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Part I: The Field of Cultural Production, Chapter 1

The Market of Symbolic Goods*

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Theories and schools, like microbes
and globules, devour each other and,
through their struggle, ensure the
continuity of life.

M. Proust, *Sodom and Gomorra*

THE LOGIC OF THE PROCESS OF AUTONOMIZATION

Dominated by external sources of legitimacy throughout the middle ages, part of the Renaissance and, in the case of French court life, throughout the classical age, intellectual and artistic life has progressively freed itself from aristocratic and ecclesiastical tutelage as well as from its aesthetic and ethical demands. This process is correlated with the constant growth of a public of potential consumers, of increasing social diversity, which guarantee the producers of symbolic goods minimal conditions of economic independence and, also, a competing principle of legitimacy. It is also correlated with the constitution of an ever-growing, ever more diversified corps of producers and merchants of symbolic goods, who tend to reject all constraints apart from technical imperatives and credentials. Finally, it is correlated with the multiplication and diversification of agencies of consecration placed in a situation of competition for cultural legitimacy: not only academies and salons, but also institutions for diffusion, such as publishers and theatrical impresarios, whose selective operations are invested with a truly cultural legitimacy even if they are subordinated to economic and social constraints.¹

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¹ 'Historically regarded,' observes Schücking, 'the publisher begins to play a part at the stage at which the patron disappears, in the eighteenth century, (with a transition period, in which the publisher was dependent on subscriptions, which in turn largely depended on relations between authors and their patrons). There is

The autonomization of intellectual and artistic production is thus correlative with the constitution of a socially distinguishable category of professional artists or intellectuals who are less inclined to recognize rules other than the specifically intellectual or artistic traditions handed down by their predecessors, which serve as a point of departure or rupture. They are also increasingly in a position to liberate their products from all external constraints, whether the moral censure and aesthetic programmes of a proselytizing church or the academic controls and directives of political power, inclined to regard art as an instrument of propaganda. This process of autonomization is comparable to those in other realms. Thus, as Engels wrote to Conrad Schmidt, the appearance of law as such, i.e. as an 'autonomous field', is correlated with a division of labour that led to the constitution of a body of professional jurists. Max Weber similarly notes, in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, that the 'rationalization' of religion owes its own 'auto-normativity'—relative independence of economic factors—to the fact that it rests on the development of a priestly corps with its own interests.

The process leading to the development of art as art is also correlated with the transformed relations between artists and non-artists and hence, with other artists. This transformation leads to the establishment of a relatively autonomous artistic field and to a fresh definition of the artist's function as well as that of his art. Artistic development towards autonomy progressed at different rates, according to the society and field of artistic life in question. It began in *quattrocento* Florence, with the affirmation of a truly artistic legitimacy, i.e. the right of artists to legislate within their own sphere—that of form and style—free from subordination to religious or political interests. It was interrupted for two centuries under the influence of absolute monarchy and—with the Counter-reformation—of the Church; both were eager to procure artists a social position and function distinct from the manual labourers, yet not integrated into the ruling class.

This movement towards artistic autonomy accelerated abruptly with the Industrial Revolution and the Romantic reaction. The development of a veritable cultural industry and, in particular, the relationship between the daily press and literature, encouraging the mass production of works produced by quasi-industrial methods—such as the serialized story (or, in other fields, melodrama

no uncertainty about this among the poets. And indeed, publishing firms such as Dodsley in England or Cotta in Germany gradually became a source of authority. Schücking shows, similarly, that the influence of theatre managers (*Dramaturgs*) can be even greater where, as in the case of Otto Brahm, 'an individual may help to determine the general trend of taste' of an entire epoch through his choices. See L. L. Schücking, *The Sociology of Literary Taste*, trans. E. W. Dicke (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 50-2.

and vaudeville)—coincides with the extension of the public, resulting from the expansion of primary education, which turned new classes (including women) into consumers of culture.² The development of the system of cultural production is accompanied by a process of differentiation generated by the diversity of the publics at which the different categories of producers aim their products. Symbolic goods are a two-faced reality, a commodity and a symbolic object. Their specifically cultural value and their commercial value remain relatively independent, although the economic sanction may come to reinforce their cultural consecration.³

By an apparent paradox, as the art market began to develop, writers and artists found themselves able to affirm the irreducibility of the work of art to the status of a simple article of merchandise and, at the same time, the singularity of the intellectual and artistic condition. The process of differentiation among fields of practice produces conditions favourable to the construction of ‘pure’ theories (of economics, politics, law, art, etc.), which reproduce the prior differentiation of the social structures in the initial abstraction by which they are constituted.⁴ The emergence of the work of art as a commodity, and the appearance of a distinct category of producers of symbolic goods specifically destined for the market, to some extent prepared the ground for a pure theory of art, that is, of art as art. It did so by dissociating art-as-commodity from art-as-pure-signification, produced according to a purely symbolic intent for purely symbolic

² Thus, Watt gives a good description of the correlative transformation of the modes of literary reception and production respectively, conferring its most specific characteristics on the novel and in particular the appearance of rapid, superficial, easily forgotten reading, as well as rapid and prolix writing, linked with the extension of the public. See I. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957).

³ The adjective ‘cultural’ will be used from now on as shorthand for ‘intellectual, artistic and scientific’ (as in cultural consecration, legitimacy production, value, etc.)

⁴ At a time when the influence of linguistic structuralism is leading some sociologists towards a pure theory of sociology, it would undoubtedly be useful to enrich the *sociology of pure theory*, sketched here, and to analyse the social conditions of the appearance of theories such as those of Kelsen de Saussure or Walras, and of the formal and immanent science of art such as that proposed by Wölfflin. In this last case, one can see clearly that the very intention of extracting the formal properties of all possible artistic expression assumed that the process of autonomization and purification of the work of art and of artistic perception had already been effected.

appropriation, that is, for disinterested delectation, irreducible to simple material possession.

The ending of dependence on a patron or collector and, more generally, the ending of dependence upon direct commissions, with the development of an impersonal market, tends to increase the liberty of writers and artists. They can hardly fail to notice, however, that this liberty is purely formal; it constitutes no more than the condition of their submission to the laws of the market of symbolic goods, that is, to a form of demand which necessarily lags behind the supply of the commodity (in this case, the work of art). They are reminded of this demand through sales figures and other forms of pressure, explicit or diffuse, exercised by publishers, theatre managers, art dealers. It follows that those 'inventions' of Romanticism—the representation of culture as a kind of superior reality, irreducible to the vulgar demands of economics, and the ideology of free, disinterested 'creation' founded on the spontaneity of innate inspiration—appear to be just so many reactions to the pressures of an anonymous market. It is significant that the appearance of an anonymous 'bourgeois' public, and the irruption of methods or techniques borrowed from the economic order, such as collective production or advertising for cultural products, coincides with the rejection of bourgeois aesthetics and with the methodical attempt to distinguish the artist and the intellectual from other commoners by positing the unique products of 'creative genius' against interchangeable products, utterly and completely reducible to their commodity value. Concomitantly, the absolute autonomy of the 'creator' is affirmed, as is his claim to recognize as recipient of his art none but an *alter ego*—another 'creator'—whose understanding of works of art presupposes an identical 'creative' disposition.

THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE FIELD OF RESTRICTED PRODUCTION

The field of production and circulation of symbolic goods is defined as the system of objective relations among different instances, functionally defined by their role in the division of labour of production, reproduction and diffusion of symbolic goods. The field of production per se owes its own structure to the opposition between the *field of restricted production* as a system producing cultural goods (and the instruments for appropriating these goods) objectively destined for a public of producers of cultural goods, and the *field of large-scale cultural production*, specifically organized with a view to the production of cultural goods destined for non-producers of cultural goods, 'the public at large'. In contrast to the field of large-scale cultural production, which submits to the laws of competition for the conquest of the largest possible market, the field of restricted production tends to develop its own criteria for the evaluation of its

products, thus achieving the truly cultural recognition accorded by the peer group whose members are both privileged clients and competitors.

The field of restricted production can only become a system objectively producing for producers by breaking with the public of nonproducers, that is, with the non-intellectual fractions of the dominant class. This rupture is only the inverse image, in the cultural sphere, of the relations that develop between intellectuals and the dominant fractions of the dominant class in the economic and political sphere. From 1830 literary society isolated itself in an aura of indifference and rejection towards the buying and reading public, i.e. towards the 'bourgeois'. By an effect of circular causality, separation and isolation engender further separation and isolation, and cultural production develops a dynamic autonomy. Freed from the censorship and auto-censorship consequent on direct confrontation with a public foreign to the profession, and encountering within the corps of producers itself a public at once of critics and accomplices, it tends to obey its own logic, that of the continual outbidding inherent to the dialectic of cultural distinction.

The autonomy of a field of restricted production can be measured by its power to define its own criteria for the production and evaluation of its products. This implies translation of all external determinations in conformity with its own principles of functioning. Thus, the more cultural producers form a closed field of competition for cultural legitimacy, the more the internal demarcations appear irreducible to any external factors of economic, political or social differentiation.⁵

It is significant that the progress of the field of restricted production towards autonomy is marked by an increasingly distinct tendency of criticism to devote itself to the task, not of producing the instruments of appropriation—the more imperatively demanded by a work the further it separates itself from the public—but of providing a 'creative' interpretation for the benefit of the 'creators'. And so, tiny 'mutual admiration societies' grew up, closed in upon their own

⁵ Here, as elsewhere, the laws objectively governing social relations tend to constitute themselves as norms that are explicitly professed and assumed. In this way, as the field's autonomy grows, or as one moves towards the most autonomous sectors of the field, the direct introduction of external powers increasingly attracts disapproval; as the members of autonomous sectors consider such an introduction as a dereliction, they tend to sanction it by the symbolic exclusion of the guilty. This is shown, for instance, by the discredit attaching to any mode of thought which is suspected of reintroducing the total, brutal classificatory principles of a political order into intellectual life; and it is as if the field exercised its autonomy to the maximum, in order to render unknowable the external principles of opposition (especially the political ones) or, at least intellectually, to 'overdetermine' them by subordinating them to specifically intellectual principles.

esotericism, as, simultaneously, signs of a new solidarity between artist and critic emerged. This new criticism, no longer feeling itself qualified to formulate peremptory verdicts, placed itself unconditionally at the service of the artist. It attempted scrupulously to decipher his or her intentions, while paradoxically excluding the public of non-producers from the entire business by attesting, through its 'inspired' readings, the intelligibility of works which were bound to remain unintelligible to those not sufficiently integrated into the producers' field.⁶ Intellectuals and artists always look suspiciously—though not without a certain fascination—at dazzlingly successful works and authors, sometimes to the extent of seeing worldly failure as a guarantee of salvation in the hereafter: among other reasons for this, the interference of the 'general public' is such that it threatens the field's claims to a monopoly of cultural consecration. It follows that the gulf between the hierarchy of producers dependent on 'public success' (measured by volume of sales or fame outside the body of producers) and the hierarchy dependent upon the degree of recognition within the peer competitor group undoubtedly constitutes the best indicator of the autonomy of the field of restricted production, that is, of the disjunction between its own principles of evaluation and those that the 'general public'—and especially the nonintellectual fraction of the dominant class—applies to its productions.

No one has ever completely extracted all the implications of the fact that the writer, the artist, or even the scientist writes not only for a public, but for a public of equals who are also competitors. Few people depend as much as artists and intellectuals do for their self-image upon the image others, and particularly other writers and artists, have of them. 'There are', writes Jean-Paul Sartre, 'qualities that we acquire only through the judgements of others.'⁷ This is especially so for the quality of a writer, artist or scientist, which is so difficult to define because it exists only in, and through, co-optation, understood as the circular relations of reciprocal recognition among peers.⁸ Any act of cultural production implies an affirmation of its claim to cultural legitimacy:⁹ when different producers confront

⁶ 'As for criticism, it hides under big words the explanations it no longer knows how to furnish. Remembering Albert Wolff, Bourde, Brunetière or France, the critic, for fear of failing, like his predecessors, to recognize artists of genius, no longer judges at all' (T. Lethève, *Impressionistes et symbolistes devant la presse* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1959), p. 276).

⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 98.

⁸ In this sense, the intellectual field represents the almost complete model of a social universe knowing no principles of differentiation or hierarchization other than specifically symbolic distinctions.

⁹ In this sense, the intellectual field represents the almost complete model of a social universe knowing no principles of differentiation or hierarchization other than specifically symbolic distinctions.

each other, it is still in the name of their claims to orthodoxy or, in Max Weber's terms, to the legitimate and monopolized use of a certain class of symbolic goods; when they are recognized, it is their claim to orthodoxy that is being recognized. As witnessed by the fact that oppositions express themselves in terms of reciprocal excommunication, the field of restricted production can never be dominated by one orthodoxy without continuously being dominated by the general question of orthodoxy itself, that is, by the question of the criteria defining the legitimate exercise of a certain type of cultural practice. It follows that the degree of autonomy enjoyed by a field of restricted production is measurable by the degree to which it is capable of functioning as a specific market, generating a specifically cultural type of scarcity and value irreducible to the economic scarcity and value of the goods in question. To put it another way, the more the field is capable of functioning as a field of competition for cultural legitimacy, the more individual production must be oriented towards the search for culturally pertinent features endowed with value in the field's own economy. This confers properly cultural value on the producers by endowing them with marks of distinction (a speciality, a manner, a style) recognized as such within the historically available cultural taxonomies.

Consequently, it is a structural law, and not a fault in nature, that draws intellectuals and artists into the dialectic of cultural distinction—often confused with an all-out quest for any difference that might raise them out of anonymity and insignificance.¹⁰ The same law also imposes limits within which the quest

¹⁰ Thus Proudhon, whose aesthetic writings all clearly express the petit-bourgeois representation of art and the artist, imputes the process of dissimulation generated from the intellectual field's internal logic to a cynical choice on the part of artists: 'On the one hand, artists will do anything, because everything is indifferent to them; on the other, they become infinitely specialized. Delivered up to themselves, without a guiding light, without compass, obedient to an inappropriately applied industrial law, they class themselves into genera and species, firstly according to the nature of commissions, and subsequently according to the method distinguishing them. Thus, there are church painters, historical painters, painters of battles, genre painters—that is, of anecdotes and comedy, portrait painters, landscape painters, animal painters, marine artists, painters of Venus, fantasy painters. This one cultivates the nude, another cloth. Then, each of them labours to distinguish himself by one of the competing methods of execution. One of them applies himself to drawing, the other to colour; this one cares for composition, that one for perspective, yet another for costume or local colour; this one shines through sentiment, another through the idealism or the realism of his figures; still another makes up for the nullity of his subjects by the finesse of his details. Each one labours to develop his trick, his style, his manner and, with the help of fashion, reputations are made and

may be carried on legitimately. The brutality with which a strongly integrated intellectual or artistic community condemns any unorthodox attempt at distinction bears witness to the fact that the community can affirm the autonomy of the specifically cultural orders only if it controls the dialectic of cultural distinction, continually liable to degenerate into an anomic quest for difference at any price.

It follows from all that has just been said that the principles of differentiation regarded as most legitimate by an autonomous field are those which most completely express the specificity of a determinate type of practice. In the field of art, for example, stylistic and technical principles tend to become the privileged subject of debate among producers (or their interpreters). Apart from laying bare the desire to exclude those artists suspected of submitting to external demands, the affirmation of the primacy of form over function, of the mode of representation over the object of representation, is the most specific expression of the field's claim to produce and impose the principles of a properly cultural legitimacy regarding both the production and the reception of an art-work.¹¹ Affirming the primacy of the saying over the thing said, sacrificing the subject to the manner in which it is treated, constraining language in order to draw attention to language, all this comes down to an affirmation of the specificity and the irreplaceability of the product and producer. Delacroix said, aptly, 'All subjects become good through the merits of their author. Oh! young artist, do you seek a subject? Everything is a subject; the subject is you yourself, your impression, your emotions before nature. You must look within yourself, and not around you.'¹² The true subject of the work of art is nothing other than the specifically artistic manner in which artists grasp the world, those infallible signs of his mastery of his art. Stylistic principles, in becoming the dominant object of position-takings and oppositions between producers, are ever more rigorously perfected and fulfilled in works of art. At the same time, they are ever more systematically affirmed in the theoretical discourse produced by and through confrontation. Because the logic of cultural distinction leads producers to

unmade' (P. J. Proudhon, *Contradictions économiques* (Paris: Riviere, 1939), p. 271).

¹¹ The emergence of the theory of art which, rejecting the classical conception of artistic production as the simple execution of a pre-existent internal model, turns artistic 'creation' into a sort of apparition that was unforeseeable for the artist himself—inspiration, genius, etc.—undoubtedly assumed the completion of the transformation of the social relations of production which, freeing artistic production from the directly and explicitly formulated order, permitted the conception of artistic labour as autonomous 'creation', and no longer as mere execution.

¹² E. Delacroix, *Oeuvres littéraires*, vol. 1 (Paris: Crès, 1923), p. 76.

develop original modes of expression—a kind of stylistic axiomatic in rupture with its antecedents—and to exhaust all the possibilities inherent in the conventional system of procedures, the different types of restricted production (painting, music, novels, theatre, poetry, etc.) are destined to fulfil themselves in their most specific aspects—those least reducible to any other form of expression.

The almost perfect circularity and reversibility of the relations of cultural production and consumption resulting from the objectively closed nature of the field of restricted production enable the development of symbolic production to take on the form of an almost reflexive history. The incessant explication and redefinition of the foundations of his work provoked by criticism or the work of others determines a decisive transformation of the relation between the producer and his work, which reacts, in turn, on the work itself.

Few works do not bear within them the imprint of the system of positions in relation to which their originality is defined; few works do not contain indications of the manner in which the author conceived the novelty of his undertaking or of what, in his own eyes, distinguished it from his contemporaries and precursors. The objectification achieved by criticism which elucidates the meaning objectively inscribed in a work, instead of subjecting it to normative judgements, tends to play a determining role in this process by stressing the efforts of artists and writers to realize their idiosyncrasy. The parallel variations in critical interpretation, in the producer's discourse, and even in the structure of the work itself, bear witness to the recognition of critical discourse by the producer—both because he feels himself to be recognized through it, and because he recognizes himself within it. The public meaning of a work in relation to which the author must define himself originates in the process of circulation and consumption dominated by the objective relations between the institutions and agents implicated in the process. The social relations which produce this public meaning are determined by the relative position these agents occupy in the structure of the field of restricted production. These relations, e.g. between author and publisher, publisher and critic, author and critic, are revealed as the ensemble of relations attendant on the 'publication' of the work, that is, its becoming a public object. In each of these relations, each of these agents engages not only his own image of other factors in the relationship (consecrated or exorcised author, avant-garde or traditional publisher, etc.) which depends on his relative position within the field, but also his image of the other factor's image of himself, i.e. of the social definition of his objective position in the field.

To appreciate the gulf separating experimental art, which originates in the field's own internal dialectic, from popular art forms, it suffices to consider the opposition between the evolutionary logic of popular language and that of literary language. As this restricted language is produced and reproduced in

accordance with social relations dominated by the quest for distinction, its use obeys what one might term 'the gratuitousness principle'. Its manipulation demands the almost reflexive knowledge of schemes of expression which are transmitted by an education explicitly aimed at inculcating the allegedly appropriate categories.

'Pure' poetry appears as the conscious and methodical application of a system of explicit principles which were at work, though only in a diffuse manner, in earlier writings. Its most specific effects, for example, derive from games of suspense and surprise, from the consecrated betrayal of expectations, and from the gratifying frustration provoked by archaism, preciousness, lexicological or syntactic dissonances, the destruction of stereotyped sounds or meaning sequences, ready-made formulae, *idéés reçues* and commonplaces. The recent history of music, whose evolution consists in the increasingly professionalized search for technical solutions to fundamentally technical problems, appears to be the culmination of a process of refinement which began the moment popular music became subject to the learned manipulation of professionals. But probably nowhere is this dynamic model of a field tending to closure more completely fulfilled than in the history of painting. Having banished narrative content with impressionism and recognizing only specifically pictorial principles, painting progressively repudiated all traces of naturalism and sensual hedonism. Painting was thus set on the road to an explicit employment of the most characteristically pictorial principles of painting, which was tantamount to the questioning of these principles and, hence, of painting itself.¹³

One need only compare the functional logic of the field of restricted production with the laws governing both the circulation of symbolic goods and the production of the consumers to perceive that such an autonomously developing field, making no reference to external demands, tends to nullify the conditions for its acceptance outside the field. To the extent that its products require extremely scarce instruments of appropriation, they are bound to precede their market or to have no clients at all, apart from producers themselves. Consequently they tend to fulfil socially distinctive functions, at first in conflicts between fractions of the dominant class and eventually, in relations among social classes. By an effect of circular causality, the structural gap between supply and demand contributes to the artists' determination to steep themselves in the search for 'originality' (with its concomitant ideology of the unrecognized or misunderstood 'genius'). This comes about, as Arnold Hauser has suggested,¹⁴ by

¹³ It can be seen that the history leading up to what has been called a 'denovelization' of the novel obeys the same type of logic.

¹⁴ 'As long as the opportunities on the art market remain favourable for the artist, the cultivation of individuality does not develop into a mania for originality—this

placing them in difficult economic circumstances, and, above all, by effectively ensuring the incommensurability of the specifically cultural value and economic value of a work.

THE FIELD OF INSTANCES OF REPRODUCTION AND CONSECRATION

Works produced by the field of restricted production are 'pure', 'abstract' and 'esoteric'. They are 'pure' because they demand of the receiver a specifically aesthetic disposition in accordance with the principles of their production. They are 'abstract' because they call for a multiplicity of specific approaches, in contrast with the undifferentiated art of primitive societies, which is unified within an immediately accessible spectacle involving music, dance, theatre and song.¹⁵ They are 'esoteric' for all the above reasons and because their complex structure continually implies tacit reference to the entire history of previous structures, and is accessible only to those who possess practical or theoretical mastery of a refined code, of successive codes, and of the code of these codes.

So, while consumption in the field of large-scale cultural production is more or less independent of the educational level of consumers (which is quite understandable, since this system tends to adjust to the level of demand), works of restricted art owe their specifically cultural rarity, and thus their function as elements of social distinction, to the rarity of the instruments with which they may be deciphered. This rarity is a function of the unequal distribution of the conditions underlying the acquisition of the specifically aesthetic disposition and of the codes indispensable to the deciphering of works belonging to the field of restricted production.¹⁶

does not happen until the age of mannerism, when new conditions on the art market create painful economic disturbances for the artist' (A. Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, vol. 2, trans. S. Godman (New York: Vintage, 1951), p. 71).

¹⁵ See J. Greenway, *Literature among the Primitives* (Hatboro: Folklore Associates, 1964), p. 37. On primitive art as a total and multiple art, produced by the group as a whole and addressed to the group as a whole, see also R. Firth, *Elements of Social Organization* (Boston: Beacon, 1963), pp. 155ff; H. Junod, *The Life of a South American Tribe* (London: Macmillan, 1927), p. 215; and B. Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1926), p. 31. On the transformation of the function and significance of the dance and festivals see J. Caro Baroja, 'El ritual de la danza en el País Vasco', *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares*, 20; 1-2 (1964).

¹⁶ For an analysis of the function of the educational system in the production of consumers endowed with a propensity and aptitude to consume learned works and in the reproduction of the unequal distribution of this propensity and this

It follows that a complete definition of the mode of restricted production must include not only those institutions which ensure the production of competent consumers, but also those which produce agents capable of renewing it. Consequently, one cannot fully comprehend the functioning of the field of restricted production as a site of competition for properly cultural consecration—i.e. legitimacy—and for the power to grant it unless one analyses the relationships between the various instances of consecration. These consist, on the one hand, of institutions which conserve the capital of symbolic goods, such as museums; and, on the other hand, of institutions (such as the educational system) which ensure the reproduction of agents imbued with the categories of action, expression, conception, imagination, perception, specific to the ‘cultivated disposition’.¹⁷

Just as in the case of the system of reproduction, in particular the educational system, so the field of production and diffusion can only be fully understood if one treats it as a field of competition for the monopoly of the legitimate exercise of symbolic violence. Such a construction allows us to define the field of restricted production as the scene of competition for the power to grant cultural consecration, but also as the system specifically designed to fulfil a consecration function as well as a system for reproducing producers of a determinate type of cultural goods, and the consumer capable of consuming them. All internal and external relations (including relations with their own work) that agents of production, reproduction and diffusion manage to establish are mediated by the structure of relations between the instances or institutions claiming to exercise a specifically cultural authority. In a given space of time a hierarchy of relations is established between the different domains, the works and the agents having a

aptitude, and, hence, of the *differential rarity* and the *distinctive value* of these works, see P. Bourdieu and A. Darbel, with Dominique Schnapper, *L’amour de l’art. Les musées d’art européens et leur public* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), published in English as *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*, trans. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Cambridge: Polity; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

¹⁷ The education system fulfils a culturally legitimizing function by reproducing, via the delimitation of what deserves to be conserved, transmitted and acquired, the distinction between the legitimate and the illegitimate way of dealing with legitimate works. The different sectors of the field of restricted production are very markedly distinguished by the degree to which they depend, for their reproduction, on generic institutions (such as the educational system), or on specific ones (such as the *École des Beaux Arts*, or the *Conservatoire de Musique*). Everything points to the fact that the proportion of contemporary producers having received an academic education is far smaller among painters (especially among the more avant-garde currents) than among musicians.

varying amount of legitimizing authority. This hierarchy, which is in fact dynamic, expresses the structure of objective relations of symbolic force between the producers of symbolic goods who produce for either a restricted or an unrestricted public and are consequently consecrated by differentially legitimized and legitimizing institutions. Thus it also includes the objective relations between producers and different agents of legitimation, specific institutions such as academies, museums, learned societies and the educational system; by their symbolic sanctions, especially by practising a form of co-optation,¹⁸ the principle of all manifestations of recognition, these authorities consecrate a certain type of work and a certain type of cultivated person. These agents of consecration, moreover, may be organizations which are not fully institutionalized: literary circles, critical circles, salons, and small groups surrounding a famous author or associating with a publisher, a review or a literary or artistic magazine. Finally, this hierarchy includes, of course, the objective relations between the various instances of legitimation. Both the function and the mode of functioning of the latter depend on their position in the hierarchical structure of the system they constitute; that is, they depend on the scope and kind of authority—conservative or challenging—these instances exercise or pretend to exercise over the public of cultural producers and, via their critical judgements, over the public at large.

By defending cultural orthodoxy or the sphere of legitimate culture against competing, schismatic or heretical messages, which may provoke radical demands and heterodox practices among various publics, the system of conservation and cultural consecration fulfils a function homologous to that of the Church which, according to Max Weber, should 'systematically establish and delimit the new victorious doctrine or defend the old one against prophetic attacks, determine what has and does not have sacred value, and make it part of the laity's faith'. Sainte-Beuve, together with Auger, whom he cites, quite naturally turns to religious metaphor to express the structurally determined logic of that legitimizing institution *par excellence*, the Académie Française: 'Once it comes to think of itself as an orthodox sanctuary (and it easily does so), the Académie needs some external heresy to combat. At that time, in 1817, lacking any other heresy, and the Romantics were either not yet born or had not yet reached manhood, it attacked the followers and imitators of Abbé Delille. [In 1824, Auger] opened the session with a speech amounting to a declaration of war

¹⁸ All forms of recognition—prizes, rewards and honours, election to an academy, a university, a scientific committee, invitation to a congress or to a university, publication in a scientific review or by a consecrated publishing house, in anthologies, mentions in the work of contemporaries, works on art history or the history of science, in encyclopedias and dictionaries, etc.—are just so many forms of *co-optation*, whose value depends on the very position of the co-optants in the hierarchy of consecration.

and a formal denunciation of Romanticism: “A new literary schism”, he said, “is appearing today.” “Many men, brought up with a religious respect for ancient teachings, consecrated by countless masterpieces, are worried by and nervous of the projects of this emergent sect, and seem to wish to be reassured.” This speech had a great effect: it brought happiness and jubilation to the adversaries. That witty swashbuckler, Henri Beyle (Stendhal), was to repeat it gaily in his pamphlets: “M. Auger said it, I’m a sectarian!” Obligated to receive M. Soumet that same year (25 November), M. Auger redoubled his anathemas against the Romantic dramatic form, “against that barbarian poetics they wish to praise” he said, and which violated, in every way, *literary orthodox*. Every sacramental word, *orthodoxy*, *sect*, *schism*, was uttered, and he could not blame himself if the Académie did not transform itself into a synod or a council’.¹⁹ The functions of reproduction and legitimation may, in accordance with historical traditions, be either consecrated into a single institution, as was the case in the seventeenth century with the French Académie Royale de Peinture,²⁰ or divided among different institutions such as the educational system, the academies, and official and semi-official institutions or diffusion (museums, theatres, operas, concert halls, etc.). To these may be added certain institutions which, though less widely recognized, are more narrowly expressive of the cultural producers, such as learned societies, literary circles, reviews or galleries; these are more inclined to reject the judgements of the canonical institutions the more intensely the cultural field asserts its autonomy.

However varied the structure of the relations among agents of preservation and consecration may be, the length of ‘the process of canonization’, culminating

¹⁹ C. A. Sainte-Beuve, ‘L’ Académie Française’, in *Paris-Guide, par les principaux écrivains et artistes de la France* (Paris: A. Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie, 1867), pp. 96-7.

²⁰ This academy, which accumulated the monopoly of the consecration of creators, of the transmission of consecrated works and traditions and even of production and the control of production, wielded, at the time of Le Brun, ‘a sovereign and universal supremacy over the world of art. For him [Le Brun], everything stopped at these two points: prohibition from teaching elsewhere than in the Academy; prohibition from practising without being of the Academy.’ Thus, ‘this sovereign company. . . possessed, during a quarter of a century, the exclusive privilege of carrying out all painting and sculpture ordered by the state and alone to direct, from one end of the kingdom to the other, the teaching of drawing: in Paris, in its own schools, outside of Paris, in subordinate schools, branch academies founded by it, placed under its direction, subject to its surveillance. Never had such a unified and concentrated system been applied, anywhere, to the production of the beautiful’ (L. Vitet, *L’ Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, Étude historique* (Paris: 1861), pp. 134, 176).

in consecration, appears to vary in proportion to the degree that their authority is widely recognized and can be durably imposed. Competition for consecration, which assumes and confers the power to consecrate, condemns those agents whose province is most limited to a state of perpetual emergency. Avant-garde critics fall into this category, haunted by the fear of compromising their prestige as discoverers by overlooking some discovery, and thus obliged to enter into mutual attestations of charisma, making them spokespersons and theoreticians, and sometimes even publicists and impresarios, for artists and their art. Academies (and the salons in the nineteenth century) or the corps of museum curators, both claiming a monopoly over the consecration of contemporary producers, are obliged to combine tradition and tempered innovation. And the educational system, claiming a monopoly over the consecration of works of the past and over the production and consecration (through diplomas) of cultural consumers, only posthumously accords that infallible mark of consecration, the elevation of works into 'classics' by their inclusion in curricula.

Among those characteristics of the educational system liable to affect the structure of its relations with other elements of the system of production and circulation of symbolic goods, the most important is surely its extremely slow rate of evolution. This structural inertia, deriving from its function of cultural conservation, is pushed to the limit by the logic which allows it to wield a monopoly over its own reproduction. Thus the educational system contributes to the maintenance of a disjunction between culture produced by the field of production (involving categories of perception related to new cultural products) and scholastic culture; the latter is 'routinized' and rationalized by—and in view of—its being inculcated. This disjunction manifests itself notably in the distinct schemes of perception and appreciation involved by the two kinds of culture. Products emanating from the field of restricted production require other schemes than those already mastered by the 'cultivated public'.

As indicated, it is impossible to understand the peculiar characteristics of restricted culture without appreciating its profound dependence on the educational system, the indispensable means of its reproduction and growth. Among the transformations which occur, the quasi-systematization and theorizing imposed on the inculcated content are rather less evident than their concomitant effects, such as 'routinization' and 'neutralization'.

The time-lag between cultural production and scholastic consecration, or, as is often said, between 'the school and living art', is not the only opposition between the field of restricted production and the system of institutions of cultural conservation and consecration. As the field of restricted production gains in autonomy, producers tend, as we have seen, to think of themselves as intellectuals or artists by divine right, as 'creators', that is as *auctors* 'claiming authority by virtue of their charisma' and attempting to impose an *auctoritas* that recognizes no other principle of legitimation than itself (or, which amounts to the

same thing, the authority of their peer group, which is often reduced, even in scientific activities, to a clique or a sect). They cannot but resist, moreover, the institutional authority which the educational system, as a consecratory institution, opposes to their competing claims. They are embittered by that type of teacher, the *lector*, who comments on and explains the work of others (as Gilbert de la Porrée has already pointed out), and whose own production owes much to the professional practice of its author and to the position he or she occupies within the system of production and circulation of symbolic goods. We are thus brought to the principle underlying the ambivalent relations between producers and scholastic authority.

If the denunciation of professional routine is to some extent consubstantial with prophetic ambition, even to the point where this may amount to official proof of one's charismatic qualifications, it is none the less true that producers cannot fail to pay attention to the judgements of university institutions. They cannot ignore the fact that it is these who will have the last word, and that ultimate consecration can only be accorded them by an authority whose legitimacy is challenged by their entire practice, their entire professional ideology. There are plenty of attacks upon the university which bear witness to the fact that their authors recognize the legitimacy of its verdicts sufficiently to reproach it for not having recognized them.

The objective relation between the field of production and the educational system is both strengthened, in one sense, and undermined, in another, by the action of social mechanisms tending to ensure a sort of pre-established harmony between positions and their occupants (elimination and self-elimination, early training and orientation by the family, co-optation by class or class fraction, etc.). These mechanisms orient very diverse individuals towards the obscure security of a cultural functionary's career or towards the prestigious vicissitudes of independent artistic or intellectual enterprise. Their social origins, predominantly petit-bourgeois in the former case and bourgeois in the latter, dispose them to import very divergent ambitions into their activities, as though they were measured in advance for the available positions.²¹

Before oversimplifying the opposition between petit-bourgeois institutional servants and the bohemians of the upper bourgeoisie, two points should be made. First, whether they are free entrepreneurs or state employees, intellectuals and artists occupy a dominated position in the field of power. And second, while the rebellious audacity of the *auctor* may find its limits within the inherited ethics and politics of a bourgeois primary education, artists and especially professors

²¹ The same systematic opposition can be seen in very different fields of artistic and intellectual activity: between researchers and teachers, for example, or between writers and teachers in higher education and, above all, between painters and musicians on the one hand, and teachers of drawing and music on the other.

coming from the petite bourgeoisie are most directly under the control of the state. The state, after all, has the power to orient intellectual production by means of subsidies, commissions, promotion, honorific posts, even decorations, all of which are for speaking or keeping silent, for compromise or abstention.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FIELD OF RESTRICTED PRODUCTION AND THE FIELD OF LARGE-SCALE PRODUCTION

Without analysing the relations uniting the system of consecratory institutions with the field of producers for producers, a full definition of the relationship between the field of restricted production and the field of large-scale production would have been impossible. The field of large-scale production, whose submission to external demand is characterized by the subordinate position of cultural producers in relation to the controllers of production and diffusion media, principally obeys the imperatives of competition for conquest of the market. The structure of its socially neutralized product is the result of the economic and social conditions of its production.²² *Middle-brow art* [*l'art moyen*], in its ideal-typical form, is aimed at a public frequently referred to as 'average' [*moyen*]. Even when it is more specifically aimed at a determinate category of non-producers, it may none the less eventually reach a socially heterogeneous public. Such is the case with the bourgeois theatre of the *belle-époque*, which is nowadays broadcast on television. It is legitimate to define middle-brow culture as the product of the system of large-scale production, because these works are entirely defined by their public. Thus, the very ambiguity of any definition of the 'average public' or the 'average viewer' very realistically designates the field of potential action which producers of this type of art and culture explicitly assign themselves, and which determines their technical and aesthetic choices.

The following remarks by a French television writer, author of some twenty novels, recipient of the *Prix Interallié* and the *Grand prix du roman de l'Académie Française*, bears this out: '*My sole ambition is to be easily read by the widest possible public. I never attempt a "masterpiece", and I do not write for intellectuals; I leave that to others.*

²² Where common and semi-scholarly discourse sees a homogeneous message producing a homogenized public ('massification'), it is necessary to see an undifferentiated message produced for a socially undifferentiated public at the cost of a methodical self-censorship leading to the abolition of all signs and factors of differentiation. To the most amorphous messages (e.g. large-circulation daily and weekly newspapers) there corresponds the most socially amorphous public.

For me, a good book is one that grips you within the first three pages.²³ It follows that the most specific characteristics of middle-brow art, such as reliance on immediately accessible technical processes and aesthetic effects, or the systematic exclusion of all potentially controversial themes, or those liable to shock this or that section of the public, derive from the social conditions in which it is produced.

Middle-brow art is the product of a productive system dominated by the quest for investment profitability; this creates the need for the widest possible public. It cannot, moreover, content itself with seeking to intensify consumption within a determinate social class; it is obliged to orient itself towards a generalization of the social and cultural composition of this public. This means that the production of goods, even when they are aimed at a specific statistical category (the young, women, football fans, stamp collectors, etc.), must represent a kind of highest social denominator.²⁴ On the other hand, middle-brow art is most often the culmination of transactions and compromises among the various categories of agents engaged in a technically and socially differentiated field of production. These transactions occur not only between controllers of the means of production and cultural producers—who are more or less locked into the role of pure technicians—but also between different categories of producers themselves. The latter come to use their specific competencies to guarantee a wide variety of cultural interests while simultaneously reactivating the self-censorship engendered by the vast industrial and bureaucratic organizations of cultural production through invocation of the ‘average spectator’.

In all fields of artistic life the same opposition between the two modes of production is to be observed, separated as much by the nature of the works produced and the political ideologies or aesthetic theories of those who disseminate them as by the social composition of the publics to which they are offered. As Bertrand Poirot-Delpech has observed, ‘Apart from drama critics, hardly anyone believes—or seems to believe—that the various spectacles demanding qualification by the word “theatre” still belong to a single and identical art form. The potential publics are so distinct; ideologies, modes of

²³ See *Télé-Sept-Jours*, 547 (October 1970), p. 45.

²⁴ In this, the strategy of producers of middle-brow art is radically opposed to the spontaneous strategy of the institutions for the diffusion of restricted art who, as we can see in the case of museums, aim at intensifying the practice of the classes from which consumers are recruited rather than at attracting new classes.

functioning, styles and actors on offer are so opposed, inimical even, that professional rules and solidarity have practically disappeared.²⁵

Consigned by the laws of profitability to ‘concentration’ and to integration into world-wide ‘show-business’ production circuits, the commercial theatre in France survives today in three forms: French (or English, etc.) versions of foreign shows supervised, distributed and, to some extent, organized by those responsible for the original show; repeats of the most successful works for the traditional commercial theatre; and, finally, intelligent comedy for the enlightened bourgeoisie. The same dualism, taking the form of downright cultural schism, exists, in Western Europe at least, in the musical sphere. Here the opposition between the artificially supported market for works of restricted scope and the market for commercial work, produced and distributed by the music-hall and recording industry, is far more brutal than elsewhere.

One should beware of seeing anything more than a limiting parameter construction in the opposition between the two modes of production of symbolic goods, which can only be defined in terms of their relations with each other. Within a single universe one always finds the entire range of intermediaries between works produced with reference to the restricted market on the one hand, and works determined by an intuitive representation of the expectations of the widest possible public on the other. The range might include avant-garde works reserved for a few initiates within the peer-group, avant-garde works on the road to consecration, works of ‘bourgeois art’ aimed at the non-intellectual fractions of the dominant class and often already consecrated by the most official of legitimizing institutions (the academies), works of middle-brow art aimed at various ‘target publics’ and involving, besides brand-name culture (with, for example, works crowned by the big literary prizes), imitation culture aimed at the rising petite bourgeoisie (popularizing literary or scientific works, for example) and mass culture, that is, the ensemble of socially neutralized works.

In fact, the professional ideology of producers-for-producers and their spokespeople establishes an opposition between creative liberty and the laws of the market, between works which create their public and works created by their public. This is undoubtedly a defence against the *disenchantment* produced by the progress of the division of labour, the establishment of various fields of action—each involving the rendering explicit of its peculiar functions—and the rational organization of technical means appertaining to these functions.

²⁵ B. Poirot-Delpech, *Le Monde*, 22 July 1970. B. Poirot-Delpech, *Le Monde*, 22 July 1970.

It is no mere chance that middle-brow art and art for art's sake are both produced by highly professionalized intellectuals and artists, and are both characterized by the same valorization of technique. In the one case this orients production towards the search for effect (understood both as effect produced on the public and as ingenious construction) and, in the other, it orients production towards the cult of form for its own sake. The latter orientation is an unprecedented affirmation of the most characteristic aspect of professionalism and thus an affirmation of the specificity and irreducibility of producers.

This explains why certain works of middle-brow art may present formal characteristics predisposing them to enter into legitimate culture. The fact that producers of Westerns have to work within the very strict conventions of a heavily stereotyped genre leads them to demonstrate their highly professionalized technical virtuosity by continually referring back to previous solutions—assumed to be known—in the solutions they provide to canonical problems, and they are continually bordering on pastiche or parody of previous authors, against whom they measure themselves. A genre containing ever more references to the history of that genre calls for a second-degree reading, reserved for the initiate, who can only grasp the work's nuances and subtleties by relating it back to previous works. By introducing subtle breaks and fine variations, with regard to assumed expectations, the play of internal allusions (the same one that has always been practised by lettered traditions) authorizes detached and distanced perception, quite as much as first-degree adherence, and calls for either erudite analysis or the aesthete's wink. 'Intellectual' Westerns are the logical conclusion of these pure cinematographic language games which assume, among their authors, as much the cinephile's as the cineaste's inclinations.

More profoundly, middle-brow art, which is characterized by tried and proven techniques and an oscillation between plagiarism and parody most often linked with either indifference or conservatism, displays one of the great covert truths underlying the aestheticism of art for art's sake. The fact is that its fixation on technique draws pure art into a covenant with the dominant sections of the bourgeoisie. The latter recognize the intellectual's and the artist's monopoly on the production of the work of art as an instrument of pleasure (and, secondarily, as an instrument for the symbolic legitimation of economic or political power); in return, the artist is expected to avoid serious matters, namely social and political questions. The opposition between art for art's sake and middle-brow art which, on the ideological plane, becomes transformed into an opposition between the idealism of devotion to art and the cynicism of submission to the market, should not hide the fact that the desire to oppose a specifically cultural legitimacy to the

prerogatives of power and money constitutes one more way of recognizing that business is business.

What is most important is that these two fields of production, opposed as they are, coexist and that their products owe their very unequal symbolic and material values on the market to their unequal consecration which, in turn, stems from their very unequal power of distinction.²⁶ The various kinds of cultural competence encountered in a class society derive their social value from the power of social discrimination, and from the specifically cultural rarity conferred on them by their position in the system of cultural competencies; this system is more or less integrated according to the social formation in question, but it is always hierarchized. To be unaware that a dominant culture owes its main features and social functions—especially that of symbolically legitimizing a form of domination—to the fact that it is not perceived as such, in short, to ignore the *fact* of legitimacy is either to condemn oneself to a class-based ethnocentrism which leads the defenders of restricted culture to ignore the material foundations of the symbolic domination of one culture by another, or implicitly to commit oneself to a populism which betrays a shameful recognition of the legitimacy of the dominant culture in an effort to rehabilitate middle-brow culture. This cultural relativism is accomplished by treating distinct but *objectively* hierarchized cultures in a class society as if they were the cultures of such perfectly independent social formations as the Eskimos and the Feugians.²⁷

Fundamentally heteronomous, middle-brow culture is objectively condemned to define itself in relation to legitimate culture; this is so in the field of production as well as of consumption. Original experimentation entering the field of large-scale production almost always comes up against the breakdown in communication liable to arise from the use of codes inaccessible to the ‘mass public’. Moreover, middle-brow art cannot renew its techniques and themes without borrowing from high art or, more frequently still, from the ‘bourgeois

²⁶ See *Télé-Sept-Jours*, 547 (October 1970), p. 45.

²⁷ The attempt to gain rehabilitation leads those at the forefront of the revolt against the university’s conservative traditions (as well as those of the academies) to betray their recognition of academic legitimacy in the very discourse attempting to challenge it. One sociologist, for instance, argues that the leisure practices he intends to rehabilitate are genuinely cultural because they are ‘disinterested’, hence reintroducing an academic, and mundane, definition of the cultivated relationship to culture, and writes: ‘We think that certain works said, today, to be minor, in fact reveal qualities of the first order; it seems barely acceptable to place the entire repertoire of French songs on a low level, as does Shils with American songs. The works of Brassens, Jacques Brel and Léo Ferré, all of which are highly successful, are not just songs from a variety show. All three are also, quite rightly, considered as poets.’

art' of a generation or so earlier. This includes 'adapting' the more venerable themes or subjects, or those most amenable to the traditional laws of composition in the popular arts (the Manichaean division of roles, for example). In this sense, the history of middle-brow art amounts to no more than that imposed by technical changes and the laws of competition.

However agents may dissimulate it, the objectively established hierarchical difference between the two productive systems continually imposes itself. Indeed, the practices and ideologies of consumers are largely determined by the level of the goods they produce or consume in this hierarchy. The connoisseur can immediately discern, from such reference points as the work's genre, the radio station, the name of the theatre, gallery or director, the order of legitimacy and the appropriate posture to be adopted in each case.

The opposition between legitimate and illegitimate, imposing itself in the field of symbolic goods with the same arbitrary necessity as the distinction between the sacred and the profane elsewhere, expresses the different social and cultural valuation of two modes of production: the one a field that is its own market, allied with an educational system which legitimizes it; the other a field of production organized as a function of external demand, normally seen as socially and culturally inferior.

This opposition between the two markets, between producers for producers and producers for non-producers, entirely determines the image writers and artists have of their profession and constitutes the taxonomic principle according to which they classify and hierarchize works (beginning with their own). Producers for producers have to overcome the contradiction in their relationship with their (limited) public through a transfigured representation of their social function, whereas in the case of producers for non-producers the quasi-coincidence of their authentic representation and the objective truth of the writer's profession is either a fairly inevitable effect or a prior condition of the success with their specific public. Nothing could be further, for example, from the charismatic vision of the writer's 'mission' than the image proposed by the successful writer previously cited: 'Writing is a job like any other. Talent and imagination are not enough. Above all, discipline is required. It's better to force oneself to write two pages a day than ten pages once a week. There is one essential condition for this: one has to be in shape, just as a sportsman has to be in shape to run a hundred metres or to play a football match.'

It is unlikely that all writers and artists whose works are objectively addressed to the 'mass public' have, at least at the outset of their career, quite so realistic and 'disenchanted' an image of their function. None the less, they can hardly avoid applying to themselves the objective image of their work received from the field. This image expresses the opposition between the two modes of production as objectively revealed in the social quality of their public ('intellectual' or 'bourgeois', for example). The more a certain class of writers

and artists is defined as beyond the bounds of the universe of legitimate art, the more its members are inclined to defend the professional qualities of the worthy, entertaining technician, complete master of his technique and *métier*, against the uncontrolled, disconcerting experiments of 'intellectual' art.

There is no doubt, moreover, that the emergence of large collective production units in the fields of radio, television, cinema and journalism as well as in scientific research, and the concomitant decline of the intellectual artisan in favour of the salaried worker, entail a transformation of the relationship between the producers and their work. This will be reflected in his own representation of his position and function in the social structure, and, consequently, of the political and the aesthetic ideologies they profess. Intellectual labour carried out collectively, within technically and socially differentiated production units, can no longer surround itself with the charismatic aura attaching to traditional independent production. The traditional cultural producer was a master of his means of production and invested only his cultural capital, which was likely to be perceived as a gift of grace. The demystification of intellectual and artistic activity consequent on the transformation of the social conditions of production particularly affects intellectuals and artists engaged in large units of cultural production (radio, television, journalism). They constitute a proletaroid intelligentsia forced to experience the contradiction between aesthetic and political position-takings stemming from their inferior position in the field of production and the objectively conservative functions of the products of their activity.

POSITIONS AND POSITION-TAKINGS

The relationship maintained by producers of symbolic goods with other producers, with the significations available within the cultural field at a given moment and, consequently, with their own work, depends very directly on the position they occupy within the field of production and circulation of symbolic goods. This, in turn, is related to the specifically cultural hierarchy of degrees of consecration. Such a position implies an objective definition of their practice and of the products resulting from it. Whether they like it or not, whether they know it or not, this definition imposes itself on them as a fact, determining their ideology and their practice, and its efficacy manifests itself never so clearly as in conduct aimed at transgressing it. For example, it is the ensemble of determinations inscribed in their position which inclines professional jazz or film critics to issue very divergent and incompatible judgements destined to reach only restricted cliques of producers and little sects of devotees. These critics tend to ape the learned, sententious tone and the cult of erudition characterizing

academic criticism, and to seek theoretical, political or aesthetic security in the obscurity of a borrowed language.²⁸

As distinct from a solidly legitimate activity, an activity on the way to legitimation continually confronts its practitioners with the question of its own legitimacy. In this way, photography—a middle-brow art situated midway between ‘noble’ and ‘vulgar’ practices—condemns its practitioners to create a substitute for the sense of cultural legitimacy which is given to the priests of all the legitimate arts. More generally, all those marginal cultural producers whose position obliges them to conquer the cultural legitimacy unquestioningly accorded to the consecrated professions expose themselves to redoubled suspicion by the efforts they can hardly avoid making to challenge its principles. The ambivalent aggression they frequently display towards consecratory institutions, especially the educational system, without being able to offer a counter-legitimacy, bears witness to their desire for recognition and, consequently, to the recognition they accord to the educational system.

All relations that a determinate category of intellectuals or artists may establish with any and all external social factors—whether economic (e.g. publishers, dealers), political or cultural (consecrating authorities such as academies)—are mediated by the structure of the field. Thus, they depend on the position occupied by the category in question within the hierarchy of cultural legitimacy.

The sociology of intellectual and artistic production thus acquires its specific object in constructing the relatively autonomous system of relations of production and circulation of symbolic goods. In doing this, it acquires the possibility of grasping the positional properties that any category of agents of cultural production or diffusion owes to its place within the structure of the field. Consequently, it acquires the capacity to explain those characteristics which products, as position-takings, owe to the *positions* of their producers within the system of social relations of production and circulation and to the corresponding positions which they occupy within the system of *objectively possible cultural positions* within a given state of the field of production and circulation.

The position-takings which constitute the cultural field do not all suggest themselves with the same probability to those occupying at a given moment a determinate position in this field. Conversely, a particular class of cultural position-takings is attached as a potentiality to each of the positions in the field of

²⁸ The educational system contributes very substantially to the unification of the market in symbolic goods, and to the generalized imposition of the legitimacy of the dominant culture, not only by legitimizing the goods consumed by the dominant class, but by devaluing those transmitted by the dominated classes (and, also, regional traditions) and by tending, in consequence, to prohibit the constitution of cultural counter-legitimacies.

production and circulation (that is, a particular set of problems and structures of resolution, themes and procedures, aesthetic and political positions, etc.). These can only be defined differentially, that is, in relation to the other constitutive cultural positions in the cultural field under consideration. ‘Were I as glorious as Paul Bourget,’ Arthur Craven used to say, ‘I’d present myself nightly in music-hall revues in nothing but a G-string, and I guarantee you I’d make a bundle.’²⁹ This attempt to turn literary glory into a profitable undertaking only appears at first sight to be self-destructive and comical because it assumes a desacralized and desacralizing relationship with literary authority. And such a stance would be inconceivable for anyone other than a marginal artist, knowing and recognizing the principles of cultural legitimacy well enough to be able to place himself outside the cultural law.³⁰ There is no position within the field of cultural production that does not call for a determinate type of position-taking and which does not exclude, simultaneously, an entire gamut of theoretically possible position-takings. This does not require that possible or excluded position-takings be explicitly prescribed or prohibited. But one should beware of taking as the basis of all practice the strategies half-consciously elaborated in reference to a never more than partial consciousness of structures. In this connection one might think, for example, of the knowledge of the present and future structure of the labour market that is mobilized at the moment of a change in orientation.

All relations among agents and institutions of diffusion or consecration are mediated by the field’s structure. To the extent that the ever-ambiguous marks of recognition owe their specific form to the objective relations (perceived and interpreted as they are in accordance with the unconscious schemes of the *habitus*) they contribute to form the *subjective* representation which agents have of the *social* representation of their position within the hierarchy of consecrations. And this semi-conscious representation itself constitutes one of the mediations through which, by reference to the social representation of possible,

²⁹ Cited by A. Breton, *Anthologie de l’humour noir* (Paris: J. J. Pauvert, 1966), p. 324.

³⁰ More generally, if the occupants of a determinate position in the social structure only rarely do what the occupants of a different position think they ought to do (‘if I were in his place . . .’), it is because the latter project the position-takings inscribed into their own position into a position which excludes them. The theory of relations between positions and position-takings reveals the basis of all those errors of perspective, to which all attempts at abolishing the differences associated with differences in position by means of a simple imaginary projection, or by an effort of ‘comprehension’ (behind which always lies the principle of ‘putting oneself in someone else’s place’), or again, attempts at transforming the objective relations between agents by transforming the representations they have of these relations, are inevitably exposed.

probable or impossible position-takings, the system of relatively unconscious strategies of the occupants of a given class of positions is defined.

It would be vain to claim to assess from among the determinants of practices the impact of durable, generalized and transposable dispositions, the impact of the perception of this situation and of the intentional or semi-intentional strategies which arise in response to it. The least conscious dispositions, such as those constituting the primary class habitus, are themselves constituted through the internalization of an objectively selected system of signs, indices and sanctions, which are nothing but the materialization, within objects, words or conducts, of a particular kind of objective structure. Such dispositions remain the basis upon which all the signs and indices characterizing quite varied situations are selected and interpreted.

In order to gain some idea of the complex relations between unconscious dispositions and the experiences which they structure—or, which amounts to the same thing, between the unconscious strategies engendered by habitus and strategies consciously produced in response to a situation designed in accordance with the schemes of the habitus—it will be necessary to analyse an example.

The manuscripts a publisher receives are the product of a kind of pre-selection by the authors themselves according to their image of the publisher who occupies a specific position within the space of publishers. The authors' image of their publisher, which may have oriented the production, is itself a function of the objective relationship between the positions authors and publishers occupy in the field. The manuscripts are, moreover, coloured from the outset by a series of determinations (e.g. 'interesting, but not very commercial', or 'not very commercial, but interesting') stemming from the relationship between the author's position in the field of production (unknown young author, consecrated author, house author, etc.) and the publisher's position within the system of production and circulation ('commercial' publisher, consecrated or avant-garde). They usually bear the marks of the intermediary whereby they came to the publisher (editor of a series, reader, 'house author', etc.) and whose authority, once again, is a function of respective positions in the field. Because subjective intentions and unconscious dispositions contribute to the efficacy of the objective structures to which they are adjusted, their interlacing tends to guide agents to their 'natural niche' in the structure of the field. It will be understood, moreover, that publisher and author can only experience and interpret the pre-established harmony achieved and revealed by their meeting as a miracle of predestination: 'Are you happy to be published by Éditions de Minuit?' 'If I had followed my instincts, I would have gone there straight away . . . but I didn't dare; I thought they were too good for me . . . So I first sent my manuscript to Publisher X. What I just said about X isn't very kind! They refused my book, and so I took it to Minuit anyway.' 'How do you get on with the publisher?' 'He began by telling

me a lot of things I hoped had not shown. Everything concerning time, coincidences.³¹

The publisher's image of his 'vocation' combines the aesthetic relativism of the discoverer, conscious of having no other principle than that of defiance of all canonical principles, with the most complete faith in an absolute kind of 'flair'. This ultimate and often indefinable principle behind his choices finds itself continually strengthened and confirmed by his perception of the selective choices of authors and by the representations authors, critics, the public and other publishers have of his function within the division of intellectual labour. The critic's situation is hardly any different. The works she receives have undergone a process of pre-selection. They bear a supplementary mark, that of the publisher (and, sometimes, that of author of a preface, another author or another critic). The value of this mark is a function, once more, of the structure of objective relations between the respective positions of author, publisher and critic. It is also affected by the relationship of the critic to the predominant taxonomies in the critical world or in the field of restricted production (for example, the *nouveau roman*, 'objectal literature', etc.). 'Apart from the opening pages, which seem to be more or less voluntary pastiche of the *nouveau roman*, *L'Auberge espagnole* tells a fantastic, though perfectly clear, story, whose development obeys the logic of dreams rather than reality.'³² So the critic, suspecting the young novelist of having entered the hall of mirrors, enters there himself by describing what he takes for a reflection of the *nouveau roman*. Schönberg describes the same type of effect: 'On the occasion of a concert given by my pupils, a critic with a particularly fine ear defined a piece for string quartet whose harmony—as can be proved—was only a very slight development of Schubert's, as a product bearing signs of my influence.' Even if such errors of identification are not rare, especially among the 'conservative' critics, they may also bring profit to the 'innovators': on account of his position, a critic may find himself predisposed in favour of all kinds of avant-garde; accordingly he may act as an initiate, communicating the deciphered revelation back to the artist from whom he received it. The artist, in return, confirms the critic in his vocation, that of privileged interpreter, by confirming the accuracy of his decipherment.

On account of the specific nature of his interests, and of the structural ambiguity of his position as a businessperson objectively invested with some power of cultural consecration, the publisher is more strongly inclined than the other agents of production and diffusion to take the regularities objectively governing relations between agents into account in his conscious strategies. The selective discourse in which he engages with the critic, who has been selected not merely because of his influence but also because of the affinities he may have

³¹ *La Quinzaine littéraire*, 15 September 1966.

³² E. Lalou, *L'Express*, 26 October 1966.

with the work, and which may even go to the length of declared allegiance to the publisher and his entire list of publications, or to a certain category of authors, is an extremely subtle mixture, in which his own idea of the work combines with his idea of the idea the critic is likely to have, given the image he has of the house's publications.

Hence, it is quite logical and highly significant that what has become the name of a literary school (the *nouveau roman*), adopted by the authors themselves, should have begun as a pejorative label, accorded by a traditionalist critic to novels published by Éditions de Minuit. Just as critics and public found themselves invited to seek the links that might unite works published under the same imprint, so authors were defined by this public definition of their works to the extent that they had to define themselves in relation to it. Moreover, confronted with the public's and the critics' image of them, they were encouraged to think of themselves as constituting more than simply a chance grouping. They became a school endowed with its own aesthetic programme, its eponymous ancestors, its accredited critics and spokespersons.

In short, the most personal judgements it is possible to make of a work, even of one's own work, are always collective judgements in the sense of position-takings referring to other position-takings through the intermediary of the objective relations between the positions of their authors within the field. Through the public meaning of the work, through the objective sanctions imposed by the symbolic market upon the producers' 'aspirations' and 'ambitions' and, in particular, through the degree of recognition and consecration it accords them, the entire structure of the field interposes itself between producers and their work. This imposes a definition of their ambitions as either legitimate or illegitimate according to whether their position objectively implies, or denies, their fulfilment.

Because the very logic of the field condemns them to risk their cultural salvation in even the least of their position-takings and to watch, uncertainly, for the ever-ambiguous signs of an ever-suspended election, intellectuals and artists may experience a failure as a sign of election, or over-rapid or too brilliant a success as a threat of damnation. They cannot ignore the value attributed to them, that is, the position they occupy within the hierarchy of cultural legitimacy, as it is continually brought home by the signs of recognition or exclusion appearing in their relations with peers or with institutions of consecration.

For each position in the hierarchy of consecration there is a corresponding relationship—more or less ambitious or resigned—to the field of cultural practices which is, itself, hierarchized. An analysis of artistic or intellectual trajectories attests that those 'choices' most commonly imputed to 'vocation', such as choice of intellectual or artistic specialization—author rather than critic, poet rather than novelist and, more profoundly, everything defining the manner in which one fulfils oneself in that 'chosen' speciality, depend on the actual and

potential position that the field attributes to the different categories of agents, notably through the intermediary of the institutions of cultural consecration. It might be supposed that the laws governing intellectual or artistic 'vocations' are similar in principle to those governing scholastic 'choices', such as the 'choice' of faculty or discipline. Such a supposition would imply, for example, that the 'choice' of discipline be increasingly 'ambitious' (with respect to the reigning hierarchy in the university field) as one ascends towards those categories of students or teachers most highly consecrated, scholastically, and most favoured in terms of social origin. Again, it might be supposed that the greater the scholastic consecration, mediated by social origin, of a determinate category of teachers and researchers, the more abundant and ambitious would be their production.

Among the social factors determining the functional laws of any field of cultural production (literary, artistic or scientific), undoubtedly the most important is the position of each discipline or specialization and the position of the different producers in the hierarchy peculiar to each sub-field. The migrations of labour power which drive large sections of producers towards the currently most consecrated scientific discipline (or, elsewhere, artistic genre), and which are experienced as though 'inspired' by vocation or determined by some intellectual itinerary and often imputed to the effects of fashion, could be merely reconversions aimed at ensuring the best possible economic or symbolic return on a determinate kind of cultural capital. And the sensitivity necessary to sniff out these movements of the cultural value stock exchange, the audacity requisite to abandoning well-worn paths for the most opportune-seeming future, once more depend on social factors, such as the nature of the capital possessed and scholastic and social origins with their attendant objective chances and aspirations.³³ Similarly, the interest which different categories of researchers manifest in different types of practice (for example, empirical research or theory) is also a composite function. It is dependent, first, on the ambitions which their formation and their scholastic success and, thus, their position in the discipline's hierarchy allow them to form by assuring them of reasonable chances of success. Secondly, it is a function of the objectively recognized hierarchy of the very

³³ The development of psychology in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century can be explained by the state of the university market, favouring the movement of physiology students and teachers towards other fields, and by the relatively lowly position occupied by philosophy in the academic field, which made it a dream ground for the innovative enterprises of deserters from the higher disciplines. See J. Ben-David and R. Collins, 'Social Factors in the Origins of a New Science: The Case of Psychology', *American Sociological Review*, 31:4 (August 1966), pp. 451-65.

different material and symbolic profits which particular practices or objects of study are in a position to procure.³⁴

If the relations which make the cultural field into a field of (intellectual, artistic or scientific) position-takings only reveal their meaning and function in the light of the relations among cultural subjects who are holding specific positions in this field, it is because intellectual or artistic position-takings are also always semi-conscious *strategies* in a game in which the conquest of cultural legitimacy and of the concomitant power of legitimate symbolic violence is at stake. To claim to be able to discover the entire truth of the cultural field within that field is to transfer the objective relations between different positions in the field of cultural production into the heaven of logical and semiological relations of opposition and homology. Moreover, it is to do away with the question of the relationship between this 'positional' field and the cultural field; in other words, it is to ignore the question of the dependence of the different systems of cultural position-takings constituting a given state of the cultural field on the specifically cultural interests of different groups competing for cultural legitimacy. It is also to deprive oneself of the possibility of determining what particular cultural position-takings owe to the social functions they fulfil in these groups' strategies.

Consequently, we can postulate that there is no cultural position-taking that cannot be submitted to a *double interpretation*: it can be related, on the one hand, to the universe of cultural position-takings constituent of the specifically cultural field; on the other hand, it can be interpreted as a consciously or unconsciously oriented strategy elaborated in relation to the field of allied or hostile positions.³⁵ Research starting from this hypothesis would doubtless find its surest landmarks in a methodical analysis of *privileged references*. These would be conceived, not as simple indices of information exchanges (in particular, implicit or explicit borrowings of words or ideas), but as so many landmarks circumscribing, within the common battlefield, the small network of privileged allies and adversaries proper to each category of producer.

'Citatology' nearly always ignores this question, implicitly treating references to an author as an index of recognition (of indebtedness or

³⁴ Short-term movements in the cultural value stock market ought not to obscure the constants, such as the domination of the most theoretical discipline over those more practically oriented.

³⁵ We should pay particular attention to the strategies employed in relation to groups occupying a neighbouring position in the field. The law of the search for distinction explains the apparent paradox which has it that the fiercest and most fundamental conflicts oppose each group to its immediate neighbours, for it is these who most directly threaten its identity, hence its distinction and even its specifically cultural existence.

legitimacy). In point of fact this apparent function may nearly always be associated with such diverse functions as the manifestation of relations of allegiance or dependence, of strategies of affiliation, of annexation or of defence (this is the role, for example, of guarantee references, ostentatious references or alibi-references). We should mention here two ‘citatologists’ who have the merit of having posed a question systematically ignored: ‘People quote another author for complex reasons—to confer meaning, authority or depth upon a statement, to demonstrate familiarity with other work in the same field and to avoid the appearance of plagiarising even ideas conceived independently. The quotation is aimed at readers of whom some, at least, are supposed to have some knowledge of the work quoted (there would be no point in quoting if this were not so) and to adhere to the norms concerning what may, and what may not, be attributed to it.³⁶ When it is not immediately explicit and direct (as in the case of polemical or deforming references), the strategic function of a reference may be apprehended in its modality: humble or sovereign, impeccably academic or sloppy, explicit or implicit and, in this case, unconscious, repressed (and betraying a strong relationship of ambivalence) or knowingly dissimulated (whether through tactical prudence, through a more or less visible and naïve will to annexation—plagiarism—or through disdain). Strategic considerations may also stalk those quotations most directly oriented towards the functions commonly recognized as theirs by ‘citatology’. It suffices to think of what might be termed an *a minima* reference, which consists in recognizing a precise and clearly specified debt (by the full-length quotation of a sentence or an expression) in order to hide a far more global and more diffuse debt. (We should note, in passing, the existence of *a maxima* references, whose functions may vary from grateful homage to self-valorizing annexation—when the contribution of the quoter to the thought quoted, which, in this case, must be prestigious, is fairly important and obvious.)

The construction of the system of relations between each of the categories of producers and competing, hostile, allied or neutral powers, which are to be destroyed, intimidated, cajoled, annexed or won over, presumes a decisive rupture, first, with naïve citatology, since it does not go beyond any but the most phenomenal relationships, and second—and in particular—with that supremely naïve representation of cultural production that takes only explicit references into

³⁶ J. S. Cloyd and A. P. Bates, ‘George Homas in Footnotes: The Fate of Ideas in Scholarly Communication’, *Sociological Inquiry*, 34:2 (1964), pp. 115-28 at p. 122.

account. How can we reduce Plato's presence in Aristotle's texts to *explicit references* alone, or that of Descartes in Leibniz's writings, of Hegel in those of Marx? We speak here more generally of those *privileged interlocutors* implicit in the writings of every producer, those revered antecedents whose thought structures he has internalized to the point where he no longer thinks except in them and through them, to the point where they have become intimate adversaries determining his thinking and imposing on him both the shape and the substance of conflict. Manifest conflicts dissimulate the *consensus* within the *dissensus* which defines the field of ideological battle in a given epoch, and which the educational system contributes to producing by inculcating an uncontested hierarchy of themes and problems worthy of discussion. Given this, implicit references allow also the construction of that intellectual space defined by a system of common references appearing so natural, so incontestable that they are never the object of conscious position-takings at all. However, it is in relation to this referential space that all the position-takings of the different categories of producers are differentially defined.

In addition to other possible functions, theories, methods and concepts in whatever realm are to be considered as strategies aimed at installing, restoring, strengthening, safeguarding or overthrowing a determinate structure of relationships of symbolic domination; that is, they constitute the means for obtaining or safeguarding the monopoly of the legitimate mode of practising a literary, artistic or scientific activity.

How, for example, could one fail to see that 'epistemological couples' (e.g. general theory and empiricism, or formalism and positivism) are nearly always covers for oppositions between different groups within the field? Such groups are led to transform interests associated with possession of a determinate type of scientific capital, and with a determinate position within the scientific field, into epistemological choices. Is it not legitimate to suppose that there is a strategic intention (which may remain perfectly unconscious) lurking behind a theory of theory such as Merton's? Does one not better understand the *raison d'être* of works by the 'high methodologists', such as Lazarsfeld, as one realizes that these scholastic codifications of the rules of scientific practice are inseparable from the project of building a kind of intellectual papacy, replete with its international corps of vicars, regularly visited or gathered together in *concilium* and charged with the exercise of rigorous and constant control over common practice?

By ignoring the systems of social relations within which symbolic systems are produced and utilized, strictly internal interpretation most frequently condemns itself to the gratuitousness of an arbitrary formalism. In point of fact, an

appropriate construction of the object of analysis presupposes sociological analysis of the social functions at the basis of the structure and functioning of any symbolic system. The semiologist, who claims to reveal the structure of a literary or artistic work through so-called strictly internal analysis, exposes him or herself to a theoretical error by disregarding the social conditions underlying the production of the work and those determining its functioning.

A field of cultural production may have achieved virtually complete autonomy in relation to external forces and demands (as in the case of the pure sciences), while still remaining amenable to specifically sociological analysis. It is the job of sociology to establish the external conditions for a system of social relations of production, circulation and consumption necessary to the autonomous development of science or art; its task, moreover, is to determine those functional laws which characterize such a relatively autonomous field of social relations and which can also account for the structure of corresponding symbolic productions and its transformations. The principles of 'selection' objectively employed by the different groups of producers competing for cultural legitimacy are always defined within a system of social relations obeying a specific logic. The available symbolic position-takings are, moreover, functions of the interest-systems objectively attached to the positions producers occupy in *special power relations*, which are the social relations of symbolic production, circulation and consumption.

As the field of restricted production closes in upon itself, and affirms itself capable of organizing its production by reference to its own internal norms of perfection—excluding all external functions and social or socially marked content from the work—the dynamic of competition for specifically cultural consecration becomes the exclusive principle of the production of works. Especially since the middle of the nineteenth century, the principle of change in art has come from within art itself, as though history were internal to the system and as if the development of forms of representation and expression were merely the product of the logical development of axiomatic systems specific to the various arts. To explain this, there is no need to hypostatize the laws of this evolution. If a relatively autonomous history of art and literature (or of science) exists, it is because the 'action of works upon works', of which Brunetière spoke, explains an ever-increasing proportion of artistic or literary production. At the same time, the field as such explicates and systematizes specifically artistic principles of the production and the evaluation of the work of art. The relationship, moreover, which each category of producer enjoys with its own production is more and more exclusively determined by its relationship with the specifically artistic traditions and norms inherited from the past, and which is, again, a function of its position in the structure of the field of production.

True, cultural legitimacy appears to be the 'fundamental norm', to employ the language of Kelsen, of the field of restricted production. But this

‘fundamental norm’, as Jean Piaget has noted, ‘is nothing other than the abstract expression of the fact that society “recognizes” the normative value of this order’ in such a way that it ‘corresponds to the social reality of the exercise of some power and of the “recognition” of this power or of the system of rules emanating from it’.³⁷ Thus, if the relative autonomy of the field of restricted production authorizes the attempt to construct a ‘pure’ model of the objective relations defining it and of the interactions which develop within it, one must remember that this formal construction is the product of the temporary bracketing-off of the field of restricted production (as a system of specific power relations) from the surrounding field of the power relations between classes. It would be futile to search for the ultimate foundation of this ‘fundamental norm’ within the field itself, since it resides in structures governed by powers other than the culturally legitimate; consequently, the functions objectively assigned to each category of producer and its products by its position in the field are always duplicated by the external functions objectively fulfilled through the accomplishment of its internal functions.

³⁷ J. Piaget, *Introduction à l'épistémologie génétique*, vol. 3 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), p. 239.