

effect of mobilization and demonstration, he may even make it appear as a social agent.

Politics is the site par excellence of symbolic efficacy, the action that is performed through signs capable of producing social things and, in particular, groups. Through the potency of the oldest of the metaphysical effects linked to the existence of a symbolism, the one that enables one to regard as really existing everything that can be *symbolized* (God or non-being), political representation produces and reproduces at every moment a derived form of the case of the bald king of France, so dear to the logicians: any predicative proposition having "the working class" as its subject disguises an existential proposition (*there is a working class*). More generally, all utterances which have as their subject a collective noun—people, class, university, school, state, etc.—presuppose the existence of the group in question and conceal the same sort of metaphysical boot-strapping that was denounced in the ontological argument. The spokesman is he who, in speaking of a group, on behalf of a group, surreptitiously posits the existence of the group in question, institutes the group, through the magical operation that is inherent in any act of naming. That is why one must perform a critique of political reason, which is intrinsically inclined to abuses of language that are also abuses of power, if one wants to pose the question with which all sociology ought to begin, that of the existence and the mode of existence of collectives.

A class exists insofar—and only insofar—as mandated representatives endowed with *plena potestas aegendi* can be and feel authorized to speak in its *name*—in accordance with the question "the Party is the working class," or "the working class is the Party," a formula which reproduces the canonists' equation: "The Church is the Pope (or the Bishops), the Pope is (or the Bishops are) the Church"—and so to make it exist as a real force within the political field. The mode of existence of what is nowadays called, in many societies (with variations, of course), "the working class," is entirely paradoxical: it is a sort

of *existence in thought*, an existence in the thinking of a large proportion of those whom the taxonomies designate as workers, but also in the thinking of the occupants of the positions remotest from the workers in the social space.

This almost universally recognized existence is itself based on the existence of a *working class in representation*, i.e. of political and trade-union apparatuses and professional spokesmen, vitally interested in believing that it exists and in having this believed both by those who identify with it and those who exclude themselves from it, and capable of making the "working class" *speak*, and with one voice, of invoking it, as one invokes gods or patron saints, even of symbolically manifesting it through *demonstration*, a sort of theatrical deployment of the class-in-representation, with on the one hand the corps of professional representatives and all the symbolism constitutive of its existence, and on the other the most convinced fraction of the believers who, through their presence, enable the representatives to manifest their representativeness. This working class "as will and representation" (in the words of Schopenhauer's famous title) is not the self-enacting class, a real group really mobilized, which is evoked in the Marxist tradition. But it is no less real, with the magical reality which (as Durkheim and Mauss maintained) defines institutions as social fictions. It is a "mystical body," created through an immense historical labour of theoretical and practical invention, starting with that of Marx himself, and endlessly re-created through the countless, constantly renewed, efforts and energies that are needed to produce and reproduce belief and the institution designed to ensure the reproduction of belief. It exists in and through the corps of mandated representatives who give it material speech and visible presence, and in the belief in its existence which this corps of plenipotentiaries manages to enforce, by its sheer existence and by its representations, on the basis of the affinities objectively uniting the members of the same "class on paper" as a probable group.

## Introduction to "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception"

In this essay, Bourdieu examines artistic competence as a symbolic asset that legitimates relations of social domination. As an asset, the ability to appropriately decipher and appreciate works of art functions as a sign of distinction that separates those who possess the ability from those who do not. Individuals are not born with this competence; rather, they acquire it through exposure to and internalization of uniquely artistic interpretive schemes. These schemes allow the viewer to understand works of art in an aesthetic manner that is freed from the "necessities" of everyday reality. However, the connection between "being" cultured and "acquiring" culture is seldom recognized. Instead, the link between artistic competence and education is denied by a "charismatic ideology" that misrecognizes social privilege as a gift of nature. Thus, while art is made accessible to all, not everyone is equally comfortable in its presence. To the extent that we understand the "unfortunate" as simply being born without the blessings of grace that allow an individual's spirit to be touched by works of art, we fail to uncover the ideological functions of culture. Bourdieu speaks directly to the ideological or political dimensions of art when he notes:

By symbolically shifting the essential of what sets them apart from other classes from the economic field to that of culture, or rather, by adding to strictly economic differences, namely those created by the simple possession of material wealth, differences created by the possession of symbolic wealth such as works of art, or by the pursuit of symbolic distinctions in the manner of using such wealth (economic or symbolic) . . . the privileged members of bourgeois society replace the difference between two cultures, historic products of social conditions, by the essential difference between two natures, a naturally cultivated nature and a naturally natural nature. Thus, the sacralization of culture and art fulfills a vital function of contributing to the consecration of the social order: to enable educated people to believe in barbarism and persuade the barbarians within the gates of their own barbarity, all they must and need do is manage to conceal themselves and to conceal the social conditions which render possible not only culture as a second nature in which society recognizes human excellence or "good form" as the "realization" in a habitus of the aesthetics of the ruling classes, but also the legitimized dominance . . . of a particular definition of culture. (Bourdieu 1968/1993:236)

To reproduce their privileged position, the "civilized" need only convince the "barbarians" that the conditions that produce the culturally gifted and ungifted are but the expression of a state of nature that condemns both to their destinies.

## "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception" (1968)

Pierre Bourdieu

An act of deciphering *unrecognized as such*, immediate and adequate "comprehension," is possible and effective only in the special case in which the cultural code which makes the act of unconscious deciphering operation.

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deciphering possible is immediately and completely mastered by the observer (in the form of cultivated ability or inclination) and merges with the cultural code which has rendered the work perceived possible. . . .

The question of the conditions that make it possible to experience the work of art (and, in a more general way, all cultural objects) as at once endowed with meaning is totally excluded from the experience itself, because the recapturing of the work's objective meaning (which may have nothing to do with the author's intention) is completely adequate and immediately effected in the case—and only in the case—where the culture that the originator puts into the work is identical with the culture or, more accurately, the *artistic competence* which the beholder brings to the deciphering of the work. In this case, everything is a matter of course and the question of the meaning, of the deciphering of the meaning and of the conditions of this deciphering does not arise.

Whenever these specific conditions are not fulfilled, misunderstanding is inevitable: the illusion of immediate comprehension leads to an illusory comprehension based on a mistaken code. In the absence of the perception that the works are coded, and coded in another code, one unconsciously applies the code which is good for everyday perception, for the deciphering of familiar objects, to works in a foreign tradition. There is no perception which does not involve an unconscious code and it is essential to dismiss the myth of the "fresh eye," considered a virtue attributed to naïveté and innocence. One of the reasons why the less educated beholders in our societies are so strongly inclined to demand a realistic representation is that, being devoid of specific categories of perception, they cannot apply any other code to works of scholarly culture than that which enables them to apprehend as meaningful objects of their everyday environment. Minimum, and apparently immediate, comprehension, accessible to the simplest observers and enabling them to recognize a house or a tree, still presupposes partial (unconscious) agreement between artist and beholder concerning categories that define the representation of the real that a historic society holds to be "realistic." . . .

The spontaneous theory of art perception is founded on the experience of familiarity and immediate comprehension—an unrecognized special case.

Educated people are at home with scholarly culture. They are consequently carried towards that kind of ethnocentrism which may be called class-centrism and which consists in considering as natural (in other words, both as a matter of course and based on nature) a way of perceiving which is but one among other possible ways and which is acquired through education that may be diffuse or specific, conscious or unconscious, institutionalized or non-institutionalized. "When, for instance, a man wears a pair of spectacles which are so close to him physically that they are 'sitting on his nose,' they are environmentally more remote from him than the picture on the opposite wall. Their proximity is normally so weakly perceived as to go unnoticed." Taking Heidegger's analysis metaphorically, it can be said that the illusion of the "fresh eye" as a "naked eye" is an attribute of those who wear the spectacles of culture and who do not see that which enables them to see, any more than they see what they would not see if they were deprived of what enables them to see.

Conversely, faced with scholarly culture, the least sophisticated are in a position identical with that of ethnologists who find themselves in a foreign society and present, for instance, at a ritual to which they do not hold the key. The disorientation and cultural blindness of the less-educated beholders are an objective reminder of the objective truth that art perception is a mediate deciphering operation. Since the information presented by the works exhibited exceeds the deciphering capabilities of the beholder, he perceives them as devoid of signification—or, to be more precise, of structure and organization—because he cannot "decode" them, i.e. reduce them to an intelligible form.

Scientific knowledge is distinguished from naïve experience (whether this is shown by disconcertment or by immediate comprehension) in that it involves an awareness of the conditions permitting adequate perception. The object of the science of the work of art is that which renders possible both this science and the immediate comprehension of the work of art, that is, culture.

It therefore includes, implicitly at least, the science of the difference between scientific knowledge and naïve perception.

## II

The work of art considered as a symbolic good (and not as an economic asset, which it may also be) only exists as such for a person who has the means to appropriate it, or in other words, to decipher it.<sup>1</sup>

The degree of an agent's art competence is measured by the degree to which he or she masters the set of instruments for the appropriation of the work of art, available at a given time, that is to say, the interpretation schemes which are the prerequisite for the appropriation of art capital or, in other words, the prerequisite for the deciphering of works of art offered to a given society at a given moment.

Art competence can be provisionally defined as the preliminary knowledge of the possible divisions into complementary classes of a universe of representations. A mastery of this kind of system is necessarily determined in relation to another class, itself constituted by all the art representations consciously or unconsciously taken into consideration which do not belong to the class in question. The *style* proper to a period and to a social group is none other than such a class defined in relation to all the works of the same universe which it excludes and which are complementary to it. The *recognition* (or, as the art historians say when using the vocabulary of logic, the *attribution*) proceeds by *successive elimination* of the possibilities to which the class is—negatively—related and to which the possibility which has become a reality in the work concerned belongs. It is immediately evident that the uncertainty concerning the different characteristics

<sup>1</sup>The laws governing the reception of works of art are a special case of the laws of cultural diffusion: whatever may be the nature of the message—religious prophecy, political speech, publicity image, technical object—reception depends on the categories of perception, thought and action of those who receive it. In a differentiated society, a close relationship is therefore established between the nature and quality of the information transmitted and the structure of the public, its "readability," and its effectiveness being all the greater when it meets as directly as possible the expectations, implicit or explicit, which the receivers owe chiefly to their family upbringing and social circumstances (and also, in the matter of scholarly culture at least, to their school education) and which the diffuse pressure of the reference group maintains, sustains and reinforces by constant recourse to the norm.

likely to be attributed to the work under consideration (authors, schools, periods, styles, subjects, etc.) can be removed by employing different codes, functioning as classification systems; it may be a case of a properly artistic code which, by permitting the deciphering of specifically stylistic characteristics, enables the work concerned to be assigned to the class formed by the whole of the works of a period, a society, a school or an author ("that's a Cézanne"), or a code from everyday life which, in the form of previous knowledge of the possible divisions into complementary classes of the universe of signifiers and of the universe of signifieds, and of the correlations between the divisions of the one and the divisions of the other, enables the particular representation, treated as a sign, to be assigned to a class of signifiers and consequently makes it possible to know, by means of the correlations with the universe of signifieds, that the corresponding signified belongs to a certain class of signifieds ("that's a forest"). In the first case the beholder is paying attention to the manner of treating the leaves or the clouds, that is to say to the stylistic indications, locating the possibility realized, characteristic of one class of works, by reference to the universe of stylistic possibilities; in the other case, she is treating the leaves or the clouds as indications or signals associated, according to the logic set forth above, with significations transcendent to the representation itself ("that's a poplar," "that's a storm").

Artistic competence is therefore defined as the previous knowledge of the strictly artistic principles of division which enable a representation to be located, through the classification of the stylistic indications which it contains, among the possibilities of representation constituting the universe of art and not among the possibilities of representation constituting the universe of everyday objects or the universe of signs, which would

## III

amount to treating it as a mere monument, i.e. as a mere means of communication used to transmit a transcendent signification. The perception of the work of art in a truly aesthetic manner, that is, as a signifier which signifies nothing other than itself, does not consist of considering it "without connecting it with anything other than itself, either emotionally or intellectually," in short of giving oneself up to the work apprehended in its irreducible singularity, but rather of noting its *distinctive stylistic features* by relating it to the ensemble of the works forming the class to which it belongs, and to these works only. On the contrary, the taste of the working classes is determined, after the manner of what Kant describes in his *Critique of Judgement* as "barbarous taste," by the refusal or the impossibility (one should say the impossibility-refusal) of operating the distinction between "what is liked" and "what pleases" and, more generally, between "disinterestedness," the only guarantee of the aesthetic quality of contemplation, and "the interest of the senses" which defines "the agreeable" or "the interest of reason": it requires that every image shall fulfil a function, if only that of a sign. This "functionalist" representation of the work of art is based on the refusal of gratuitousness, the idolatry of work or the placing of value on what is "instructive" (as opposed to what is "interesting") and also on the impossibility of placing each individual work in the universe of representations, in the absence of strictly stylistic principles of classification. . . .

Being an historically constituted system, founded on social reality, this set of instruments of perception whereby a particular society, at a given time, appropriates artistic goods (and, more generally, cultural goods) does not depend on individual wills and consciousnesses and forces itself upon individuals, often without their knowledge, defining the distinctions they can make and those which escape them. Every period arranges artistic representations as a whole according to an institutional system of classification of its own, bringing together works which other periods separated, or distinguishing between works which other periods placed together, and individuals have difficulty in imagining differences other than those which the available system of classification allows them to imagine. . . .

the equivalent of prolonged contact between disciple and initiate in traditional education, i.e. repeated contact with the work (or with works of the same class). And, just as students or disciples can *unconsciously* absorb the rules of the art—including those which are not explicitly known to the initiates themselves—by giving themselves up to it, excluding analysis and the selection of elements of exemplary conduct, so art-lovers can, by abandoning themselves in some way to the work, internalize the principles and rules of its construction without there ever being brought to their consciousness and formulated as such. This constitutes the difference between the art theorist and the connoisseur, who is usually incapable of explicating the principles on which his judgements are based. In this field as in others (learning the grammar of one's native tongue, for instance), school education tends to encourage the conscious reflection of patterns of thought, perception or expression which have already been mastered unconsciously by formulating explicitly the principles of the creative grammar, for example, the laws of harmony and counterpoint or the rules of pictorial composition, and by providing the verbal and conceptual material essential for naming differences previously experienced in a purely intuitive way. . . .

Even when the educational institution makes little provision for art training proper (as is the case in France and many other countries), even when, therefore, it gives neither specific encouragement to cultural activities nor a body of concepts specifically adapted to the plastic arts, it tends on the one hand to inspire a certain *familiarity*—confering a feeling of belonging to the cultivated class—with the world of art, in which people feel at home and among themselves as the appointed addressees of works which do not deliver their message to the first-comer; and on the other to inculcate (at least in France and in the majority of European countries, at the level of secondary education) a *cultivated disposition* as a durable and generalized attitude which

implies recognition of the value of works of art and the ability to appropriate them by means of generic categories.<sup>11</sup> Although it deals almost exclusively with literary works, in-school learning tends to create on the one hand a transposable inclination to admire works approved by the school and a duty to admire and to love certain works or, rather, certain classes of works which gradually seem to become linked to a certain educational and social status; and, on the other hand, an equally generalized and transposable aptitude for categorizing by authors, by genres, by schools and by periods, for the handling of educational categories of literary analysis and for the mastery of the code which governs the use of the different codes, giving at least a tendency to acquire equivalent categories in other fields and to store away the typical knowledge which, even though extrinsic and anecdotal, makes possible at least an elementary form of apprehension, however inadequate it may be. Thus, the first degree of strictly pictorial competence shows itself in the mastery of an arsenal of words making it possible to name differences and to apprehend them while naming them: these are the proper names of famous painters—da Vinci, Picasso, Van Gogh—which function as generic categories, because one can say about any painting or non-figurative object "that suggests Picasso," or, about any work recalling nearly or distantly the manner of the Florentine painter, "that looks like da Vinci"; there are also broad categories, like "the Impressionists" (a school commonly considered to include Gauguin, Cézanne and Degas), "the Dutch School," "the Renaissance." It is particularly significant that the proportion of subjects who think in terms of schools very clearly grows as the level of education rises and that, more generally, generic knowledge which is required for the perception of differences and consequently for memorizing—proper names and historical, technical or aesthetic concepts—becomes increasingly specific as we go towards the more educated beholders, so that the most adequate

<sup>11</sup>School instruction always fulfils a function of legitimation, if only by giving its blessing to works which it sets up as worthy of being admired, and thus helps to define the hierarchy of cultural goods valid in a particular society at a given time.

perception differs only from the least adequate in so far as the specificity, richness and subtlety of the categories employed are concerned. By no means contradicting these arguments is the fact that the less educated visitors to museums—who tend to prefer the most famous paintings and those sanctioned by school teaching, whereas modern painters who have the least chance of being mentioned in schools are quoted only by those with the highest educational qualifications—live in large cities. To be able to form discerning or so-called “personal” opinions is again a result of the education received: the ability to go beyond school constraints is the privilege of those who have sufficiently assimilated school education to make their own the free attitude towards scholastic culture taught by a school so deeply impregnated with the values of the ruling classes that it accepts the fashionable depreciation of school instruction. The contrast between accepted, stereotyped and, as Max Weber would say, “routinized” culture, and genuine culture, freed from school discourse, has meaning only for an infinitely small minority of educated people for whom culture is second nature, endowed with all the appearances of talent, and the full assimilation of school culture is a prerequisite for going beyond it towards this “free culture”—free, that is to say, from its school origins—which the bourgeois class and its school regard as the value of values.

But the best proof that the general principles for the transfer of training also hold for school training lies in the fact that the practices of one single individual and, *a fortiori*, of individuals belonging to one social category or having a specific level of education, tend to constitute a system, so that a certain type of practice in any field of culture very probably implies a corresponding type of practice in all the other fields; thus, frequent visits to museums are almost necessarily associated with an equal amount of theatre-going and, to a lesser degree, attendance at concerts. Similarly, everything seems to indicate that knowledge and preferences tend to form into constellations that are strictly linked to the level of education, so that a typical structure of preferences in painting is most likely to be linked to a structure of preferences of the same type in music or literature.

social scale) and finally when a propitious cultural atmosphere sustains and relays its effectiveness. Thus, humanities students who have received a homogeneous and homogenizing training for a number of years, and who have been constantly selected according to the degree to which they conform to school requirements, remain separated by systematic differences, both in their pursuit of cultural activities and in their cultural preferences, depending upon whether they come from a more or less cultivated milieu and for how long this has been so; their knowledge of the theatre (measured according to the average number of plays that they have seen on the stage) or of painting is greater if their father or grandfather (or, *a fortiori*, both of them) belongs to a higher occupational category; and, furthermore, if one of these variables (the category of the father or of the grandfather) has a fixed value, the other tends, by itself, to hierarchize the scores. Because of the slowness of the acculturation process, subtle differences linked with the length of time that they have been in contact with culture thus continue to separate individuals who are apparently equal with regard to social success and even educational success. Cultural nobility also has its quarterings.

Only an institution like the school, the specific function of which is methodically to develop or create the dispositions which produce an educated person and which lay the foundations, quantitatively and consequently qualitatively, of a constant and intense pursuit of culture, could offset (at least partially) the initial disadvantage of those who do not receive from their family circle the encouragement to undertake cultural activities and the competence presupposed in any discourse on works, on the condition—and only on the condition—that it employs every available means to break down the endless series of cumulative processes to which any cultural education is condemned. For if the apprehension of a work of art depends, in its intensity, its modality and in its very existence, on the beholders' mastery of the generic and specific code of the work, i.e. on their competence, which they owe partly to school training, the same thing applies to the pedagogic communication which is responsible, among its other functions, for transmitting the code of works of scholarly culture

(and also the code according to which it effects this transmission). Thus the intensity and modality of the communication are here again a function of culture (as a system of schemes of perception, expression and historically constituted and socially conditioned thinking) which the receiver owes to his or her family milieu and which is more or less close to scholarly culture and the linguistic and cultural models according to which the school effects the transmission of this culture. Considering that the direct experience of works of scholarly culture and the institutionally organized acquisition of culture which is a prerequisite for adequate experience of such works are subject to the same laws, it is obvious how difficult it is to break the sequence of the cumulative effects which cause cultural capital to attract cultural capital. In fact, the school has only to give free play to the objective machinery of cultural diffusion without working systematically to give to all, in and through the pedagogical message itself, what is given to some through family inheritance—that is, the instruments which condition the adequate reception of the school message—for it to redouble and create by its approval the socially conditioned inequalities of cultural competence, by treating them as natural inequalities or, in other words, as inequalities of gifts or natural talents.

Charismatic ideology is based on parenthesizing the relationship, evident as soon as it is revealed, between art competence and education, which alone is capable of creating both the disposition to recognize a value in cultural goods and the competence which gives a meaning to this disposition by making it possible to appropriate such goods. Since their art competence is the product of an imperceptible familiarization and an automatic transferring of aptitudes, members of the privileged classes are naturally inclined to regard as a gift of nature a cultural heritage which is transmitted by a process of unconscious training. But, in addition, the con-tradictions and ambiguities of the relationship which the most cultured among them maintain with their culture are both encouraged and permitted by the paradox which defines the “realization” of culture as *becoming natural*. Culture is thus achieved only by negating itself as such, that is, as artificial and artificially acquired, so as

to become second nature, a habitus, a possession turned into being; the virtuosi of the judgement of taste seem to reach an experience of aesthetic grace so completely freed from the constraints of culture and so little marked by the long, patient training of which it is the product that any reminder of the conditions and the social conditioning which have rendered it possible seems to be at once obvious and scandalous. It follows that the most experienced connoisseurs are the natural champions of charismatic ideology, which attributes to the work of art a magical power of conversion capable of awakening the potentialities latent in a few of the elect, and which contrasts authentic experience of a work of art as an "affection" of the heart or immediate enlightenment of the intuition with the laborious proceedings and cold comments of the intelligence, ignoring the social and cultural conditions underlying such an experience, and at the same time treating as a birthright the virtuosity acquired through long familiarization or through the exercises of a methodical training; silence concerning the social prerequisites for the appropriation of culture or, to be more exact, for the acquisition of art competence in the sense of mastery of all the means for the specific appropriation of works of art is a self-seeking silence because it is what makes it possible to legitimize a social privilege by pretending that it is a gift of nature.

To remember that culture is not what one is but what one has, or rather, what one has become; to remember the social conditions which render possible aesthetic experience and the existence of those beings—art lovers or "people of taste"—for whom it is possible; to remember that the work of art is given only to those who have received the means to acquire the means to appropriate it and who could not seek to possess it if they did not already possess it, and through the possession of means of possession as an actual possibility of effecting the taking of possession; to remember, finally, that only a few have the real possibility of benefiting from the theoretical possibility, generously offered to all, of taking advantage of the works

<sup>11</sup>It was understood thus by a very cultivated old man who declared during a conversation: "Education, Sir, is inborn."

are also inequalities of merit. Plato records, towards the end of *The Republic*, that the souls who are to begin another life must themselves choose their lot among "patterns of life" of all kinds and that, when the choice has been made, they must drink of the water of the river Lethe before returning to earth. The function which Plato attributes to the water of forgetfulness falls, in our societies, on the university which, in its impartiality, through pretending to recognize students as equal in rights and duties, divided only by inequalities of gifts and of merit, in fact confers on individuals degrees judged according to their cultural heritage, and therefore according to their social status.

By symbolically shifting the essence of what sets them apart from other classes from the economic field to that of culture, or rather, by adding to strictly economic differences, namely those created by the simple possession of material goods, differences created by the possession of symbolic goods such as works of art, or by the pursuit of symbolic distinctions in the manner of using such goods (economic or symbolic), in short, by turning into a fact of nature everything which determines their "value," or to take the word in the linguistic sense, their *distinction*—a mark of difference which, according to the Littre, sets people apart from the common herd "by the characteristics of elegance, nobility and good form"—the privileged members of bourgeois society replace the difference between two cultures, historic products of social conditions, by the essential difference between two natures, a naturally cultivated nature and a naturally natural nature. Thus, the sacralization of culture and art fulfils a vital function by contributing to the consecration of the social order: to enable educated people to believe in barbarism and persuade the barbarians within the gates of their own barbarity, all they must and need do is to

<sup>12</sup>It is not infrequent that working-class visitors explicitly express the feeling of exclusion which, in any case, is evident in their whole behaviour. Thus, they sometimes see in the absence of any indication which might facilitate the visit—arrows showing the direction to follow, explanatory panels, etc.—the signs of a deliberate intention to exclude the uninitiated. The provision of teaching and didactic aids would not, in fact, really make up for the lack of schooling, but it would at least proclaim the right not to know, the right to be there in ignorance, the right of the ignorant to be there, a right which everything in the presentation of works and in the organization of the museum combines to challenge, as this remark overheard in the Chateau of Versailles testifies: "This chateau was not made for the people, and it has not changed."

manage to conceal themselves and to conceal the social conditions which render possible not only culture as a second nature in which society recognizes human excellence or "good form" as the "realization" in a habitus of the aesthetics of the ruling classes, but also the legitimized dominance (or, if you like, the legitimacy) of a particular definition of culture. And in order that the ideological circle may be completely closed, all they have to do is to find in an essentialist representation of the bipartition of society into barbarians and civilized people the justification of their right to conditions which produce the possession of culture and the disposition of culture, a state of "nature" destined to appear based on the nature of the men who are condemned to it.

If such is the function of culture and if it is love of art which really determines the choice that separates, as by an invisible and insuperable barrier, those who have from those who have not received this grace, it can be seen that museums betray, in the smallest details of their morphology and their organization, their true function, which is to strengthen the feeling of belonging in some and the feeling of exclusion in others.<sup>12</sup> Everything, in these civic temples in which bourgeois society deposits its most sacred possessions, that is, the relics inherited from a past which is not its own, in these holy places of art, in which the chosen few come to nurture a faith of virtuosi while conformists and bogus devotees come and perform a class ritual, old palaces or great historic homes to which the nineteenth century added imposing edifices, built often in the Greco-Roman style of civic sanctuaries, everything combines to indicate that the world of art is as contrary to the world of everyday life as the sacred is to the profane. The prohibition against touching the objects, the religious silence which is forced upon visitors,

the puritan asceticism of the facilities, always scarce and uncomfortable, the almost systematic refusal of any instruction, the grandiose solemnity of the decoration and the decorum, colonnades, vast galleries, decorated ceilings, monumental staircases both outside and inside, everything seems done to remind people that the transition from the profane world to the sacred world presupposes, as Durkheim says, "a genuine metamorphosis," a radical spiritual change, that the bringing together of the worlds "is always, in itself, a delicate operation which calls for precaution and a more or less complicated initiation," that "it is not even possible unless the profane lose their specific characteristics, unless they themselves become sacred to some extent and to some degree."<sup>16</sup> Although the work of art, owing to its sacred character, calls for particular dispositions or predispositions, it brings in return its consecration to those who satisfy its demands, to the small elite who are self-chosen by their aptitude to respond to its appeal.

The museum gives to all, as a public legacy, the monuments of a splendid past, instruments of the sumptuous glorification of the great figures of bygone ages, but this is false generosity, because free entrance is also optional entrance, reserved for those who, endowed with the ability to appropriate the works, have the privilege of using this freedom and who find themselves consequently legitimized in their privilege, that

is, in the possession of the means of appropriating cultural goods or, to borrow an expression of Max Weber, in the *monopoly* of the handling of cultural goods and of the institutional signs of cultural salvation (awarded by the school). Being the keystone of a system which can function only by concealing its true function, the charismatic representation of art experience never fulfills its function of mystifying so well as when it resorts to a "democratic" language: to claim that works of art have power to awaken the grace of aesthetic enlightenment in anyone, however culturally uninitiated he or she may be, to presume in all cases to ascribe to the unfathomable accidents of grace or to the arbitrary bestowal of "gifts" aptitudes which are always the product of unevenly distributed education, and therefore to treat inherited aptitudes as personal virtues which are both natural and meritorious. Charismatic ideology would not be so strong if it were not the only outwardly irreproachable means of justifying the right of the heirs to the inheritance without being inconsistent with the ideal of formal democracy, and if, in this particular case, it did not aim at establishing in nature the sole right of the bourgeoisie to appropriate art treasures to itself, to appropriate them to itself *symbolically*, that is to say, in the only legitimate manner, in a society which tends to yield to all, "democratically," the relics of an aristocratic past.

<sup>16</sup>E. Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, 6th edn (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960), 55-6. The holding of a Danish exhibition showing modern furniture and utensils in the old ceramic rooms of the Lille museum brought about such a "conversion" in the visitors as can be summarized in the following contrasts, the very ones which exist between a department store and a museum: noise/silence; touch/see; quick, haphazard exploration, in no particular order/leisurely, methodical inspection, according to a fixed arrangement; freedom/constraint; economic assessment of works which may be purchased/aesthetic appreciation of "priceless" works. However, despite these differences, bound up with the things exhibited, the solemnizing (and distancing) effect of the museum no less continued to be felt, contrary to expectations, for the structure of the public at the Danish exhibition was more "aristocratic" (in respect of level of education) than the ordinary public of the museum. The mere fact that works are consecrated by being exhibited in a consecrated place is sufficient, in itself, profoundly to change their signification and, more precisely, to raise the level of their emission; were they presented in a more familiar place, a large emporium for instance, they would be more accessible.

### EDWARD SAID (1935-2003): A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Edward Said was born in Jerusalem in 1935 to a Christian Arab family. At that time, Jerusalem was a Palestinian city under British colonial rule. Said spent his formative years living in both Jerusalem and Cairo until 1948, when the state of Israel was established and his family became refugees. In 1951, Said emigrated to the United States to attend an elite boarding school in Massachusetts while his family stayed behind in the Middle East. He proved to be an exceptional student in his new country, graduating at the top of his class. The school, however, withheld his deserved title as valedictorian or salutatorian (Said does not recall graduating first or second) on the dubious moral grounds of being unfit for the honor (Said 2000:559). Nevertheless, he would go on to receive his bachelor's degree from Princeton University and his master's and doctorate from Harvard, where he studied Western literature, music, and philosophy.

In 1963, Said joined the faculty of Columbia University, where he would remain for the next four decades as professor of English and comparative literature. During this time, he also taught courses at Yale, Johns Hopkins, and Harvard universities and delivered lectures in Canada, Europe, and the Middle East, among other locations. He received more than half a dozen honorary doctorates from universities in some eight countries. He published more than a dozen books (with translations in 36 languages) and wrote countless articles and essays appearing in both scholarly journals and the popular media. Said's writings run the gamut from literary criticism and music criticism (he was a Juilliard-trained classical pianist) to the cultural dynamics of colonialism, the Arab-Israeli conflict, media depictions of Arabs and Islam, and personal memoirs. Said was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Royal Society of Literature. He served as president of the Modern Language Association in 1999.

Said is arguably best known for his political views on the "Palestinian question." An ardent supporter of the Palestinians' right of return, he remained an outspoken critic of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the United States' complicity in the continued degradation of the Palestinian people. He was a regular contributor to newspapers and magazines published in England, France, and the United States and across the Arab world. For more than a decade, he served on the Palestinian National Council, until a falling-out with Yasser Arafat and his leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) led him to resign his position. Such was Said's vocal opposition to Arafat's leadership that the Palestinian Authority banned the sale of his books. Once an official spokesperson for the Palestinian struggle for independence, Said was now considered a traitor to the cause. His disagreement with the PLO came largely in response to Arafat's signing of the Oslo Peace Accord in 1993. For Said, the accord was fundamentally flawed, because it did not establish the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes in Israel and left unchecked the expansion of Israeli settlements into the occupied territories. In his view, a lasting Middle East peace could be secured only through the creation of a single, binational state in which Israelis and Palestinians shared political authority. A coexistence between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs based on a mutual equality was for Said the only "road map" capable of ending the continuing oppression of refugees and the violence that occupation breeds. Said summed up his position in this way:

I've been consistent in my belief that no military option exists for either side, that only a process of peaceful reconciliation, and justice for what the Palestinians have had to endure by way of dispossession and military occupation, would work. (ibid.:564)