* in the object (designated as "past") whose historiographic operation is fictively detached (through a fiction that is moreover the very space where the scientific challenge of mastering history is produced).<sup>20</sup> In reality, his position is not risked there, but rather in a **double combat whose articulation furnishes us with a formal landmark for the study of culture**. On the one hand, he combats the professionalization of philosophy, that is, its reduction to the technical (i.e., positivist) discourse of a specialty. More generally, he rejects the purifying process that, by eliminating the ordinary use of language (everyday language), makes it possible for science to produce and master an artificial language. On the other hand, he combats the rashness of metaphysics and the impatience of ethics, which are always led to subsume the rules of correct use and to pay with the **meaninglessness of some statements for the authority of their discourse on the language of common experiences**. He attacks the presumption that leads philosophy to

proceed "as if" it gave meaning to ordinary use, and to suppose that it has its own place from which it can reflect on the everyday.

We are subject to, but not identified with, ordinary language. As in the ship of fools, we are **embarked, without the possibility of an aerial view or any sort of totalization**. That is the "prose of the world" Merleau-Ponty spoke of. It encompasses every discourse, even if human experiences cannot be reduced to what it can say about them. In order to constitute themselves, scientific methods allow themselves to *forget this fact* and philosophers *think they dominate it so that they can authorize themselves to deal with it*. In this respect, neither touches the philosophical question, endlessly reopened by that "urge" that "pushes man to run up against the limits of language" ("*an die Grenze der Sprache anzurennen*").<sup>21</sup> Wittgenstein reintroduces this language **both into philosophy, which has indeed taken it for a formal object while according itself a fictional mastery over it, and into the sciences, which have excluded it in order to accord themselves an actual mastery**.

He thus changes the *place of analysis, henceforth defined by a universality identical with submission to ordinary use*. This change of place modifies the status of the discourse. By being "caught" within ordinary language, the philosopher no longer has his own (*propre*) appropriable place. Any position of mastery is denied him. The analyzing discourse and the analyzed "object" are in the same situation: both are organized by the practical activity with which they are concerned, **both are determined by rules they neither establish nor see clearly, equally scattered in differentiated ways of working** (Wittgenstein wanted his work itself to be composed only of fragments), inscribed in a texture in which each can by turns "appeal" to the other, cite it and refer to it. There is a continual exchange of distinct places. Philosophical or scientific privilege disappears into the ordinary. This disappearance has as its corollary the invalidation of truths. From what privileged place could they be signified? There will thus be **facts that are no longer truths**. The inflation of the latter is controlled, if not shut off, by criticism of the places of authority in which facts are converted into truths. Detecting them by their mixture of meaninglessness and power, Wittgenstein attempts to reduce these truths to linguistic facts and to that which, *in* these facts, refers to an ineffable or "mystical" exteriority of language.

This position can be connected to the **increasing importance in Wittgenstein's work of linguistic behaviors and uses**. To discuss language "within" ordinary language, without being able "to command a clear

view" of it, without being able to see it from a distance, is to grasp it as an ensemble of practices in which one is implicated and through which the prose of the world is at work. The analysis will therefore be a "looking into the workings of our language" ("*eine Einsicht in das Arbeiten unserer Sprache*").<sup>22</sup> It thus cannot avoid reproducing the dissemination which fragments every system. But by trying to "determine the morphology of use" of expressions, that is, to examine their "domains of use" and to "describe the forms,"<sup>23</sup> it can "recognize" different modes of everyday functioning, governed by "pragmatic rules," themselves dependent on "forms of life" (*Lebensformen*).<sup>24</sup>

#### *A contemporary historicity*

Wittgenstein's elaboration of this analysis, to whose sociolinguistic or "ethnomethodological" developments we shall return later, owes a great deal to the philosophical tradition he came to know at Cambridge. From Cook Wilson to G. E. Moore and J. L. Austin, it had concentrated on the "ways of speaking" of ordinary or everyday language, to the point that Austin's program was "to track the minutiae of ordinary language" and his reputation that of being "the evangelist of ordinary language" (*TLS*, 16 November 1973). Several reasons were advanced in support of this approach, and they concern us as well: 1. the usual ways of speaking do not have any equivalent in philosophical discourse and they cannot be translated into it because they are richer and more varied than it is; 2. they constitute a reserve of "distinctions" and "connections" accumulated by historical experience and stored up in everyday speech;<sup>25</sup> 3. as linguistic practices, they manifest logical complexities unnoticed by scientific formalizations.<sup>26</sup>

But these more or less professional exchanges cannot erase the primary historical context of Wittgenstein's thought. Three aspects of this context are particularly indicative of its importance. First, parallel to the reaction that inspired the architect Adolf Loos to write *Ornament and Crime*, a book defending a functionalist austerity against the decorative degeneracy of Vienna,<sup>27</sup> or that which elicits the clinical irony of Musil's observations in *Cacania*,<sup>28</sup> there is in Wittgenstein's work an almost puritanical "execration" of the "fallacious" charm and the "journalistic" brilliance of a "rotting culture" and of the "drivel" that resembles them.<sup>29</sup> "Purity"<sup>30</sup> and reserve mark the style of an engagement in contemporary

history, a philosophical politics of culture. The critical return of the ordinary, as Wittgenstein understands it, must destroy all the varieties of rhetorical brilliance associated with powers that hierarchize and with nonsense that enjoys authority.

Another, equally striking, analogy: through his experience as a superior technician, then as a mathematician, Wittgenstein had, like Musil's Ulrich, the man without qualities, a "second try" and a third try, "the most important." He, too, possessed "fragments of a new way of thinking and feeling" and saw "the spectacle of novelty, at first so intense," dissolve "into the multiplication of details." For him, too, "there remained only philosophy to which he could dedicate himself."<sup>31</sup> But, like Ulrich, in the area of the "good use of his [linguistic] abilities" he retained the "marvelous clarity"<sup>32</sup> which the scientific method had sharpened—thus combining technical rigor with respect for its "object." Unlike the Expert's discourse, Wittgenstein's does not profit from knowledge by exchanging it against the right to speak in its name; he retains its exactingness but not its mastery.

Finally, this science of the ordinary is defined by a threefold foreignness: the foreignness of the specialist (and of the wealthy bourgeois) to common life, of the scientist to philosophy, and, until the very end, of the German to the everyday English language (in which he never settled down). This situation is comparable to those of the ethnologist and the historian, but more radical. In the accidental ways of being a foreigner away from home (like any traveler or keeper of records) Wittgenstein sees the metaphors of foreign analytical procedures inside the very language that circumscribes them. "When we do philosophy [that is, when we are working in the place which is the only "philosophical" one, the prose of the world] we are like savages, primitive people, who hear the expressions of civilized men, put a false interpretation on them, and then draw the queerest conclusions from it."<sup>33</sup> This is no longer the position of professionals, supposed to be civilized men among savages; it is rather the position which consists in being a foreigner at home, a "savage" in the midst of ordinary culture, lost in the complexity of the common agreement and what goes without saying. And since one does not "leave" this language, since one cannot find another place from which to interpret it, since there are therefore no separate groups of false interpretations and true interpretations, but only illusory interpretations, since in short there is no way out, the fact remains that we are foreigners on the

inside—but there is no outside. Thus we must constantly “run up against the limits” of ordinary language—a situation close to the Freudian position except that Wittgenstein does not allow himself an unconscious referent to name this foreignness-at-home.

By these characteristics, Wittgenstein’s fragmented and rigorous body of work seems to provide a philosophical blueprint for a contemporary science of the ordinary. Without going into the details of its theses, we must compare this model, taken as a theoretical hypothesis, with positive contributions of the “human sciences” (sociology, ethnology, history, etc.) to the knowledge of ordinary culture.

## Chapter II Popular Cultures: Ordinary Language

TO LEAVE VIENNA or Cambridge, to leave theoretical texts, is not to leave Wittgenstein behind (he was a teacher in a village elementary school between 1920 and 1926) but rather to set out toward the open sea of common experience that surrounds, penetrates, and finally carries away every discourse—if one is not satisfied with substituting a political mastery for scientific appropriation. Memories come back to me, the places of these mute silences of memory. For instance, as an introduction to a seminar on the popular culture of Northeast Brazil, a walk through the night, alive with sound, in the town of Salvador towards the Igreja do Passo. Contrasting with the subtle theatricality of the Misericórdia, the church’s dark facade lifts up into its dignity all the dust and sweat of the city. Standing above the old parts of town full of vague murmurings and human voices, it presents their monumental, silent secret. It dominates the narrow Ladeira do Passo. It does not yield itself to researches who nevertheless have it there before them, just as popular language escapes them, when they approach it, for it comes from too far away and too high. Very different from the Church do Rosário, which is all blue and openness, this dark stone raises the nocturnal face of Bahian irony. An unconquerable rock even though (or because) it is familiar, totally without solemnity, similar to the songs of the Brazilian *saudade*. Returning from this pilgrimage, the passing faces in the streets seem, in spite of their vivacious mobility, to multiply the indecipherable and nearby secret of the monument.

### *A Brazilian “art”*

Our investigation moves on, groping its way, as we did, in interdisciplinary local teams, in Rio, in Salvador, and in Recife (Brazil), or again in Santiago and Concepción (Chile), in Posadas (Argentina), etc. For example, one of these analyses concerned the language used by the



peasants of the Pernambuco (in Crato, Juazeiro, Itapetim, etc.) in talking about their situation in 1974 and about the great deeds of Frei Damião, the charismatic hero of the region.<sup>1</sup> The discourse parted space in such a way as to stratify it on two levels. On the one hand, a socio-economic space, organized by an immemorial struggle between "the powerful" and "the poor," presented itself as the field of constant victories by the rich and the police, but also as the reign of mendacity (there no truth is said, except in whispers and among peasants: "*Agora a gente sabe, mas não pode dizer alto*"). In this space, the strong always win and words always deceive—an experience in accord with that of a Maghrebian syndicalist in Billancourt:\* "They always fuck us over." On the other hand, distinct from this *polemological* space which perspicacious country people saw as a network of innumerable conflicts covered up with words, there was also a *utopian* space in which a possibility, by definition miraculous in nature, was affirmed by religious stories. Frei Damião was the almost immobile center of this space, constantly qualified by the successive accounts of the celestial punishments visited upon his enemies.

As far as the actual power relationships were concerned, we can say that a lucid discourse cunningly turned up fake words and prohibitions on speaking in order to reveal an ubiquitous injustice—not simply the injustice of the established powers, but, more profoundly, that of history. It recognized in that injustice an order of things that seemed immutable: it is always so; people see it every day. But no legitimacy whatever was accorded this state of affairs. On the contrary, just because it was a constantly repeated fact, this relationship of forces did not become any more acceptable. The fact was not accepted as a law, even if it remained inescapably a fact. Trapped in dependency, forced to submit to the facts, this conviction is nevertheless opposed to the *statutory* fact of an order presenting itself as natural, a goal of non-acceptance, and to its fatality, an *ethical* protest (if science can permit itself different options concerning the relation between facts and laws, it is above all because it can escape from that dependence). But in order to affirm the non-coincidence of fact and meaning, another scene was required, the religious scene that reintroduces, in the mode of supernatural events, the historical contingency of this "nature" and, by means of celestial landmarks, creates a place for this protest. The unacceptability of an order which is nevertheless established was articulated, appropriately enough, as a miracle.

\* The Renault automobile factory in Billancourt (on the outskirts of Paris) employs many immigrants from North Africa. (Tr.)

There, in a language necessarily foreign to the analysis of socioeconomic relationships, the hope could be *maintained* that the vanquished of history—the body on which the victories of the rich or their allies are continually inscribed—might, in the "person" of the humiliated "saint" Damião, rise again as a result of the blows rained on its adversaries from on high.

Without diminishing in any way what one sees every day, the stories of miracles respond to it "from aside" with irrelevance and impertinence in a different discourse, a discourse one can only *believe*—just as an ethical reaction must believe that life cannot be reduced to what one sees of it. In the same way, in J.-L. Comolli's film *La Cecilia*, the anarchist songs form the counterpoint to the events that gradually destroy, as it develops, the socialist commune founded in Brazil by Tito Rossi: the songs remain intact and, in the end, from the very ruins of a history restored to order, these songs rise again, escaping from the battlefield of defeat, lifting up a voice that will bring to life, elsewhere, other movements:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Un' idea l'amante mia<br>A cui detti braccio e cuor . . . <sup>2</sup>  | An idea is my darling,<br>I gave it grip and heart   |
| Deh t'affretta a sorgere<br>O sol dell'avvenir<br>Vivere vogliam liberi<br>Non vogliam più servir. <sup>3</sup> | Ah, hurry to rise<br>You sun of the future<br>It's free we would live<br>We would serve no more. |

In the same way as the voodoo *Loas*, the "spirits" and voices from another realm,<sup>4</sup> the stories of miracles are also songs, but serious ones, relating not to uprisings but to the recognition of the permanent repression. In spite of everything, they provide the possible with a site that is impregnable, because it is a nowhere, a utopia. They create another space, which coexists with that of an experience deprived of illusions. They tell a truth (the miraculous) which is not reducible to the particular beliefs that serve it as metaphors or symbols. They exist *alongside* the analysis of facts, as the equivalent of what a political ideology introduces *into* that analysis.

The rural "believers" thus subvert the fatality of the established order. And they do it by using a frame of reference which also proceeds from an external power (the religion imposed by Christian missions). They re-employ a system that, far from being their own, has been constructed and spread by others, and they mark this re-employment by "superstitions," excrescences of this belief in miracles which civil and religious

authorities have always correctly suspected of putting in question the "reason" behind power and knowledge hierarchies. A ("popular") use of religion modifies its functioning. A way of speaking this received language transforms it into a song of resistance, but this internal metamorphosis does not in any way compromise the sincerity with which it may be believed nor the lucidity with which, from another point of view, the struggles and inequalities hidden under the established order may be perceived.

More generally, a way of using imposed systems constitutes the resistance to the historical law of a state of affairs and its dogmatic legitimations. A practice of the order constructed by others redistributes its space; it creates at least a certain play in that order, a space for maneuverers of unequal forces and for utopian points of reference. That is where the opacity of a "popular" culture could be said to manifest itself—a dark rock that resists all assimilation. What is there called "wisdom" (*sabedoria*) may be defined as a stratagem (*trampolinagem*, which a play on words associates with the acrobatics of the mountebank and his art of jumping on the trampoline, *trapolim*) and as "trickery" (*trapaçaria*, ruse, deception, in the way one uses or cheats with the terms of social contracts).<sup>5</sup> Innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other's game (*jouer/déjouer le jeu de l'autre*), that is, the space instituted by others, characterize the subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces and representations. People have to make do with what they have. In these combatants' stratagems, there is a certain art of placing one's blows, a pleasure in getting around the rules of a constraining space. We see the tactical and joyful dexterity of the mastery of a technique. Scapin and Figaro are only literary echoes of this art. Like the skill of a driver in the streets of Rome or Naples, there is a skill that has its connoisseurs and its esthetics exercised in any labyrinth of powers, a skill ceaselessly recreating opacities and ambiguities—spaces of darkness and trickery—in the universe of technocratic transparency, a skill that disappears into them and reappears again, taking no responsibility for the administration of a totality. Even the field of misfortune is refashioned by this combination of manipulation and enjoyment.

#### *The proverbial enunciation*

Is this too hasty a generalization? It is a hypothesis for research, to be sure, but it is based on the examinations of other terrains<sup>6</sup> and situated,

naturally, in an ensemble of precedents and neighboring inquiries, for example, the recent research on the "practical intelligence" (*mētis*) of the Greeks<sup>7</sup> or on the "practical sense" and the "strategies" of the peoples of Béarn (in Southern France) and Kabylia (in North Africa).<sup>8</sup> Bourdieu

This approach to popular culture takes its inspiration from a problematics of enunciation, in the triple sense due to Austin's analysis of performative utterances, to A. J. Greimas' semiotics of manipulation, and to the semiology of the Prague School. Although it was initially concerned with the *speech act* through which a speaker actualizes and appropriates his mother tongue in a particular situation of exchange or "contract,"<sup>9</sup> this problematics can be extended to culture as a whole on the basis of the resemblance between the ("enunciative") procedures which articulate actions in both the field of language and the network of social practices. It differs from more traditional studies concerned with legendary, proverbial (etc.) statements, or, more generally, with the objective form of rites or behaviors in that it constitutes a corpus peculiar to popular culture and analyzes the variable terms of invariable functions within finite systems. The postulates and methods of the two perspectives are divergent: whereas the one seeks to discern the types of operations for which historical conjunctures provide the space, the other prefers to identify the structural equilibria whose constancy each society manifests in differing ways.

The differences are of course neither so simple nor so antithetical. Thus Pierre Bourdieu combines both in a "theory of practice" to which we shall have to return. But one can clarify what is at stake in these alternatives by reference to a particular case, that of the proverb.

One method consists in first isolating proverbs and then collecting them, as Aarne or Propp did for folktales. Once the material has been collected, one can treat either the content, divided by labels or semantic units (actions, themes, agents), whose relationships are analyzable in terms of structures and whose aggregates indicate the mental geography peculiar to a given group;<sup>10</sup> or one can study the modes of production, for example the way in which proverbs (generally distichs: "Out of sight, out of mind," "When the cat's away, the mice will play," "Red sky in morning, sailor take warning," etc.) reinforce the impact of the meaning by diminishing differences in sound (through rhyme, alliteration, etc.).<sup>11</sup> On the one hand, one is concerned with systems of signification, on the other, with systems of fabrication. Through a twofold control of the corpus they circumscribe and of the operations they carry out on it, these methods succeed in defining their object themselves (what is a

linguistics

2 methods

proverb?), in rationalizing its collection, in classifying the types and transforming the "given" into something reproducible (for example, if one knows the rules of the production of proverbs, one can fabricate series of them). These techniques thus provide, by explaining them, the ability to *construct* social phenomena, just as biology synthesizes insulin.

Because the analysis of myths has been further developed than that of proverbs, such analysis, from Aarne to Lévi-Strauss, has shown how a science of these discourses, by isolating and sifting them, by refining and formalizing the minimum units it treats,<sup>12</sup> can classify a literature that is supposed to be heterogenous, can reveal a "savage mind" (*pensée sauvage*) and a logic in bodies of material constituted as "foreign," and, in this way, can renew the interpretation and production of our own discourse.

The drawback of this method, which is at the same time the condition of its success, is that it extracts the documents from their historical context and eliminates the operations of speakers in particular situations of time, place, and competition. Everyday linguistic practices (as well as the space of their tactics) have to be ignored in order for the scientific practices to be able to operate in their own field. The innumerable tricks of bringing in a proverb at just the right moment and with a particular interlocutor are thus not taken into account. This art and its practitioners are excluded from the laboratory, not only because the scientific method requires a delimitation and simplification of its objects, but also because there corresponds to the constitution of a scientific space, as the precondition of any analysis, the necessity of being able to *transfer* the objects of study into it. Only what can be transported can be treated. What cannot be uprooted remains by definition outside the field of research. Hence the privilege that these studies accord to discourses, the data that can most easily be grasped, recorded, transported, and examined in secure places; in contrast, the speech act cannot be parted from its circumstances. Of the practices themselves, science will retain only movable elements (tools and products to be put in display cases) or descriptive schemas (quantifiable behaviors, stereotypes of the staging of social intercourse, ritual structures), leaving aside the aspects of a society that cannot be so uprooted and transferred to another space: ways of using things or words according to circumstances. Something essential is at work in this everyday historicity, which cannot be dissociated from the existence of the subjects who are the agents and authors of conjunctural operations. Indeed, like Schreber's God, who "communicates only with

cadavers,"<sup>13</sup> our knowledge seems to consider and tolerate in a social body only inert objects.

Was it fate? I remember the marvelous Shelburne Museum in Vermont, where, in thirty-five houses of a reconstructed village, all the signs, tools, and products of nineteenth-century everyday life teem; everything, from cooking utensils and pharmaceutical goods to weaving instruments, toilet articles, and children's toys can be found in profusion. The display includes innumerable familiar objects, polished, deformed, or made more beautiful by long use; everywhere there are as well the marks of the active hands and laboring or patient bodies for which these things composed the daily circuits, the fascinating presence of absences whose traces were everywhere. At least this village full of abandoned and salvaged objects drew one's attention, through them, to the ordered murmurs of a hundred past or possible villages, and by means of these imbricated traces one began to dream of countless combinations of existences. Like tools, proverbs (and other discourses) are marked by uses; they offer to analysis the imprints of acts or of processes of enunciation;<sup>14</sup> they signify the *operations* whose object they have been, operations which are relative to situations and which can be thought of as the conjunctural modalizations of statements or of practices;<sup>15</sup> more generally, they thus indicate a social historicity in which systems of representations or processes of fabrication no longer appear only as normative frameworks but also as tools manipulated by users.

#### *Logics: games, tales, and the arts of speaking*

From these imprints on language, we are already returning toward operators' ways of operating. But it is not enough to describe individual ruses and devices. In order to think them, one must suppose that to these ways of operating correspond a finite number of procedures (invention is not unlimited and, like improvisations on the piano or on the guitar, it presupposes the knowledge and application of codes), and that they imply a logic of the operation of actions relative to types of situations. This logic, which turns on circumstances, has as its precondition, contrary to the procedures of Western science, the non-autonomy of its field of action. A rich elucidation of this logic can be found in Chinese thought, in the canonical *I Ching* (or *Book of Changes*) or in Sun Tzu's *Art of War*,<sup>16</sup> or in the Arab tradition of the *Book of Tricks*.<sup>17</sup> But need we seek our models so far abroad? Every society always

manifests somewhere the formal rules which its practices obey. But where should we look for them in the West, since our scientific method, by substituting its "own" places for the complex geography of social ruses and its "artificial" languages for ordinary language,<sup>18</sup> has allowed and even required reason to adopt a logic of mastery and transparency? Like Poe's "purloined letter," the inscriptions of these various logics are written in places so obvious that one does not see them. Without referring again to ordinary language, we can already suggest three places in which, hidden only by their very evidence, the formal rules of these circumstantial ways of making are already visible.

① First of all, in the specific games of each society: games, which as operations are disjunctive, because they produce differentiating events,<sup>19</sup> give rise to spaces where moves are proportional to situations. From the game of chess, an aristocratic form of the "art of war" which came from China and was brought by the Arabs into medieval Western culture where it constituted a very important part of manorial culture, to pinochle, Lotto, and Scrabble, games formulate (and already formalize) rules organizing moves and constitute as well a memory (a storage and a classification) of schemas of actions articulating replies with respect to circumstances. They exercise that function precisely because they are detached from those everyday combats which forbid one to "show his hand" and whose stakes, rules, and moves are too complex. The explicitness of the rules is always inversely proportional to the practical engagement involved. If we observe a formalization of tactics in these games (as has been done with respect to the game of go),<sup>20</sup> or compare to games the technique of divination, whose formal framework has the purpose of adjusting a decision to concrete situations,<sup>21</sup> we gain a preliminary body of material concerning the kinds of rationality proper to the practice of spaces—spaces that are closed and "historicized" by the variability of the events to be treated.

To these games correspond accounts of particular games; people tell each other about the hand they had to play the night before, or the slam they made the previous week. These stories represent a succession of combinations among all those that the synchronic organization of a space, of rules, of deals, etc., make possible. They are paradigmatic projections of a choice among these possibilities—a choice corresponding to a particular actualization (or enunciation). Like the bridge or chess articles in *The New York Times*, the stories could be formulated in a special code, thus making it clear that every event is a particular

application of the formal framework. But in replaying the games, in telling about them, these accounts record the rules and the moves simultaneously. To be memorized as well as memorable, they are repertoires of schemas of action between partners. With the attraction that the element of surprise introduces, these mementos teach the tactics possible within a given (social) system.

Tales and legends seem to have the same role.<sup>22</sup> They are deployed, like games, in a space outside of and isolated from daily competition, that of the past, the marvelous, the original. In that space can thus be revealed, dressed as gods or heroes, the models of good or bad ruses that can be used every day. Moves, not truths, are recounted. One can already find an example of these panoplies of strategies in the work of Propp, a pioneer whose work became a rigidified model for "formalist" research on folktales.<sup>23</sup> The four hundred fabulous tales he had examined were reduced to a "fundamental series"<sup>24</sup> of functions, the "function" being "the action of a character, defined from the point of view of its signification in the development of the plot."<sup>25</sup> It is not certain, as A. Régner noted, that the homologizing of these functions is coherent, nor, as both Lévi-Strauss and Greimas have shown, that the units Propp delimited are stable; but the novelty of Propp's work, which remains important today, lies in the analysis of the tactics for which the tales offer both an inventory and a repertory of combinations, on the basis of elementary units which are not significations or beings, but actions relative to conflictual situations. With others that have since appeared, Propp's reading would allow us to recognize in the tales the strategic discourses of the people. Hence the privilege that these tales accord to simulation/dissimulation.<sup>26</sup> The formality of everyday practices is indicated in these tales, which frequently reverse the relationships of power and, like the stories of miracles, ensure the victory of the unfortunate in a fabulous, utopian space. This space protects the weapons of the weak against the reality of the established order. It also hides them from the social categories which "make history" because they dominate it. And whereas historiography recounts in the past tense the strategies of instituted powers, these "fabulous" stories offer their audience a repertory of tactics for future use.

Finally, in these tales themselves, the stylistic effects—devices and "figures," alliterations, inversions and plays on words—also participate in the collation of these tactics. They are also, more discreetly, living museums of these tactics, the benchmarks of an apprenticeship. Both

②  
like 19th  
C. rub-  
propp?

③

rhetoric and everyday practices can be defined as internal manipulations of a system—that of language or that of an established order. “Turns” (or “tropes”) inscribe in ordinary language the ruses, displacements, ellipses, etc., that scientific reason has eliminated from operational discourses in order to constitute “proper” meanings. But the practice of these ruses, the memory of a culture, remains in these “literary” zones into which they have been repressed (as in dreams, where Freud re-discovered them). These tricks characterize a popular *art of speaking*. So quick, so perspicacious in recognizing them in the discourse of the raconteur and the peddler, the ear of the peasant or worker can discern in a way of speaking a way of treating the received language. His amused or artistic appreciation also concerns an art of living in the other’s field. It distinguishes in these linguistic turns a style of thought and action—that is, models of practice.<sup>27</sup>

*A diversionary practice: “la perruque”*

With these examples of terrains on which one can locate the specific modalities of “enunciative” practices (manipulations of imposed spaces, tactics relative to particular situations), the possibility is opened up of analyzing the immense field of an “art of practice” differing from the models that (in theory) reign from top to bottom in a culture certified by education (from the universities to the elementary schools), models that all postulate the constitution of a space of their own (a scientific space or a blank page to be written on), independent of speakers and circumstances, in which they can construct a system based on rules ensuring the system’s production, repetition, and verification. Two questions burden this inquiry. They concern, moreover, the two sides of a single political problem. First, on what grounds can we call this “art” different? Second, from what position (from what distinct place) can we set out to analyze it? Perhaps by resorting to the very procedures of this art, we can revise our views on both its definition as “popular” and our position as observers.

To be sure, there remain social, economic, historical differences between the practitioners (peasants, workers, etc.) of these ruses and ourselves as analysts. It is no accident that their culture is elaborated in terms of the conflictual or competitive relations between the stronger and the weaker, leaving no room for a legendary or ritual space that would be merely neutral. This difference can moreover be seen within the study itself, in the gap that separates the time of solidarity (marked by docility

and gratitude toward one’s hosts) from the time of writing; the latter reveals the institutional affiliations (scientific, social) and the profit (intellectual, professional, financial, etc.) for which this hospitality is objectively the means. The Bororos of Brazil sink slowly into their collective death, and Lévi-Strauss takes his seat in the French Academy. Even if this injustice disturbs him, the facts remain unchanged. This story is ours as much as his. In this one respect (which is an index of others that are more important), the intellectuals are still borne on the backs of the common people.

We need not stress here either the socioeconomic implications or the *locus* of ethnological or historical research,<sup>28</sup> or the political situation that, from the very beginning of contemporary research, has inscribed the concept *popular* in a problematic of repression.<sup>29</sup> But one pressing question must be confronted here: if one does not expect a revolution to transform the laws of history, how is it possible to foil here and now the social hierarchization which organizes scientific work on popular cultures and repeats itself in that work? The resurgence of “popular” practices within industrial and scientific modernity indicates the paths that might be taken by a transformation of the object of our study and the place from which we study it.

The operational models of popular culture cannot be confined to the past, the countryside, or primitive peoples. They exist in the heart of the strongholds of the contemporary economy. Take, for example, what in France is called *la perruque*, “the wig.” *La perruque* is the worker’s own work disguised as work for his employer. It differs from pilfering in that nothing of material value is stolen. It differs from absenteeism in that the worker is officially on the job. *La perruque* may be as simple a matter as a secretary’s writing a love letter on “company time” or as complex as a cabinetmaker’s “borrowing” a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room. Under different names in different countries this phenomenon is becoming more and more general, even if managers penalize it or “turn a blind eye” on it in order not to know about it.<sup>30</sup> Accused of stealing or turning material to his own ends and using the machines for his own profit, the worker who indulges in *la perruque* actually diverts time (not goods, since he uses only scraps) from the factory for work that is free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit. In the very place where the machine he must serve reigns supreme, he cunningly takes pleasure in finding a way to create gratuitous products whose sole purpose is to signify his own capabilities through his work and to confirm his solidarity with other workers or his family

through *spending* his time in this way. With the complicity of other workers (who thus defeat the competition the factory tries to instill among them), he succeeds in "putting one over" on the established order on its home ground. Far from being a regression toward a mode of production organized around artisans or individuals, *la perruque* re-introduces "popular" techniques of other times and other places into the industrial space (that is, into the Present order).

Many other examples would show the constant presence of these practices in the most ordered spheres of modern life. With variations, practices analogous to *la perruque* are proliferating in governmental and commercial offices as well as in factories. No doubt they are just as widespread as formerly (though they ought still to be studied), just as widely suspected, repressed, or ignored. Not only workshops and offices, but also museums and learned journals penalize such practices or ignore them. The authority of ethnological or folklore studies permits some of the material or linguistic objects of these practices to be collected, labelled according to place of origin and theme, put in display cases, offered for inspection and interpretation, and thus that authority conceals, as rural "treasures" serving to edify or satisfy the curiosity of city folk, the legitimization of an order supposed by its conservators to be immemorial and "natural." Or else they use the tools and products taken from a language of social operations to set off a display of technical gadgets and thus arrange them, inert, on the margins of a system that itself remains intact.

← The actual order of things is precisely what "popular" tactics turn to their own ends, without any illusion that it will change any time soon. Though elsewhere it is exploited by a dominant power or simply denied by an ideological discourse, here order is tricked by an art. Into the institution to be served are thus insinuated styles of social exchange, technical invention, and moral resistance, that is, an economy of the "gift" (generosities for which one expects a return), an esthetics of "tricks" (artists' operations) and an ethics of *tenacity* (countless ways of refusing to accord the established order the status of a law, a meaning, or a fatality). "Popular" culture is precisely that; it is not a corpus considered as foreign, fragmented in order to be displayed, studied and "quoted" by a system which does to objects what it does to living beings.

The progressive partitioning of times and places, the disjunctive logic of specialization through and for work, no longer has an adequate counterpart in the conjunctive rituals of mass communications. This *fact* cannot become our *law*. It can be gotten around through departments

that, "competing" with the gifts of our benefactors, offer them products at the expense of the institution that divides and pays the workers. This practice of *economic diversion* is in reality the return of a sociopolitical ethics into an economic system. It is no doubt related to the *potlatch* described by Mauss, an interplay of voluntary allowances that counts on reciprocity and organizes a social network articulated by the "obligation to give."<sup>31</sup> In our societies, the market economy is no longer determined by such an "emulation": taking the abstract individual as a basic unit, it regulates all exchanges among these units according to the code of generalized equivalence constituted by money. This individualistic axiom is, of course, now surfacing as the question that disturbs the free market system as a whole. The a priori assumption of an historical Western option is becoming its point of implosion. However that may be, the *potlatch* seems to persist within it as the mark of another type of economy. It survives in our economy, though on its margins or in its interstices. It is even developing, although held to be illegitimate, within modern market economy. Because of this, the politics of the "gift" *also* becomes a diversionary tactic. In the same way, the loss that was voluntary in a gift economy is transformed into a transgression in a profit economy: it appears as an excess (a waste), a challenge (a rejection of profit), or a crime (an attack on property).

This path, relative to our economy, derives from another; it compensates for the first even though it is illegal and (from this point of view) marginal. The same pathway allows investigations to take up a position that is no longer defined only by an acquired power and an observational knowledge, with the addition of a pinch of nostalgia. Melancholy is not enough. Certainly, with respect to the sort of writing that separates domains in the name of the division of labor and reveals class affiliations, it would be "fabulous" if, as in the stories of miracles, the groups that formerly gave us our masters and that are currently lodged in our corpus were to rise up and themselves mark their comings and goings in the texts that honor and bury them at the same time. This hope has disappeared, along with the beliefs which have long since vanished from our cities. There are no longer any ghosts who can remind the living of reciprocity. But in the order organized by the power of knowledge (ours), as in the order of the countryside or the factories, a diversionary practice remains possible.

Let us try to make a *perruque* in the economic system whose rules and hierarchies are repeated, as always, in scientific institutions. In the area of scientific research (which defines the current order of knowledge),

working with its machines and making use of its scraps, we can divert the time owed to the institution; we can make textual objects that signify an art and solidarities; we can play the game of free exchange, even if it is penalized by bosses and colleagues when they are not willing to "turn a blind eye" on it; we can create networks of connivances and sleights of hand; we can exchange gifts; and in these ways we can subvert the law that, in the scientific factory, puts work at the service of the machine and, by a similar logic, progressively destroys the requirement of creation and the "obligation to give." I know of investigators experienced in this art of diversion, which is a return of the ethical, of pleasure and of invention within the scientific institution. Realizing no profit (profit is produced by work done for the factory), and often at a loss, they take something from the order of knowledge in order to inscribe "artistic achievements" on it and to carve on it the graffiti of their debts of honor. To deal with everyday tactics in this way would be to practice an "ordinary" art, to find oneself in the common situation, and to make a kind of *perruque* of writing itself.

## Chapter III "Making Do": Uses and Tactics

**I**N SPITE OF MEASURES taken to repress or conceal it, *la perruque* (or its equivalent) is infiltrating itself everywhere and becoming more and more common. It is only one case among all the practices which introduce *artistic* tricks and competitions of *accomplices* into a system that reproduces and partitions through work or leisure. Sly as a fox and twice as quick: there are countless ways of "making do."

From this point of view, the dividing line no longer falls between work and leisure. These two areas of activity flow together. They repeat and reinforce each other. Cultural techniques that camouflage economic reproduction with fictions of surprise ("the event"), of truth ("information") or communication ("promotion") spread through the workplace. Reciprocally, cultural production offers an area of expansion for rational operations that permit work to be managed by dividing it (analysis), tabulating it (synthesis) and aggregating it (generalization). A distinction is required other than the one that distributes behaviors according to their place (of work or leisure) and qualifies them thus by the fact that they are located on one or another square of the social checkerboard—in the office, in the workshop, or at the movies. There are differences of another type. They refer to the *modalities* of action, to the *formalities* of practices. They traverse the frontiers dividing time, place, and type of action into one part assigned for work and another for leisure. For example, *la perruque* grafts itself onto the system of the industrial assembly line (its counterpoint, in the same place), as a variant of the activity which, outside the factory (in another place), takes the form of bricolage.

Although they remain dependent upon the possibilities offered by circumstances, these transverse tactics do not obey the law of the place, for they are not defined or identified by it. In this respect, they are not any more localizable than the technocratic (and scriptural) *strategies* that seek to create places in conformity with abstract models. But what

distinguishes them at the same time concerns the *types of operations* and the role of spaces: strategies are able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces, when those operations take place, whereas tactics can only use, manipulate, and divert these spaces.

We must therefore specify the operational schemas. Just as in literature one differentiates "styles" or ways of writing, one can distinguish "ways of operating"—ways of walking, reading, producing, speaking, etc. These styles of action intervene in a field which regulates them at a first level (for example, at the level of the factory system), but they introduce into it a way of turning it to their advantage that obeys other rules and constitutes something like a second level interwoven into the first (for instance, *la perruque*). These "ways of operating" are similar to "instructions for use," and they create a certain play in the machine through a stratification of different and interfering kinds of functioning. Thus a North African living in Paris or Roubaix (France) insinuates into the system imposed on him by the construction of a low-income housing development or of the French language the ways of "dwelling" (in a house or a language) peculiar to his native Kabylia. He superimposes them and, by that combination, creates for himself a space in which he can find ways of using the constraining order of the place or of the language. Without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him, he establishes within it a degree of plurality and creativity. By an art of being in between, he draws unexpected results from his situation.

These modes of use—or rather re-use—multiply with the extension of acculturation phenomena, that is, with the displacements that substitute manners or "methods" of transiting toward an identification of a person by the place in which he lives or works. That does not prevent them from corresponding to a very ancient art of "making do." I give them the name of uses, even though the word most often designates stereotyped procedures accepted and reproduced by a group, its "ways and customs." The problem lies in the ambiguity of the word, since it is precisely a matter of recognizing in these "uses" "actions" (in the military sense of the word) that have their own formality and inventiveness and that discreetly organize the multiform labor of consumption.

#### Use, or consumption

In the wake of the many remarkable works that have analyzed "cultural products," the system of their production,<sup>1</sup> the geography of their

distribution and the situation of consumers in that geography,<sup>2</sup> it seems possible to consider these products no longer merely as data on the basis of which statistical tabulations of their circulation can be drawn up or the economic functioning of their diffusion understood, but also as parts of the repertory with which users carry out operations of their own. Henceforth, these facts are no longer the data of our calculations, but rather the lexicon of users' practices. Thus, once the images broadcast by television and the time spent in front of the TV set have been analyzed, it remains to be asked what the consumer makes of these images and during these hours. The thousands of people who buy a health magazine, the customers in a supermarket, the practitioners of urban space, the consumers of newspaper stories and legends—what do they make of what they "absorb," receive, and pay for? What do they do with it?

The enigma of the consumer-sphinx. His products are scattered in the graphs of televised, urbanistic, and commercial production. They are all the less visible because the networks framing them are becoming more and more tightly woven, flexible, and totalitarian. They are thus protean in form, blending in with their surroundings, and liable to disappear into the colonizing organizations whose products leave no room where the consumers can mark their activity. The child still scrawls and daubs on his schoolbooks; even if he is punished for this crime, he has made a space for himself and signs his existence as an author on it. The television viewer cannot write anything on the screen of his set. He has been dislodged from the product; he plays no role in its apparition. He loses his author's rights and becomes, or so it seems, a pure receiver, the mirror of a multiform and narcissistic actor. Pushed to the limit, he would be the image of appliances that no longer need him in order to produce themselves, the reproduction of a "celibate machine."<sup>3</sup>

In reality, a rationalized, expansionist, centralized, spectacular and clamorous production is confronted by an entirely different kind of production, called "consumption" and characterized by its ruses, its fragmentation (the result of the circumstances), its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi-invisibility, since it shows itself not in its own products (where would it place them?) but in an art of using those imposed on it.

The cautious yet fundamental inversions brought about by consumption in other societies have long been studied. Thus the spectacular victory of Spanish colonization over the indigenous Indian cultures was diverted from its intended aims by the use made of it: even when they



were subjected, indeed even when they accepted their subjection, the Indians often used the laws, practices, and representations that were imposed on them by force or by fascination to ends other than those of their conquerors; they made something else out of them; they subverted them from within—not by rejecting them or by transforming them (though that occurred as well), but by many different ways of using them in the service of rules, customs or convictions foreign to the colonization which they could not escape.<sup>4</sup> They metaphorized the dominant order: they made it function in another register. They remained other within the system which they assimilated and which assimilated them externally. They diverted it without leaving it. Procedures of consumption maintained their difference in the very space that the occupier was organizing.

Is this an extreme example? No, even if the resistance of the Indians was founded on a memory tattooed by oppression, a past inscribed on their body.<sup>5</sup> To a lesser degree, the same process can be found in the use made in "popular" milieus of the cultures diffused by the "elites" that produce language. The imposed knowledge and symbolisms become objects manipulated by practitioners who have not produced them. The language produced by a certain social category has the power to extend its conquests into vast areas surrounding it, "deserts" where nothing equally articulated seems to exist, but in doing so it is caught in the trap of its assimilation by a jungle of procedures rendered invisible to the conqueror by the very victories he seems to have won. However spectacular it may be, his privilege is likely to be only apparent if it merely serves as a framework for the stubborn, guileful, everyday practices that make use of it. What is called "popularization" or "degradation" of a culture is from this point of view a partial and caricatural aspect of the revenge that utilizing tactics take on the power that dominates production. In any case, the consumer cannot be identified or qualified by the newspapers or commercial products he assimilates: between the person (who uses them) and these products (indexes of the "order" which is imposed on him), there is a gap of varying proportions opened by the use that he makes of them.

Use must thus be analyzed in itself. There is no lack of models, especially so far as language is concerned; language is indeed the privileged terrain on which to discern the formal rules proper to such practices. Gilbert Ryle, borrowing Saussure's distinction between "*langue*" (a system) and "*parole*" (an act), compared the former to a fund of capital

and the latter to the operations it makes possible: on the one hand, a stock of materials, on the other, transactions and uses.<sup>6</sup> In the case of consumption, one could almost say that production furnishes the capital and that users, like renters, acquire the right to operate on and with this fund without owning it. But the comparison is valid only for the relation between the knowledge of a language and "speech acts." From this alone can be derived a series of questions and categories which have permitted us, especially since Bar-Hillel's work, to open up within the study of language (*semiosis* or *semiotics*) a particular area (called *pragmatics*) devoted to use, notably indexical expressions, that is, "words and sentences of which the reference cannot be determined without knowledge of the context of use."<sup>7</sup>

*Enunciata*  
We shall return later to these inquiries which have illuminated a whole region of everyday practices (the use of language); at this point, it suffices to note that they are based on a problematics of enunciation.<sup>8</sup> By situating the act in relation to its circumstances, "contexts of use" draw attention to the traits that specify the act of speaking (or practice of language) and are its effects. Enunciation furnishes a model of these characteristics, but they can also be discovered in the relation that other practices (walking, residing, etc.) entertain with non-linguistic systems. Enunciation presupposes: (1) a realization of the linguistic system through a speech act that actualizes some of its potential (language is real only in the act of speaking); (2) an appropriation of language by the speaker who uses it; (3) the postulation of an interlocutor (real or fictive) and thus the constitution of a relational contract or allocution (one speaks to someone); (4) the establishment of a present through the act of the "I" who speaks, and conjointly, since "the present is properly the source of time," the organization of a temporality (the present creates a before and an after) and the existence of a "now" which is the presence to the world.<sup>9</sup>

These elements (realizing, appropriating, being inscribed in relations, being situated in time) make of enunciation, and secondarily of use, a nexus of circumstances, a nexus adherent to the "context" from which it can be distinguished only by abstraction. Indissociable from the present *instant*, from particular circumstances and from a *faire* (a peculiar way of doing things, of producing language and of modifying the dynamics of a relation) (the speech act is at the same time a use of language and an operation performed on it) We can attempt to apply this model to many non-linguistic operations by taking as our hypothesis that all these uses concern consumption.

We must, however, clarify the nature of these operations from another angle, not on the basis of the relation they entertain with a system or an order, but insofar as power relationships define the networks in which they are inscribed and delimit the circumstances from which they can profit. In order to do so, we must pass from a linguistic frame of reference to a polemological one. We are concerned with battles or games between the strong and the weak, and with the "actions" which remain possible for the latter.

*Strong/weak doesn't seem like a necessary opposition  
Strategies and tactics*

Unrecognized producers, poets of their own affairs, trailblazers in the jungles of functionalist rationality, consumers produce something resembling the "*lignes d'erre*" described by Deligny.<sup>10</sup> They trace "indeterminate trajectories"<sup>11</sup> that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written, and prefabricated space through which they move. They are sentences that remain unpredictable within the space ordered by the organizing techniques of systems. Although they use as their material the vocabularies of established languages (those of television, newspapers, the supermarket or city planning), although they remain within the framework of prescribed syntaxes (the temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic organizations of places, etc.), these "traverses" remain heterogeneous to the systems they infiltrate and in which they sketch out the guileful ruses of different interests and desires. They circulate, come and go, overflow and drift over an imposed terrain, like the snowy waves of the sea slipping in among the rocks and defiles of an established order.

Statistics can tell us virtually nothing about the currents in this sea theoretically governed by the institutional frameworks that it in fact gradually erodes and displaces. Indeed, it is less a matter of a liquid circulating in the interstices of a solid than of different *movements* making use of the elements of the terrain. Statistical study is satisfied with classifying, calculating and tabulating these elements—"lexical" units, advertising words, television images, manufactured products, constructed places, etc.—and they do it with categories and taxonomies that conform to those of industrial or administrative production. Hence such study can grasp only the material used by consumer practices—a material which is obviously that imposed on everyone by production—and not the *formality* proper to these practices, their surreptitious and guileful

*waves/rocks*

*stats*

"movement," that is, the very activity of "making do." The strength of these computations lies in their ability to divide, but this analytical ability eliminates the possibility of representing the tactical trajectories which, according to their own criteria, select fragments taken from the vast ensembles of production in order to compose new stories with them.

What is counted is what is used, not the ways of using. Paradoxically, the latter become invisible in the universe of codification and generalized transparency. Only the effects (the quantity and locus of the consumed products) of these waves that flow in everywhere remain perceptible. They circulate without being seen, discernible only through the objects that they move about and erode. The practices of consumption are the ghosts of the society that carries their name. Like the "spirits" of former times, they constitute the multiform and occult postulate of productive activity.

In order to give an account of these practices, I have resorted to the category of "trajectory."<sup>12</sup> It was intended to suggest a temporal movement through space, that is, the unity of a diachronic succession of points through which it passes, and not the figure that these points form on a space that is supposed to be synchronic or achronic. Indeed, this "representation" is insufficient, precisely because a trajectory is drawn, and time and movement are thus reduced to a line that can be seized as a whole by the eye and read in a single moment, as one projects onto a map the path taken by someone walking through a city. However useful this "flattening out" may be, it transforms the *temporal* articulation of places into a *spatial* sequence of points. A graph takes the place of an operation. A reversible sign (one that can be read in both directions, once it is projected onto a map) is substituted for a practice indissociable from particular moments and "opportunities," and thus irreversible (one cannot go backward in time, or have another chance at missed opportunities). It is thus a mark *in place of* acts, a relic in place of performances: it is only their remainder, the sign of their erasure. Such a projection postulates that it is possible to take the one (the mark) for the other (operations articulated on occasions). This is a *quid pro quo* typical of the reductions which a functionalist administration of space must make in order to be effective.

A distinction between strategies and tactics appears to provide a more adequate initial schema. I call a strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject

*Stats*

\*

*movement in  
time/  
space*

*strategy*

strategy  
36

the ménage?

with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed. As in management, every "strategic" rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its "own" place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an "environment." A Cartesian attitude, if you wish: it is an effort to delimit one's own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the Other. It is also the typical attitude of modern science, politics, and military strategy.

The establishment of a break between a place appropriated as one's own and its other is accompanied by important effects, some of which we must immediately note:

(1) The "proper" is a triumph of place over time. It allows one to capitalize acquired advantages, to prepare future expansions, and thus to give oneself a certain independence with respect to the variability of circumstances. It is a mastery of time through the foundation of an autonomous place.

(2) It is also a mastery of places through sight. The division of space makes possible a panoptic practice proceeding from a place whence the eye can transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured, and thus control and "include" them within its scope of vision.<sup>13</sup> To be able to see (far into the distance) is also to be able to predict, to run ahead of time by reading a space.

(3) It would be legitimate to define the power of knowledge by this ability to transform the uncertainties of history into readable spaces. But it would be more correct to recognize in these "strategies" a specific type of knowledge, one sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with one's own place. Thus military or scientific strategies have always been inaugurated through the constitution of their "own" areas (autonomous cities, "neutral" or "independent" institutions, laboratories pursuing "disinterested" research, etc.). In other words, a certain power is the precondition of this knowledge and not merely its effect or its attribute. It makes this knowledge possible and at the same time determines its characteristics. It produces itself in and through this knowledge.

By contrast with a strategy (whose successive shapes introduce a certain play into this formal schema and whose link with a particular historical configuration of rationality should also be clarified), a tactic is

for the ménage:  
work, purchase  
food + furniture  
communications  
w/ neighbors  
the "face" one  
shows to others  
not in household

Tactic

tactics  
2

a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. It does not have the means to keep to itself, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection: it is a maneuver "within the enemy's field of vision," as von Bülow put it,<sup>14</sup> and within enemy territory. It does not, therefore, have the options of planning general strategy and viewing the adversary as a whole within a district, visible, and objectifiable space. It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage of "opportunities" and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids. What it wins it cannot keep. This nowhere gives a tactic mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment. It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse.

In short, a tactic is an art of the weak. Clausewitz noted this fact in discussing deception in his treatise *On War*. The more a power grows, the less it can allow itself to mobilize part of its means in the service of deception: it is dangerous to deploy large forces for the sake of appearances; this sort of "demonstration" is generally useless and "the gravity of bitter necessity makes direct action so urgent that it leaves no room for this sort of game." One deploys his forces, one does not take chances with feints. Power is bound by its very visibility. In contrast, trickery is possible for the weak, and often it is his only possibility, as a "last resort." "The weaker the forces at the disposition of the strategist, the more the strategist will be able to use deception."<sup>15</sup> I translate: the more the strategy is transformed into tactics.

Clausewitz also compares trickery to wit: "Just as wit involves a certain legerdemain relative to ideas and concepts, trickery is a sort of legerdemain relative to acts."<sup>16</sup> This indicates the mode in which a tactic, which is indeed a form of legerdemain, takes an order by surprise. The art of "pulling tricks" involves a sense of the opportunities afforded by a particular occasion. Through procedures that Freud makes explicit with reference to wit,<sup>17</sup> a tactic boldly juxtaposes diverse elements in order suddenly to produce a flash shedding a different light on the language of

ex: hitting someone would put forward the idea that they deserved it: see things my way

a place and to strike the hearer. Cross-cuts, fragments, cracks and lucky hits in the framework of a system, consumers' ways of operating are the practical equivalents of wit.

Lacking its own place, lacking a view of the whole, limited by the blindness (which may lead to perspicacity) resulting from combat at close quarters, limited by the possibilities of the moment, a tactic is determined by the absence of power just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power. From this point of view, the dialectic of a tactic may be illuminated by the ancient art of sophistic. As the author of a great "strategic" system, Aristotle was already very interested in the procedures of this enemy which perverted, as he saw it, the order of truth. He quotes a formula of this protean, quick, and surprising adversary that, by making explicit the basis of sophistic, can also serve finally to define a tactic as I understand the term here: it is a matter, Corax said, of "making the worse argument seem the better."<sup>18</sup> In its paradoxical concision, this formula delineates the relationship of forces that is the starting point for an intellectual creativity as persistent as it is subtle, tireless, ready for every opportunity, scattered over the terrain of the dominant order and foreign to the rules laid down and imposed by a rationality founded on established rights and property.

In sum, strategies are actions which, thanks to the establishment of a place of power (the property of a proper), elaborate theoretical places (systems and totalizing discourses) capable of articulating an ensemble of physical places in which forces are distributed. They combine these three types of places and seek to master each by means of the others. They thus privilege spatial relationships. At the very least they attempt to reduce temporal relations to spatial ones through the analytical attribution of a proper place to each particular element and through the combinatory organization of the movements specific to units or groups of units. The model was military before it became "scientific." Tactics are procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to (time) to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation, to the rapidity of the movements that change the organization of a space, to the relations among successive moments in an action, to the possible intersections of durations and heterogeneous rhythms, etc. In this respect, the difference corresponds to two historical options regarding action and security (options that moreover have more to do with constraints than with possibilities): strategies pin their hopes on the resistance that the establishment of a place offers to the erosion of time; tactics on a clever

Perhaps if the other person is winning, or leaving?

utilization of time, of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power. Even if the methods practiced by the everyday art of war never present themselves in such a clear form, it nevertheless remains the case that the two ways of acting can be distinguished according to whether they bet on place or on time.

### The rhetorics of practice, ancient ruses

Various theoretical comparisons will allow us better to characterize the tactics or the polemology of the "weak." The "figures" and "turns" analyzed by rhetoric are particularly illuminating in this regard. Freud already noticed this fact and used them in his studies on wit and on the forms taken by the return of the repressed within the field of an order: verbal economy and condensation, double meanings and misinterpretations, displacements and alliterations, multiple uses of the same material, etc.<sup>19</sup> There is nothing surprising about these homologies between practical ruses and rhetorical movements. In relation to the legalities of syntax and "proper" sense, that is, in relation to the general definition of a "proper" (as opposed to what is not "proper"), the good and bad tricks of rhetoric are played on the terrain that has been set aside in this way. They are manipulations of language relative to occasions and are intended to seduce, captivate, or invert the linguistic position of the addressee.<sup>20</sup> Whereas grammar watches over the "propriety" of terms, rhetorical alterations (metaphorical drifts, elliptical condensations, metonymic miniaturizations, etc.) point to the use of language by speakers in particular situations of ritual or actual linguistic combat. They are the indexes of consumption and of the interplay of forces. They depend on a problematics of enunciation. In addition, although (or because) they are excluded in principle from scientific discourse, these "ways of speaking" provide the analysis of "ways of operating" with a repertory of models and hypotheses. After all, they are merely variants within a general semiotics of tactics. To be sure, in order to work out that semiotics, it would be necessary to review arts of thinking and acting other than the one that the articulation of a certain rationality has founded on the delimitation of a proper: from the sixty-four hexagrams of the Chinese *I-Ching*<sup>21</sup> or the Greek *mētis*<sup>22</sup> to the Arabic *hīla*,<sup>23</sup> other "logics" can be discerned.

I am not concerned directly here with the constitution of such a semiotics, but rather with suggesting some ways of thinking about everyday practices of consumers, supposing from the start that they are

of a tactical nature. Dwelling, moving about, speaking, reading, shopping, and cooking are activities that seem to correspond to the characteristics of tactical ruses and surprises: clever tricks of the "weak" within the order established by the "strong," an art of putting one over on the adversary on his own turf, hunter's tricks, maneuverable, polymorph mobilities, jubilant, poetic, and warlike discoveries.

Perhaps these practices correspond to an ageless art which has not only persisted through the institutions of successive political orders but goes back much farther than our histories and forms strange alliances preceding the frontiers of humanity. These practices present in fact a curious analogy, and a sort of immemorial link, to the simulations, tricks, and disguises that certain fishes or plants execute with extraordinary virtuosity. The procedures of this art can be found in the farthest reaches of the domain of the living, as if they managed to surmount not only the strategic distributions of historical institutions but also the break established by the very institution of consciousness. They maintain formal continuities and the permanence of a memory without language, from the depths of the oceans to the streets of our great cities.

In any event, on the scale of contemporary history, it also seems that the generalization and expansion of technocratic rationality have created, between the links of the system, a fragmentation and explosive growth of these practices which were formerly regulated by stable local units. Tactics are more and more frequently going off their tracks. Cut loose from the traditional communities that circumscribed their functioning, they have begun to wander everywhere in a space which is becoming at once more homogeneous and more extensive. Consumers are transformed into immigrants. The system in which they move about is too vast to be able to fix them in one place, but too constraining for them ever to be able to escape from it and go into exile elsewhere. There is no longer an elsewhere. Because of this, the "strategic" model is also transformed, as if defeated by its own success: it was by definition based on the definition of a "proper" distinct from everything else; but now that "proper" has become the whole. It could be that, little by little, it will exhaust its capacity to transform itself and constitute only the space (just as totalitarianism as the cosmos of ancient times) in which a cybernetic society will arise, the scene of the Brownian movements of invisible and innumerable tactics. One would thus have a proliferation of aleatory and indeterminate manipulations within an immense framework of socioeconomic constraints and securities: myriads of almost invisible movements, playing on the more and more refined texture of a place that is even,

continuous, and constitutes a proper place for all people. Is this already the present or the future of the great city?

Leaving aside the multimillennial archeology of ruses as well as the possibility of their anthill-like future, the study of a few current everyday tactics ought not to forget the horizon from which they proceed, nor, at the other extreme, the horizon towards which they are likely to go. The evocation of these perspectives on the distant past or future at least allows us to resist the effects of the fundamental but often exclusive and obsessive analysis that seeks to describe institutions and the mechanisms of repression. The privilege enjoyed by the problematics of repression in the field of research should not be surprising: scientific institutions belong to the system which they study, they conform to the well-known genre of the family story (an ideological criticism does not change its functioning in any way; the criticism merely creates the appearance of a distance for scientists who are members of the institution); they even add the disturbing charm of devils or bogey-men whose stories are told during long evenings around the family hearth. But this elucidation of the apparatus by itself has the disadvantage of not seeing practices which are heterogeneous to it and which it represses or thinks it represses. Nevertheless, they have every chance of surviving this apparatus too, and, in any case, they are also part of social life, and all the more resistant because they are more flexible and adjusted to perpetual mutation. When one examines this fleeting and permanent reality carefully, one has the impression of exploring the night-side of societies, a night longer than their day, a dark sea from which successive institutions emerge, a maritime immensity on which socioeconomic and political structures appear as ephemeral islands.

The imaginary landscape of an inquiry is not without value, even if it is without rigor. It restores what was earlier called "popular culture," but it does so in order to transform what was represented as a matrix-force of history into a mobile infinity of tactics. It thus keeps before our eyes the structure of a social imagination in which the problem constantly takes different forms and begins anew. It also wards off the effects of an analysis which necessarily grasps these practices only on the margins of a technical apparatus, at the point where they alter or defeat its instruments. It is the study itself which is marginal with respect to the phenomena studied. The landscape that represents these phenomena in an imaginary mode thus has an overall corrective and therapeutic value in resisting their reduction by a lateral examination. It at least assures their presence as ghosts. This return to another scene thus reminds us of

Foucault

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 D  tienne, 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 D  tienne). 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