Understanding

Pierre Bourdieu

> I don't, myself, just reject everything. I always try to see the behaviour of individuals, how they behave, where they come from, what their interests are and I manage to understand. (Steel worker and trade union official, Longwy)

> Everything is interesting provided you look at it for long enough. (Gustave Flaubert)

I AM LOATH to engage too insistently here in reflections on theory or method addressed simply to researchers: 'We do nothing but gloss one another', as Montaigne used to say. And even if it is *only* a question of doing that, but in a quite other mode, I wish to avoid scholastic disquisitions on the subject of hermeneutics or on the 'situation of ideal communication': I believe that there is no more real or more realistic way of exploring communication in its general state than to focus on the simultaneously practical and theoretical problems which emerge in the particular case of the interaction between the investigator and the person questioned.

For all that, I do not believe that it is useful to turn to the innumerable so-called 'methodological' writings on techniques of enquiry. Useful as these may be when they describe the various effects that the interviewer can produce without knowing it, they almost always miss the point, not least because they remain faithful to old methodological principles which, like the ideal of the standardization of procedures, often derived from the desire to imitate the external signs of the rigour of the best established scientific disciplines. It does not seem to me, at any rate, that they do justice to what has always been done – and known – by those researchers who are most respectful of their object and attentive to the almost infinitely subtle strategies that social agents deploy in the ordinary conduct of their existence.

Many decades of empirical research in all its forms, from ethnography to sociology and from the 'closed' questionnaire to the most open interview, have convinced me that this practice finds its adequate scientific expression neither in the prescriptions of a methodology which is more often scientistic

than scientific, nor in the anti-scientific caveats of the mystic advocates of emotional fusion. It is for this reason that it seems to me indispensable to try to make explicit the intentions and the procedural principles that we put into practice in the research project, the findings of which we present here. The reader will thus be able to reproduce in the reading of the texts the work of both construction and comprehension, of which they are the product.[1]

If the research interview relationship is different from most of the exchanges of ordinary existence due to its objective of pure knowledge, it is, in all cases, a *social relation*. This has some effect on the results obtained (the effects being variable according to the different parameters which influence them).[2]

Of course, scientific questioning, by definition, excludes the intention of exerting any type of symbolic violence capable of affecting the responses; yet it still remains the case that on these matters one cannot trust simply to one's own good faith, because various kinds of distortion are embedded in the very structure of the relationship. It is a question of understanding and mastering these distortions. And doing this as part of a practice which may be reflective and methodical, without being the application of a method or the embodiment of specific theoretical thinking.

Only reflexivity, which is synonymous with method, but a *reflex reflexivity* based on a sociological 'feel' or 'eye' enables one to perceive and monitor *on the spot*, as the interview is actually being carried out, the effects of the social structure within which it is taking place. How can we claim to engage in the scientific investigation of presuppositions if we do not work to gain knowledge [*science*] of our own presuppositions? And doing so principally by striving to make reflexive use of the findings of social science in order to control the effects of the survey itself and to engage in the process of questioning with a command of the inevitable effects of that process.

The positivist dream of an epistemological state of perfect innocence has the consequence of masking the fact that the crucial difference is not between a science which effects a construction and one which does not, but between a science which does this without knowing it and one which, being aware of this, attempts to discover and master as completely as possible the nature of its inevitable acts of construction and the equally inevitable effects which they produce.

A Non-Violent Form of Communication

To seek to know what one is doing when one sets up an interview relationship is, first of all, to seek to know the effects one may unwittingly produce by that kind of always slightly arbitrary *intrusion* which is inherent in this special kind of social exchange (chiefly by the way one presents oneself and presents the survey, by the encouragements one gives or withholds, etc.); it is to attempt to bring out the representation the respondent has of the situation, of the survey in general, of the particular relationship in which it is taking place, of the ends it is pursuing, and to make explicit the reasons which led her[3] to agree to take part in the exchange. It is in effect only through

measuring the extent and the character of the distance between the objective of the enquiry as perceived by the respondent and as viewed by the investigator, that the latter can attempt to reduce the resulting distortions. At the very least this implies understanding what can and cannot be said, the forms of censorship which prevent the voicing of certain things and the promptings which encourage the emphasis of others.

It is the investigator who starts the game and who sets up its rules: it is most often she who, unilaterally and without any preliminary negotiations, assigns to the interview its objectives and uses, and on occasion these may be poorly specified – at least for the respondent. This asymmetry is underlined by a social asymmetry which occurs every time the investigator occupies a higher place in the social hierarchy of different types of capital, especially cultural capital. The *market of linguistic and symbolic goods*, which is set up in each interview, varies in structure according to the objective relation between the investigator and the investigated or, which is the same thing, between the capitals of all kinds – especially linguistic capitals – with which they are endowed.

Taking into account these two inherent properties of the interview relationship, we have sought to do all in our power to control their effects (without claiming to eradicate them) or, more precisely, *to reduce as much as possible the symbolic violence which is exerted through them*. We have tried, therefore, to instigate a relationship of *active and methodical listening*, as far removed from pure laissez-faire of the non-directive interview as from the directiveness of the questionnaire survey. It is not easy in practice to adhere strictly to this seemingly contradictory position. In effect, it combines the display of total attention to the person questioned, submission to the singularity of her own life history – which may lead, by a kind of more or less controlled imitation, to adopting her language and espousing her views, feelings and thoughts – with methodical construction, founded on the knowledge of objective conditions common to an entire social category.

In order to facilitate a relationship of enquiry as close to this ideal limit as possible, several conditions had to be met. It was not sufficient to act, as all 'good' empirical investigators spontaneously do, on the elements that can be consciously or unconsciously controlled in the *interaction*, in particular, the level of language used and the appropriate (verbal or non-verbal) signs to encourage the collaboration of the individuals interviewed, who can only give a response worthy of that name to the questioning if they can themselves 'own' it and espouse the position of the questioning subject. We had on certain occasions to act on the structure of the relationship itself (and, through that, on the linguistic and symbolic market) and, therefore, on the very *choice* of respondents and interviewers.

Imposition

One is sometimes amazed at the goodwill and kindness which respondents can show towards the arbitrary and irrelevant questions which are so often 'meted out' to them, especially in public opinion surveys. That said, one only

needs to have conducted an interview once to become conscious of how diffi-
cult it is to concentrate continuous attention on what is being said (and not
solely in words) and think ahead to questions which might fall 'naturally' into
the flow of the conversation following a kind of theoretical 'line'. This means
that nobody is immune to the 'imposition effect' created by naively ego-
centric or, quite simply, inattentive questions and, above all, the fact that
answers extorted in this way risk rebounding on the analyst herself, whose
interpretation is always liable to take seriously an artefact that she herself
has manufactured. Thus, to give an example, despite being both a consider-
ate and attentive person, a researcher asks a steelworker, point-blank, who
has just told her what good luck he has had to stay in the same works all his
life, if he 'personally' is 'prepared to leave Longwy', and gets in reply, once
the first moment of complete amazement has passed, a polite response of the
type that the hurried researcher and coder in the opinion poll institutes cate-
gorize as acquiescence:

> Now [amazed tone]? Do what? Leave? I don't quite see the point of it. . . . No, I
> don't think I will leave Longwy. . . . That has just never occurred to me. . . .
> Especially since my wife is still working. That holds me back perhaps. . . .
> But, leave Longwy? I don't know, perhaps, why not? One day . . . I won't say,
> 'never' . . . but it hasn't occurred to me, particularly as I've stayed. . . . I don't
> know, why not [laughs], I don't know, you never know. . . .

We thus chose to leave investigators free to choose their respondents from
among or around people *personally known to them*. Social proximity and
familiarity in effect provide two of the social conditions of 'non-violent' com-
munication. For one thing, when the researcher is socially very close to her
respondent she provides her, by virtue of their interchangeability, with
guarantees against the threat of having her subjective reasoning reduced to
objective causes, and those choices that she experiences as free made to
seem the effect of objective determinisms revealed by analysis. For another
thing, one finds that in this case we can be assured of immediate agreement,
continually confirmed, as to presuppositions regarding the content and form
of the communication: this agreement shows up in the carefully gauged
emission of all the non-verbal signs, coordinated with the verbal ones, indi-
cating either how a given utterance is to be interpreted or how it has been
interpreted by the interlocutor – something which is always difficult to
produce in an intentional and conscious manner.[4]

   But the spread of social categories which can be reached in optimum
conditions of familiarity has its limits, even if homologies of position can
provide a basis for certain real affinities between the sociologist and certain
categories of respondent: magistrates or educational social workers, for
example. In order to extend the net as widely as possible, we could, as we
have done in earlier studies, have resorted to certain strategies such as *role-
playing*, to making up the identity of a respondent occupying a specific
social position, so as to undertake fake shopping expeditions or requests for
information (mainly by telephone). Here we took the step of diversifying the

interviewers by making systematic use of the method which William Labov used in his investigation of black speech in Harlem. In order to neutralize the imposition effect of official speech, he asked young blacks to conduct the linguistic investigation themselves. In the same way we have tried wherever possible to neutralize a major cause of distortion in the survey relationship by giving training in survey techniques to interviewers who could have access in a familiar way to certain categories of respondent we wished to reach.

When a young physicist questions another young physicist (or an actor another actor, an unemployed worker another unemployed worker, etc.) with whom she shares virtually all the characteristics capable of operating as major explanatory factors of her practices and representations, and to whom she is linked by close familiarity, the rationale for the questions is found in her dispositions, which are objectively attuned to those of the respondent herself. Thus even the most brutally objectifying questions will no longer appear threatening or aggressive because her interlocutor knows perfectly that she shares with her what she is inducing the other to divulge and, in the same way, shares the risks that the speaker exposes herself to by speaking about it. And the interviewer can never forget that by objectifying the respondent, she is also objectifying herself, as is attested by the adjustments she introduces into certain of her questions, moving from the objectivizing 'you' to 'one', which refers to an impersonal collective, and on then to 'we', in which she clearly states that she herself is involved in the objectification: 'In other words, all the studying *you* did, that *one* did, inclined *us* more or less to love theory.' And the social proximity of the person who is being questioned undoubtedly explains the impression of unease which practically all the researchers placed in such a position have confessed to experiencing, sometimes throughout the interview, sometimes from a particular moment in the analysis: in all these cases, the questioning tends to become in effect a two-handed socio-analysis, in which the analyst is herself caught up and examined, much as the person she is submitting to investigation.

But the analogy with the strategy employed by Labov is not perfect: it is not simply a question of collecting 'natural discourse' as little affected as possible by cultural asymmetry; it is also necessary to construct this discourse scientifically, in such a way that it yields the necessary elements for its own explication. The demands placed on irregular researchers are thereby considerably increased and, although preliminary interviews had been conducted with them, intended to gather all the information they possessed on the respondent and to define with them the outlines of an interview strategy, quite a number of the studies carried out under these conditions could not be published: they produced little more than sociolinguistic data, which could not provide the instruments for their own interpretation.[5]

To these cases where the sociologist provides herself with a substitute should also be added the relations of the research in which it is possible to partially surmount such social distance thanks to the relations of familiarity which unite her with the respondent and to the sense of social ease,

favourable to plain speaking, provided by the numerous links of secondary solidarity which offer indisputable guarantees of sympathetic comprehension. In this way on more than one occasion, family relations or childhood friendships or, as certain female interviewers report, the affinities between women, enabled obstacles linked to differences of social condition to be surmounted – in particular, the fear of patronizing class attitudes which, when the sociologist is perceived as socially superior, often adds itself to the very general, if not universal, fear of being made into an object.

A Spiritual Exercise

But all the procedures and subterfuges we have been able to think up to reduce distance have their limits. Although transcription cannot capture the rhythms and tempo of the spoken word, it is sufficient to read several interviews one after the other to see what a distance there is between the words painfully extracted from the respondents furthest removed from the tacit demands of the research situation and the utterances of those most closely – sometimes too closely – attuned to such assumptions, at least according to their own conception of them. The latter acquire such a mastery of the situation that they may even seem to impose their definition of the game on the researcher.

When there is nothing to neutralize or suspend the social effects of the asymmetry linked to social distance, one can only hope to obtain answers unaffected by the effects of the research situation itself by way of a continual labour of construction. Paradoxically, the more successful it is and the more it leads to an interchange endowed with every appearance of 'naturalness', the more that work is destined to remain invisible (understood as that which arises ordinarily in the ordinary interchanges of everyday life).

The sociologist may be able to impart to those interviewees who are furthest removed from her socially a feeling that they may legitimately be themselves, if she knows how to show them, both by her tone and, most especially, the content of her questions, that, without pretending to cancel the social distance which separates her from them (unlike the populist vision, which is blind to the reality of its own point of view), she is capable of *mentally putting herself in their place*.

Attempting to situate oneself in the place the interviewee occupies in the social space in order to understand them as *necessarily what they are*, by questioning them from that point and in order, to some degree, to *take their part* (in the sense in which the poet Francis Ponge, in the title of his collection, *Le parti pris des chose*, implies taking the part or 'side' of things) is not to effect that 'projection of oneself into the other' of which the phenomenologists speak. It is to give oneself a *general and genetic comprehension* of who the person is, based on the (theoretical or practical) command of the social conditions of which she is the product: a command of the conditions of existence and the social mechanisms which exert their effects on the whole ensemble of the category to which such a person belongs (that of high-school students, skilled workers, magistrates, etc.) and a command of the conditions, psychological and

social, both associated with a particular position and a particular trajectory in social space. Against the old Diltheyan distinction, it must be accepted that *understanding and explaining are one*.

This understanding cannot be reduced to a well-intentioned state of mind. It is put into effect in the manner – at once intelligible, reassuring and inviting – of presenting the interview, so that the interview and the situation itself have a meaning for the respondent and put into effect also – indeed, especially – in the selection of problems to be discussed: that range of problems, together with the likely responses they evoke, is deduced from corroborated representation of the conditions in which the respondent is placed and of which she is the product. This means that the researcher only has some chance of being truly equal to her task if she possesses an extensive knowledge of her subject, acquired sometimes in the course of a whole life of research or of earlier interviews with the same respondent or with informants. Most of the published interviews represent only a fraction of a long set of interchanges, even if a privileged fraction, and have nothing in common with the single, occasional and arbitrary encounters of the hastily effected surveys carried out by researchers lacking any specific competence.

Even if this is only shown negatively, through the careful introductions and considerate intentions which give the respondent confidence in the research and help her to enter the game, or by the exclusion of inappropriate or misplaced questions, this preliminary process of information-gathering is what enables one to improvise the pertinent questions, these amounting, effectively, to genuine *hypotheses*, based on a provisional and intuitive representation of the generative formula specific to the interviewee, in order to prompt her to reveal herself more fully.[6]

Although it may produce the theoretical equivalent of that practical knowledge which comes of proximity and familiarity, not even the deepest preliminary knowledge could lead to true comprehension if it were not accompanied both by an attentiveness to others and an openness towards them rarely met with in everyday life. We normally tend, in fact, to accord to the relatively ritualized talk of relatively common troubles an attention merely as empty and formal as the 'How are you?' which triggers it off. We have all heard stories of struggles over inheritances or neighbours' rights, educational difficulties or office rivalries, which we apprehend through categories of perception which, by reducing the personal to the impersonal, the unique drama to the commonplace, permit a sort of economizing of thought and emotion, in brief, of comprehension. And even when all the resources of professional vigilance, as well as personal sympathy, are mobilized, one has difficulty detaching oneself from an inattentive drowsiness, induced by illusions of déjà-vu and déjà-entendu, in order to enter into the distinctive personal history and to attempt to gain an understanding – at once unique and general – of each life-story. The immediate semi-understanding based on a distracted and routinized attention discourages the effort needed to burst through the screen of clichés within which each of us lives and expresses both the minor discomforts and major ordeals of our lives. What

the philosophically stigmatized and literally discredited 'one', which we all are, tries with its desperately 'inauthentic' means to say is, no doubt, for the 'I's which, in our most common claim to uniqueness we believe ourselves to be, the thing that is most difficult to hear.

Thus, at the risk of shocking both the rigorous methodologist and the inspired hermeneutic scholar, I would willingly say that the interview can be considered a sort of *spiritual exercise*, aiming to obtain, through *forgetfulness of self*, a true *transformation of the view* we take of others in the ordinary circumstances of life.[7]

The welcoming disposition, which leads one to share the problem of the respondent, the capacity to take her and understand her just as she is, in her distinctive necessity, is a sort of *intellectual love*: a gaze which consents to necessity in the manner of the 'intellectual love of God', that is to say, of the natural order, which Spinoza held to be the supreme form of knowledge.

The benign essential conditions for the interview are doubtless often unnoticed. In offering an exceptional situation for communication, devoid of the normal constraints (particularly of time) which weigh down the most everyday interchanges, and in opening up the alternatives which incite or authorize her to express her unhappiness or needs and the demands that are discovered in expressing these, the fieldworker contributes to the conditions for an extra-ordinary discourse which might never have been realized, but which was already there, merely awaiting the conditions for its actualization.[8]

Although they seldom consciously perceive all the signs of this availability – which demands, no doubt, more than a mere intellectual conversion – certain respondents, especially the most deprived, seem to grasp this situation as an exceptional opportunity offered to them to testify, to make themselves heard, to transfer their experience from the private to the public sphere; an opportunity also to *explain themselves* (in the most complete sense of the term) that is, to construct their own point of view both on themselves and on the world and to fully delineate the vantage-point within this world from which they see themselves and the world and become comprehensible and are justified, not least for themselves.[9] It even happens that, far from simply being instruments in the hands of the investigator, the respondents conduct the interview themselves and the density and intensity of their speech, and the impression they often give of finding a sort of relief, even accomplishment, evoke, as does everything about them, a '*joy of expression*'.

Thus one might speak of 'an induced and accompanied self-analysis'. In more than one case, we had the feeling that the person questioned took advantage of the opportunity we offered her to examine herself and took advantage of the permission or prompting afforded by our questions or suggestions (always open and multiple and, at times, reduced to a silent waiting) to carry out a simultaneously gratifying and painful task of clarification and to give vent, at times with an extraordinary *expressive intensity*, to experiences and thoughts long kept to herself or repressed.

Resistance to Objectivation

It should not be thought that, simply through the good offices of reflexivity, the sociologist can ever completely control the multiple and complex effects of the research relationship, all the more so as those who are investigated can also play on those effects, consciously or otherwise, to attempt to impose their own definition of the situation and turn to their advantage an interchange in which one of the stakes is the image they have of themselves, the image that they both wish to give to others and to themselves. This is a situation in which in evoking, as they are invited to by the research, 'what is wrong with their lives', they expose themselves to all the negative assumptions which are linked to the possession of these problems and discontents, where these are not cast into the legitimate forms of expression of legitimate discontent, in other words, those forms supplied by politics, law, psychology and literature. Thus for example, in a number of interviews (mainly with members of the *Front National*) the social relation between the respondent and the researcher produces a very powerful effect of censorship, accentuated by the tape-recorder: it is doubtless this fact which makes some opinions inexpressible (except in brief snatches or lapses). Certain interviews bear numerous traces of the work done by the respondent to master the constraints contained within the situation by showing that she is capable of taking in hand her own objectivation and of adopting towards herself a reflexive point of view, which it is part of the goals of the investigation to attain.

One of the most subtle means of resisting objectivation is thus that of those interviewees who, playing on their social proximity to the investigator, try, more unconsciously than consciously, to protect themselves from it by seeming to play along and attempting to press upon her, without always knowing it, something akin to self-analysis. Despite appearances, nothing is further from the participant objectivation in which the researcher assists the respondent in an effort (simultaneously painful and gratifying) to unveil those aspects of the social determinants of their opinions and their practices which they may find it most difficult openly to declare and assume, than the *false, collusive objectivation* – semi-demystifying and thus doubly mystificatory – which affords all the pleasures of lucidity without questioning anything essential.

I quote here just one example:

> There is a kind of unease which means I don't know where to place myself. . . . I'm not too sure any more where I am socially. . . . It's perhaps about where others acknowledge you to be. . . . I'm becoming aware how much other people take a completely different view of you, depending on the social position you occupy and that really is quite disturbing. It wasn't easy for me having a number of different social statuses. I wasn't all that very good at sorting out where I was sometimes, especially when it came to how others saw me, etc. etc.

Such words tack on to an apparent avowal the *appearance* of an explanation. They may provoke in the researcher who recognizes them, because they are

constructed with the instruments of thought and forms of expression close to her own, a form of intellectual narcissism which may combine with a populist sense of wonder, or may conceal such a sense within itself.

Thus when the daughter of an immigrant evokes with considerable poise the difficulties of her split existence for a researcher who may recognize in certain elements of her speech some aspects of her own unintegrated experience, she manages, paradoxically, to have the interviewer forget what is at the heart of the highly stylized vision of her life that she puts forward, namely, her literary studies, which allow her to offer to her interlocutor a double gratification: that of a discourse that closely fulfils the interviewer's conception of a deprived group and that of a formal accomplishment which eliminates any obstacle relating to social and cultural difference. It is necessary to quote in full here both the questions and the responses:

> *Investigator*: This awareness developed when you arrived in France, but awareness of what exactly?

> *Respondent* (female): Awareness of reality in the sense that for me it was there that things began to take shape. I am living out the reality of my parents' separation. It takes on meaning for me from the moment when I moved from living with my parents, that is, my mother and her family, back there [in Morocco, where the mother remained after the separation] to come here, where I finally discovered my father. It was the first time we had really lived together. Even when he was married to my mother his social life took place in France. So they didn't see much of each other and we didn't see much of him. I had the impression he was someone I was discovering for the first time. . . . He came back into my life from the moment we were going to live together. So, there was a realization in that regard. The separation took on meaning. I realized that I had never lived with my own father. And also there was the sense of another landscape. It was not the same space–time. . . . You know that you pass from your father to your mother. That also excites you a little, in a certain way, but the reality comes little by little to colour in and give life to what had happened. So, that makes it no longer the same landscape, no longer the same people, no longer the same space–time. For myself, from that moment I passed into a period of flux, where, if you like, it was necessary from then on to make a bridge between the two worlds which for me were entirely separate. I haven't quite got over that separation, which was much more than the actual separation of my father and mother.

And later on:

> I have the impression, in fact, of being rooted in something. And that the question which is now posed is, am I going to continue in that or am I going to try to leave it totally? Frankly, I don't much believe I will. So, clearly, I will always be in a halfway house. It's true that it doesn't mean much to me to be one thing or another. I have a desire to keep this kind of fresh air, this sense of being between two worlds. I don't know.

The interview, as can be seen, becomes a monologue in which the respondent asks herself questions and replies at great length, hardly pausing for breath, imposing on the researcher (who is clearly quite content for her to do so) not simply her problematic, but her style ('You feel yourself uprooted here?' or else, 'What is your greatest dissatisfaction?'). She thus excludes de facto any investigation of the objective facts of her trajectory other than those which enter into the project of self-portraiture she wishes to engage in.

In this exchange relationship, each deceives the other a little while also deceiving herself: the researcher is taken in by the 'authenticity' of the respondent's testimony, because she believes she has access through it to a raw, dense, untarnished form of speech that others will not have known how to pick up or to provoke (certain more or less stylized forms of peasants' or workers' speech can exert the same seduction); the respondent pretends to play her expected part in this interview, that of the Immigrant, without having to seek it openly, recognition of the literary value of her speech, which is simultaneously a testament to the divided character of her consciousness and a quest for salvation through stylistic form.[10]

A Realist Construction

Even if it is sometimes experienced as such, there is nothing miraculous about the match that is thus achieved between the anticipation or the attentions of the researcher and the expectations of the respondent. True submission to the given facts requires an act of construction based on practical mastery of the social logic by which this factual order is built up. Thus, for example, one cannot properly hear what is said in the apparently quite banal conversation between the three secondary school students [see *La Misère du Monde*, pp. 632–7, Trans.], unless avoiding the reduction of the three adolescents to isolated individuals differentiated by their first names, as in the manner of so many sociologists walking around with tape-recorders, one knows how to read in their words the structure of objective relations present and past, especially the relationship between their particular career and the structure of the educational establishments they frequented, and through this, all the structure and history of the teaching system which is expressed in them. Contrary to what might be believed from a naively personalist view of the uniqueness of social persons, it is the uncovering of the structures immanent in the precise form of words constituting an individual interaction that alone allows one to grasp the essentials of what makes up the *idiosyncrasy* of each of these girls and all the singular complexity of their actions and reactions.

Thus understood,[11] conversational analysis reads each discourse not solely in terms of its specific structure of interaction as a transaction, but also in terms of the invisible structures that organize it. In the case above, these are both the structure in social space in which (right from the start) the girls exist, and the structure of educational space, within which they have pursued their different trajectories. Despite belonging to their past, these trajectories continue to orient their visions both of their own educational past

and future, and indeed, of who they are themselves, in their most singular aspects.[12]

Thus, against the illusion which consists in searching for neutrality through the elimination of the observer, it must be admitted that, paradoxically, the only 'spontaneous' process is one that is constructed, but it is *a realist construction*. In order to make this understood – or at least felt – I shall relate an anecdote that shows that it is only when it rests on prior knowledge of realities that research can bring the realities it wishes to record to the surface. Taking the fieldwork which we have undertaken on the housing problem as an example, in order to escape the abstract unreality of the question of housing preferences, particularly as regards purchase and letting, I decided to ask each respondent to speak of their successive places of residence, the conditions under which they had acquired them, the reasons and causes which had led them to choose or to leave them, the alterations they had made to them, etc. The interviews carried out on these lines proceeded in a way that to us seemed very 'natural', giving rise to some accounts of an unhoped-for frankness. Now, a long time afterwards, I heard, totally by chance, in the Metro, a conversation between two women of about 40: one of them, who had recently moved into a new flat, was telling the story of the successive places she had lived in. And her interlocutor conducted herself exactly as if she was following the rules that we had laid down for these interviews. Here is the transcription that I made from memory immediately afterwards:

> It was the first time I had been in a new flat. It's really good.
>   The first place I lived in, in Paris, was in rue Brancion, it was an old block that hadn't had anything done to it since the First World War. Everything had to be redone and everything was a mess. And there again, you couldn't get the ceilings clean because they had got so grimy. Really, it is a lot of work.
>   Before, with my parents, we'd lived in a tenement without any water. It was marvellous, with two children, to have a bathroom.
>   At my parents' it was the same. But, for all that, we weren't dirty. Having said that, it was certainly much easier. . . .
>   After that, we moved to Créteil, it was a modern bloc, but about ten years old. . . .

And the story continued in this way, very naturally, interrupted only by interventions either to 'acknowledge reception', by simple repetition, in an affirmative or interrogative mood, of the last-pronounced phrase, or to show interest and to offer agreement with certain points of view ('It's hard, when you work all day standing . . .' or 'At my parent's it was the same . . .'). It is this participation in which one engages in conversation, thus bringing the interlocutor also to engage in it, which distinguishes most clearly between ordinary conversation, or the interview as we have practised it, and the interview in which the researcher, out of a concern for neutrality, forbids herself all personal engagement.

There is a whole world of difference between this kind of maieutics and the imposition of a problematic, which so many opinion polls effect with an illusion of 'neutrality'. Their forced, artificial questions themselves entirely

conjure up the artificial finds they believe they are recording – to say nothing of those television interviews which extort from the interviewee remarks which issue directly from the discourse television conducts about them.[13] First difference, the awareness of danger, based on the knowledge of the volatility of what bear the name of 'opinions': deep dispositions can be shaped into many expressive forms and they can be recognized in relatively different preconstructed formulations (the performed alternatives offered in the closed questionnaire or the ready-prepared language of politics). Which means that nothing is simpler, and in a sense, more 'natural', than to *impose* a problematic: this is shown by the frequent *hijacking of opinion*, with all the innocence that accompanies mindlessness, by opinion polls (which is what makes them so well predisposed to serve as the instruments of a rational demagoguery) and also, more generally, by the demagogues of all per-suasions, who are always in haste to confirm the apparent expectations of individuals who do not always have the means to identify their real wants.[14] The imposition effect which is exerted under the cover of 'neutrality' is all the more pernicious in that the publication of such imposed opinions contri-butes to imposing them and giving them a social existence, bringing the poll-sters a semblance of validation of their credibility and their worth.

One thus sees the reinforcement that the empiricist representation of science is able to gain from the fact that rigorous knowledge almost always presupposes a more or less striking rupture with the evidence of accepted belief – usually identified with common sense – a rupture often liable to appear as the effect of begging the question or of a prejudice. In fact, it is pre-cisely by letting things alone, abstaining from all intervention and from all construction, that one falls into error: one leaves the terrain free for precon-structions, or for the automatic effects of those social mechanisms which are at work in even the most elementary scientific operations (conception and formulation of questions, definition of categories for coding, etc.). It is only by an active denunciation of the tacit presuppositions of accepted belief that one can stand up against the effects of all the representations of social reality to which both researched and researchers are continually exposed. I am think-ing particularly here of those representations produced both in the press and, above all, in television, which are everywhere imposed on the most deprived as the ready-made terms for what they believe to be their experience.

Social agents do not have an innate knowledge of what they are and what they do: more precisely, they do not necessarily have access to the central causes of their discontent or their disquiet and the most spontaneous declarations can, without aiming to mislead, express quite the opposite of what they appear to say. What distinguishes sociology from that science minus the learned mind which opinion poll surveys represent is that it demands of itself the means for raising doubts – initially in the form of the questions it poses itself – about all the preconstructions and all the presup-positions, both those of the researcher and the respondent, which operate so that the research study relationship is often only established on the basis of an agreement at the unconscious level.[15]

It is also understood in sociology that the most spontaneous and, thus, apparently, the most authentic opinions, which the hurried investigator of the public research institutes and those who commission them are content with, can obey a logic very close to that brought out by psychoanalysis. This is the case, for example, with the sort of a priori hostility in relation to foreigners that is found everywhere with farmers or with small shopkeepers who lack any direct knowledge of immigrants. One can only get beyond the appearance of opacity and absurdity which, by comparison with an understanding-based interpretation, seems to characterize that hostility if we see that, by a form of *displacement*, it offers to resolve the specific contradictions experienced by these capitalists with proletarian incomes and the contradictions in their experience of the state, which they see as responsible for an unacceptable redistribution. The real bases of the discontent and dissatisfaction which are expressed, in inappropriate forms, in this hostility can only accede to consciousness – that is to explicit discourse – where an effort is made to bring to light these things, which are buried away within the people who experience them – people who are both unconscious of these things and, in another sense, know them better than anyone.

Like a midwife, the sociologist can help them in this work on condition that she has a deeper understanding both of the conditions of existence of which they are the product and of the social effects which the relations of the fieldwork (and through these her own position and primary dispositions) can themselves exert. But the desire to discover the truth, which is constitutive of scientific intent, is totally lacking in any power to produce practical effects unless it is actualized in the form of a 'craft', itself the embodied product of all earlier research, which is by no means mere abstract and purely intellectual knowledge. This craft is a real 'disposition to pursue truth' (*hexis tou alètheuein*, as Aristotle says in his *Metaphysics*), which enables one to improvise on the spot, in the pressing situation of the interview, strategies of self-presentation and adaptive responses, encouragement and opportune questions, etc., in such a manner as to help the research respondent give up her truth or, rather, to be delivered of her truth.[16]

The Risks of Writing

The same attitude applies in the case of the work of construction the recorded interview must undergo. This will allow us to treat the analysis of those procedures of transcription and analysis more quickly here. It is clear that even the most literal form of writing-up (the simplest punctuation, the placing of a comma, for example, can dictate the whole sense of a phrase) represents a *translation* or even an interpretation. This is even more markedly the case with the form of writing-up proposed here: breaking with the spontaneist illusion of a discourse which 'speaks for itself', it deliberately plays on the *pragmatics of writing* (particularly by the introduction of headings and sub-headings made up from phrases taken from the interview) to orient the reader's attention toward the sociologically pertinent features which might escape the unprepared or distracted perception.

The report of the discourse produced by the author of the transcription is subject to two sets of constraints which are often difficult to reconcile: the constraint of being faithful to everything that came up in the interview – which cannot be reduced to what is really recorded on the tape-recorder – should lead her to try to restore to that discourse all that the transformation into writing and the use of the feeble and impoverished ordinary tools of punctuation tend to strip away from it, from which very often its real interest and meaning derived; but the constraints of readability, which are defined in relation to potential readers of very diverse levels of understanding and competence, prevents the publication of a phonetic transcription with notes attached, aimed at restoring all that has been lost in the passage from the spoken to the written form, that is, the voice, the punctuation (notably in its significant social variations), the intonation, the rhythm (each interview has its own tempo which is not that of reading), the language of gesture, the gesticulations and all the body posture, etc.[17]

Thus, to transcribe is necessarily to write, in the sense of rewrite.[18] Like the transition from written to oral that occurs in the theatre, the transition from the oral to the written imposes, with the changes in medium, infidelities which are without doubt the condition of a true fidelity. The well-known antinomies of popular literature are there to remind us that merely conveying their language 'just as it is' is not a way of affording true self-expression to those who do not normally have access to it. There are hesitations, repetitions, sentences interrupted and prolonged by gestures, looks, sighs or exclamations: there are laborious digressions, ambiguities that transcription inevitably removes, references to concrete situations, events linked to the particular history of a town, factory or a family, etc. (and which the speaker invokes much more willingly if his interlocutor is more familiar, and therefore more familiar with his whole familiar environment).

It is therefore in the name of the respect due to the author that, paradoxically, we have sometimes had to disembarrass the transcribed text of certain parasitic developments, certain confused phrases, verbal expletives or linguistic tics (the 'rights' and the 'ers', etc.), which, even if they give their particular colour to the oral discourse and fulfil an important function in communication (by permitting a statement to be sustained during a moment of breathlessness or when the interlocutor is called on to support a point), nevertheless have the effect of confusing and obscuring the transcription, in some cases to such a point that it is made altogether unreadable for anyone who has not heard the original. In the same manner, we allowed ourselves to divest the transcription of all its purely informative statements (on social origin, studies, job, etc.) wherever these could be moved, in an indirect style, into the introductory text. But we have never replaced one word with another, nor changed the order of the questions, nor the progression of the interview and all the cuts have been signalled.

By virtue of the exemplification, concretization and symbolization that effect, which at times confers on them a dramatic intensity and an emotional force similar to that of the literary text, the transcribed interviews can have

something of the effect of a *revelation*, especially in those who share some general characteristics with the speaker. In the fashion of parables in prophetic speech, they provide a more accessible equivalent to the conceptually complex and abstract conceptual analyses: they render tangible the objective structures which scientific work strives to expose, doing so even by way of the most individual characteristics of enunciation (intonation, pronunciation, etc.).[19] Being able to touch and move the reader, to reach the emotions, yet without giving in to the taste for the sensational, they are able to produce these shifts of thought and vision which are often the preconditions for comprehension.

But emotional force may also generate ambiguity, if not indeed confusion of symbolic effects. Can one report racist remarks in such a way that the person making them becomes intelligible, without thereby legitimating racism? How is one to do justice to his remarks without entering into his reasoning, without yielding to that reasoning? Or, in a more banal case, how is one to refer to the hairstyle of a low-ranking clerk without exciting class prejudice and how is one to communicate, without seeming to approve it, the impression she inevitably produces on the eye attuned to the canons of the dominant aesthetic – an impression which forms part of her most inevitably objective truth?

The intervention of the analyst is, clearly, as difficult as it is necessary. In taking the responsibility for publishing these discourses which – such as they are – are situated, as Benveniste says, 'in a pragmatic situation implying a certain intention of influencing the interlocutor', the analyst is exposed to the role of relaying their symbolic efficacy; but, above all, she risks allowing people to play, freely, the game of reading, that is to say, that spontaneous (if not, indeed, unruly) construction each reader necessarily puts on things read. A game which is particularly dangerous when it is applied to texts which have not been written and which, for this reason, have no advance defence against feared or rejected readings, above all, when applied to the words of speakers who are far from speaking like books and who, like some of so-called popular literature, the 'naiveté' or 'awkwardness' of which are the product of the cultivated eye, have every chance of not finding favour in the eyes of most readers, including even those with the best intentions.

To choose a laissez-faire approach, in a concern to avoid any limitation imposed on the liberty of the reader, is to forget that, whatever one does, every reading is already, if not constrained, then at least oriented, by the interpretive schemas employed. We have thus observed that, in some cases, non-specialist readers read the interviews as though they were hearing confidences from a friend or, rather, remarks (or gossip) about a third party, which thus provides an opportunity not merely for identification, but also for differentiating themselves, for judging, for condemning, for affirming a moral consensus in the reaffirmation of common values. The political act, of a quite particular type, which consists in bringing into the public sphere, by publication, something that does not normally come into it, or never, at least *in this form*, might thus be said to have been in some way distorted, and totally emptied of its meaning.

It thus seemed indispensable to intervene in the presentation of the transcriptions both by providing headings and sub-headings and, above all, preambles, the role of which is to provide the reader with the tools for a reading which affords proper understanding, a reading capable of reproducing the posture which gave rise to the text. The sustained, receptive attention required to become imbued with a sense of the singular necessity of each personal testimony, and which is usually reserved for great philosophical and literary texts, can also be accorded, by a sort of *democratization of the hermeneutic posture*, to the ordinary accounts of ordinary adventures. It is necessary, as Flaubert taught us, to learn to bring to bear on Yvetot the look that one affords so willingly to Constantinople: to learn, for example, to give the marriage of a woman teacher to a post office worker the attention and interest that would have been lent to the literary account of a misalliance, and to offer to the statements of a steelworker the thoughtful reception which a certain tradition of reading reserves for the highest forms of poetry or philosophy.[20]

We have thus striven to transmit to the reader the means of developing an attitude towards the words that she is about to read which will make sense of them, which will restore to the respondent her raison d'etre and her necessity; or, more precisely, to situate herself at the point in social space from which the respondent views that space, which is to say that place in which her world-vision becomes self-evident, necessary, *taken for granted*.

But there is doubtless no writing more perilous than that text in which the public writer must provide commentaries to the messages she has had confided in her. Forced to make a constant effort to master completely the relation between the subject and the object of the writing or, more exactly, the distance that separates them, she must strive for the objectivity of 'historical enunciation', which in the terms of Benveniste's alternative objectivates facts without the intervention of the narrator, while eschewing the cold distance of the clinical case study. While trying to deliver all the necessary elements of an objective perception of the person questioned, she must also use all the resources of the language (such as the free indirect style or the 'as if' dear to Flaubert) to avoid the objectivating distance which would place that person in the dock, or worse, in the pillory. And so while respecting a categorical ban (this is again one of the functions of the 'as if') on projecting herself improperly on to this alter ego, which always remains an object, whether we like it or not, in order abusively to make herself the subject of her world-vision.

Rigour, in this case, lies in the permanent control of the point of view, which is continually affirmed in the details of the writing (the fact, for example, of saying 'her school' not 'the school', in order to mark the fact that the account of what happens in this organization is given by the teacher who has been questioned and not the analyst herself). It is details of this sort which – if they do not pass purely and simply unnoticed – will most probably appear simply as matters of literary elegance or journalist sloppiness, which continuously underline the difference between 'the personal voice' and 'the

voice of science', to use Roland Barthes' phrase, and the refusal to slide unconsciously from one to the other.[21]

The sociologist must never ignore that the specific characteristic of her point of view is to be a point of view on a point of view. She can only reproduce the point of view of her object and constitute it as such, through resituating it within the social space, by taking up that very singular (and, in a sense, very privileged) viewpoint at which it is necessary to place oneself to be able to take (in thought) all possible points of view. And it is solely to the extent that she can objectivate herself that she is able, while remaining in the place inexorably assigned to her in the social world, to imagine herself in the place where the object (who is, at least to a certain degree, an alter ego) is also positioned and thus to take her point of view, that is to say, to understand that if she were in her shoes she would doubtless be and think just like her.

Translated by Bridget Fowler; extensively revised by Emily Agar

Notes

This article is a translation of pages 903–25 of *La Misère du Monde*, Paris: Seuil, 1993. The translators would like to thank Carol Woodward, of the Institut Français, Glasgow, for her generous and meticulous help.

1. In the course of various discussions I set out the objectives of the research and the (provisional) principles of interviewing, extracted from many years of both my own experience and that of my close collaborators (most notably R. Christin, Y. Delsaut, M. Pialoux, A. Sayad). The choice of the possible theme and form of the interview in relation to the social characterization of the potential respondent was attentively examined in each case. In many cases, hearing or reading the first interview threw up new questions (either of a factual or an interpretative nature) that required a second interview. Subsequently, the problems, difficulties and lessons of the interview that the various interviewers might have encountered in the interviewing process were regularly discussed at my seminars in the Collège de France in the year 1991–2. It was by continually confronting these experiences and the reflections of the participants that this method gradually took precise shape through making explicit and codifying the procedures actually carried out in the field.

2. The traditional opposition between so-called quantitative methods, such as the questionnaire, and qualitative methods, such as the interview, conceals the fact that they both rest on social interaction which is brought off within the constraints of social structures. Defenders of these two categories of method both ignore these structures, as do also the ethnomethodologists, whose subjectivist view of the social world leads them to ignore the effects exerted by objective structures not just on the interactions they record and analyse (between doctors and nurses for example), but also on their own interaction with those who are submitted to their observation or questioning.

3. In this translation the feminine pronoun is used throughout where no clear indicator of gender is provided.

4. Those signs of feedback which E.A. Schleghoff calls response tokens, such as 'yes', 'right', 'of course', 'oh!', and also the approving nods, looks, smiles and all the information receipts, bodily or verbal signs of attention, interest, approval, encouragement

and recognition, are the preconditions for an interchange which flows well (to the extent that a moment's inattention or distraction of gaze is alone sufficient to provoke a sort of awkwardness on the part of the respondent and to make her lose the thread): *placed at the right moment*, they are a sign of the intellectual and emotional participation of the interviewer.

5. One of the major reasons for these failures is the perfect match between the interviewer and the respondent, which allows the latter to say everything (like most personal accounts and historical documents) except that which goes without saying (for example, the actress, precisely because she is talking to an actor, passes in silence over the hierarchy of genres, the directors, and also the oppositions constitutive of the field of theatre at a particular moment). All investigations thus find themselves situated between two limit positions doubtless never completely attained: total co-incidence between the investigator and the respondent, where nothing could be said because, since nothing could be subject to question, everything would go without saying; or total divergence, where understanding and trust would become impossible.

6. On this point, as on every other, one would doubtless be understood better if one could give examples of the most typical errors, which almost always have their rationale in the unconscious or in ignorance. Some of the virtues of a mode of enquiry which is sensitive to its own effects are bound to pass unnoticed because they are remarkable solely by absences. Hence, the interest of the bureaucratic enquiries which are analysed below: these are out-and-out examinations in the art of living in which the researcher, locked into his institutional assumptions and ethical certainties, gauges the capacity of the respondents to adopt 'suitable' behaviour. As such, they show up all the questions which respect based on prior knowledge tends to exclude, because they are incompatible with an adequate representation of the situation of the person being questioned or the philosophy of action she deploys in her practice.

7. One might cite here Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius writing of the disposition which tends benevolently to welcome everything which derives from a universal cause, a joyous *assent* (*prosthesis*) to the natural world.

8. It is the aim of the 'Socratic' work of aiding explanation to propose without imposing, to formulate suggestions sometimes explicitly presented as such ('don't you mean that . . .') and intended to offer multiple, open-ended continuations to the interviewee's argument, to their hesitations or searchings for appropriate expression.

9. I have observed many times that the respondent would repeat with visible satisfaction the word or phrase that illuminated her own actions, that is to say her position (such as the term 'fuse' that I used to designate the critical position of an employee within the hierarchy of her own institution, and which, by its connotations, graphically described the extreme tension that she experienced).

10. If this logic of the double game in the mutual confirmation of identities finds a particularly favourable soil in the face-to-face relations of the investigation, it does not occur solely in the 'failed' interview (fairly common) that we had to eliminate. I could cite some works which appear to me to illustrate this perfectly, such as a recent novel by Nina Bouraoui, *La Voyeuse Interdite* (Paris, 1990), and certain new forms of populist literature, which, while appearing to combine the two, side-step the demands both of an authentically sociological testimony and an authentically literary novel because they have a blind-spot about their own point of view. But the example par excellence seems to me to be that of the novel *Small World* by David

Lodge (New York, Warner Books, 1984), a mystifying demystification, which presents all the commonplaces of the self-satisfied representation, falsely lucid and truly narcissistic, which university teachers love to present of themselves and their world – a book which – quite logically – has had an immense success in the university world and all the circles connected with university studies.

11. That is, in a sense very different from that given to it when one takes as object the manner of conducting conversation, for example, the structures of openings and endings, leaving out of account the social and cultural characteristics of the participants.

12. I could have quoted here the interview with the young high-school student, son of an immigrant, which, in Goodman's sense, is an example of the transformations of the teaching system which have led to the increase in those *excluded from the inside*, the interviewee concerned being a 'model' (in Goodman's terms) of this new type of high-school pupil.

13. I think it is necessary to recall here analyses I made earlier in a more systematic manner (cf. especially, 'L'opinion publique n'existe pas', in *Questions de Sociologie*, Paris, Minuit, 1984, pp. 222–50).

14. These reflections are particularly directed at those who teach that criticism of opinion polls is criticism of democracy.

15. I have shown by a detailed analysis of replies to an opinion poll about politicians (Giscard, Chirac, Marchais, etc.) designed on the model of the game sometimes known as 'Chinese roulette' (what if she were a tree, an animal, etc?) that, in their replies, the respondents unconsciously put into the equation the classificatory schemes (strong/weak, rigid/flexible, noble/ignoble, etc.) which the authors of the questionnaire had also used in their questions, *without being any more aware of the fact*. The inanity of the comments the authors appended to the statistical tables they published provide a demonstration of their total lack of understanding of the data they had themselves generated and, *a fortiori*, of the operation by which they had generated it (Bourdieu, *La Distinction*, Paris: Minuit, 1979, pp. 625–40).

16. This is not the place to analyse all the paradoxes of the scientific habitus which presupposes, on the one hand, an effort to bring to consciousness the primary dispositions which are socially constituted, in order to neutralize and uproot them (or better, to split them from their bodily incorporation), and on the other hand, an effort – and *training* – to incorporate, and thus to render quasi-'unconscious' the consciously defined principles of the different methods thus made *practically available*. The opposition between conscious and unconscious 'knowledge' we have resorted to here for purposes of communication is, actually, totally artificial and fallacious: in fact, the principles of scientific practice can be both present to consciousness – to varying degrees at different times and different 'levels' of practice – and function in the practical state in the form of incorporated dispositions.

17. We know, for example, that irony, which is often the product of a deliberate discordance between body symbolism and verbal symbolism, or between different levels of the verbal message, is almost inevitably lost in transcription. And the same goes for the ambiguities, double meanings, uncertainty and vagueness so characteristic of oral language, which the written form almost inevitably destroys, especially by the effect of punctuation. But there is also all the information that is inherent in proper names, immediately meaningful to those familiar with a particular world (and which have almost always had to be omitted so as to preserve the anonymity of the respondents), names of people, of places and of institutions, on which structuring

divisions often hang: this is the case with the opposition between experimental and boulevard theatre which gives meaning to the mix-up between the name of a boulevard actress and a great classical tragedian perpetrated by the actress: a significant slip, through which she revealed, for those with ears to hear, the reality of a failure related to a wrong initial choice between the two career options.

18. Cf. P. Encrevé, 'Sa voix harmonieuse et voilée', *Hors Cadre* 3 (1985) pp. 42–51. (An entire transcription [not phonetic] of all the interviews [numbering 182] was made, and placed in the archive, along with the corresponding tapes.)

19. The words of the post-office sorter say much more than what is said, with all the abstract coldness of conceptual language, in an analysis of the social trajectory of provincial white-collar workers (even if his words also cover that analysis), forced as they very often are to pay for entry to the profession or career advancement with a long exile in Paris.

20. The reception of sociological discourse evidently owes much to the fact that it concerns the immediate present or current events; in this respect it is like journalism, which is, however, its opposite. We know that the hierarchy of historical studies corresponds to the remoteness of their objects in time. And it is certain that one doesn't give to a transcription of a sermon by the Bishop of Créteil, even though it is equally rich with rhetorical subtleties and theologico-political skills, the same attention as to a text by Adalberon of Laoin, written, moreover, in Latin, and that one will attach more value to the words – no doubt apocryphal – of Olivier Lefèvre, founder of the Ormesson dynasty, than to an interview with the last of his descendants [a reference to the novelist Jean d'Ormesson, Trans.]. No one escapes the logic of the academic unconscious which orients this a priori distribution of respect or indifference and the sociologist who has succeeded in overcoming these prejudices in herself will, no doubt, find it all the more difficult to obtain the minimal consideration that is due to the documents she produces and the analyses she offers of them for the fact that the daily and weekly press are full of sensationalist declarations of the anguish of the teachers or the anger of the nurses, which are, it might be said in passing, better designed to satisfy that form of conventional goodwill which is accorded to good causes.

21. This constant control over one's point of view is never as necessary, nor so difficult, as when the social distance that has to be surmounted is only of marginal difference. Thus, for example, in the case of the woman teacher, whose favourite expressions ('I feel guilty', 'relationship problems', etc.) can have both an off-putting and de-realizing effect, preventing one from feeling the reality of the drama they are expressing, it would be only too easy to leave the associations of daily polemic in play, so as to characterize by caricaturing them a life and lifestyle which only seem so intolerable because of one's fear of recognizing in them one's own.

Pierre Bourdieu holds the Chair of Sociology at the Collège de France. His latest publications include *Les règles de l'art: genère et structure du champ artistique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1992) and, with others, *La misère du Monde* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993).