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The Goffman Prize Lecture:

Masculine Domination Revisited¹

Pierre Bourdieu

Prefatory Remarks

I would like to thank the Sociology department and its Chair, Neil Fligstein, for the opportunity to speak here today in front of this impressive audience. I would like to thank also the students and the faculty for their hospitality and all the different departments and programs for their warm welcome in Berkeley.

First I must say that I am genuinely honored, indeed proud, to be the first recipient of the Goffman Prize awarded by the Sociology Department of Berkeley. Erving Goffman was a very dear friend of mine from the days when he taught at the University of California in the sixties. Leaving aside many personal memories of the man, I would like to insist on two characteristics of the scholar that, in my view, deserve to be celebrated and imitated.

First he was *very modest when it came to his theoretical culture*. He often expressed his regrets at not having received the strong philosophical training that some Europeans social scientists beget. But, in fact, as you will readily realize by scrutinizing his footnotes and especially the substance of his analyses, Goffman had a penetrating and deft mastery of the theoretical tools he needed to formulate and to carry out his scientific project. And without “playing the part” of the philosopher, he made signal contributions to philosophy -- in particular to the philosophy of language, of performative acts, and of the self, among other areas.

Erving Goffman had another very rare intellectual quality that is closely related to his theoretical modesty: he had a unique ability to detect and decipher the minute details, the quasi-invisible processes, and the infinitesimal features of everyday life. He was the *discoverer of the “infinitely small”* in society as he raised to the dignity of scientific

¹ This is the text of the first Goffman Prize Lecture, delivered by Pierre Bourdieu at the University of California, Berkeley, on April 4, 1996. Translated and edited by Loïc Wacquant.

objects the “bits and pieces” of social life that were before everybody’s eyes but had never been seen and understood in this light. By doing so, he opened up a whole new realm of inquiry for sociologists, anthropologists, linguists, educationalists, and others.

One thing is particularly worthy of notice in Goffman’s way of working. Instead of offering rhetorical answers to huge and vague questions such as “what is gender” or “how do gender, race, and class intersect” (the kind of questions, so fashionable today, that lend themselves to neither serious philosophy nor rigorous social science but to something that falls in between and too often meets the standards of neither), Goffman worked to reformulate broad and abstract issues by means of a precise analysis of the most concrete and apparently trivial details of the social phenomena he observed.

I once held in my hands the box in which he kept the slides of advertisements -- well over one thousand of them -- that he had collected and examined to ground his analysis of the ritualization of gender relations and that later lead to his well-known book, *Gender Advertisements* (Goffman, 1976/1979). This is a good example, a model, particularly for younger scholars, of how one does innovative and rigorous social analysis without huge amounts of economic and bureaucratic capital (in the form of grants and other research means) and even less symbolic capital, that is, without the ritual “name dropping” of canonical philosophical authors and perfunctory references that eat up ever more energy and space.

A few years ago, I wrote an article entitled “Masculine Domination” (Bourdieu, 1990) which hopefully will soon be fully revised and amended so as to be published in book form in English. Today, in this brief lecture, I would like to do three things. First I want to explicate the *methodological intention* that inspired me to tackle this issue in the manner I did, that is, by resorting to what on first look appears like an ideographic analysis of one particular case of masculine domination but is in my view a “quasi-experiment” about the fundamental structures of gender. Second, I will restate and elaborate some of the main *substantive results* of this work-in-progress, which I hope to develop further thanks to the critical dialogue with American scholars of which this lecture is one moment. Third and last, I want to suggest some *analytical and political implications* of such an analysis of masculine domination premised on a materialist theory of the economy of symbolic goods.

For reasons of time, I will address these points in a schematic and somewhat didactic manner, without entering into the detail of the analysis and without attempting to cover all aspects of the phenomenon.

This is the kind of problem--like most real theoretical problems--that is best analyzed in a workshop, with very concrete empirical materials, not in a formal lecture like today. I want to make sure that I get the main points across so as to start off the discussion that I hope will follow.

The Ethnological Detour as an Instrument of Reflexivity

When we attempt to think masculine domination, we stand in danger of resorting to, or submitting to, modes of thinking that are themselves products of millennia of masculine domination. Whether we like it or not, the analyst, man or woman, is part and parcel of the object she tries to grasp. For he or she has internalized, in the form of unconscious schemata of perception and appreciation, the historical social structures of masculine rule. Consequently, our first imperative must be to find a practical strategy that enables us to effect the methodical objectivation of the subject of scientific objectivation: a device for uncovering the structures of the archaic unconscious that we owe to our ontogenesis and phylogenesis as gendered beings and that leads us to partake of the very phenomenon we seek to plumb.

This is one variant of the modern form of the critical intention exemplified by Immanuel Kant, namely, to explore the categories of "understanding." In its more materialist vein inaugurated by Durkheim (1912/1996), it involves retracing the historical genesis and social fabrication of our bodies, of the symbolic forms through which we construct the world but which, being issued out of this world, are more often than not in agreement with the world so that we tend to take the latter for granted and collude in its perpetuation.

Thirty years ago, it was necessary to show (in my book *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970/1977) that the school is a conservative force in order to try to make it the liberating force that it *can* be (under definite social conditions that sociology can help specify). Today it is necessary to take the risk of appearing to justify the existing state of gender relations by showing how women, as they have been constituted as gendered beings by the social world, can contribute to their own domination. This is undertaken, not for the pleasure of disenchanting or appearing more clever than everybody else, but in order to increase the possibility of effecting the symbolic revolution which is the necessary condition of a true transformation of gender relations.

The question I was faced with, then, was the following: how to transform such exercise in transcendental reflection into an empirical question, an anthropological experiment (*Erfahrung*) that can be controlled, repeated, replicated, by opposition to an experience

(*Erlebnis*) of the masculine and the feminine which, by definition, can be neither falsified nor replicated? (I must confess that I also wanted to avoid writing yet another exegesis about exegeses of gender that would add to the profusion of discourses on discourses about gender and sex, yet another text on the canonical texts that are on everyone's mandatory list of authors, from Freud to Lacan and Lévi-Strauss to Mackinnon. I wanted, to put it bluntly, to avoid the empty speculation of pure theoretical discourse and its clichés and slogans on "gender and power" which so far have done more to muddle the issue than to clarify it).

To escape this infernal circle wherein we unconsciously take as instruments of analysis of masculine domination the unconscious (masculine) categories produced by this domination, I decided to start from the anthropological analysis of one particular historical case -- as I did in my study of *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu, 1984/1988), where I used an in-depth study of the French university system in the sixties to try to uncover the invariants of the modern academic mind and universe. This case is the world of the Kabyles of Algeria, among whom I did fieldwork in the 1950s and 1960s.

To describe the objective structures of the social universe of the Kabyles is at the same time to describe the mental structures of the observer, that is, my own mental structures as a man born in the neo-Mediterranean cultural tradition. Kabylia offers a unique terrain in which to carry out this *experimental exercise in self socioanalysis*, or, if you allow an expression that will perhaps sound oxymoronic to some, an exercise in experimental criticist philosophy. For a variety of historical reasons that would be too long to enumerate, this peasant society of the mountains of the Atlas was, until recently, a kind of *anthropological sanctuary* where ancient Mediterranean traditions and modes of thought had been preserved at a fairly high degree of practical coherence and integrity. Ethnological studies on honor and shame in different societies around the Mediterranean rim, from Greece to Egypt and from Spain to Turkey (Peristiany, 1965), show that Kabylia offers a living, paradigmatic instantiation of a masculine cosmogony-in-action that *is at once exotic and familiar* because it lies behind our own European and even Euro-American cultural tradition.

It follows that, by studying up close the ritual and mythical practices of the Kabyles, we may uncover (or recover) a system of representations or, better a system of principles of vision and di-vision common to the entire Mediterranean civilization and which survives to this day in our own mental structures and, for a part, in our social structures. The "phallonic" cosmology to which the Kabyle give public and collective display haunts our unconscious, including our scholastic unconscious and the unconscious of the science of the

unconscious, that is, psychoanalysis (as even a cursory analysis of the writings of Freud or Lacan readily reveals).

Thus to use ethnological description as an instrument of rupture, just as Goffman went to his thousand slides of gender advertisement, I went back to the ethnographic data I had collected in Kabylia but which I had only partially analyzed in this regard (see Bourdieu, 1980/1990: Book II). I treated the Kabyle case as a sort of “aggrandized picture” through which we can more easily construct a *historical model*, but a general model, of the fundamental structures of the masculine vision and division of the world. I sought to use this model to explicate how the “phallonic” dispositions that we can clearly discern in the case of the Kabyle have been deposited, inscribed, within the bodies of the men *and women* of contemporary Western societies but in distorted, partial, mutilated forms, at the cost of gaps, discrepancies, substitutions, and inconsistencies.

To give you an analogy, I hoped to put myself in the situation of someone who is trying to reassemble and make sense of the remaining fragments of a great monument, the Parthenon or the Mausoleum of Helicarnesse, by using a map or a blueprint left by those who built it. In this respect, the experiment was successful insofar as it later allowed me to recover from a classic of feminist thought such as Virginia Woolf’s *To The Lighthouse* analyses of the masculine gaze that I could not have detected had I not re-read it through eyes informed by the Kabyle vision.

There was another, secondary but nevertheless important, use of this ethnological detour: to submit the innumerable contending theories of gender to the acid of the Kabyle test, if I may put it thus, so as to discern those that are scholastic artifacts of what Barbara Christian (1988) calls the “race for theory” from those that bring to light genuinely new aspects of sociohistorical reality. At the risk of seeming arrogant, I will confess that I also hoped that, through this methodological device and following the logic of a historically founded model, I would be able to propose a systematic account of gender domination that would integrate the best of the existing works on this topic (works which I read, for most of them, only *ex post*, after having conducted my own inquiry, for fear that I would be diverted in directions stipulated by the masculine unconscious of which we all partake).

Some Provisional Results of the “Kabyle Experiment”

I would like now to mention briefly some of the main substantive

results of this detailed anthropological analysis of the Kabyle case in which I also confront some of the great texts of Western philosophy, from Kant to Sartre, treated on the same level, as “anthropological documents”—but this would be too long to recount here.

1. Necessitation through systematicity

What we can see most clearly in the case of social universes where “sexuality” has not been constituted as such and autonomized from other realms (the limiting case of such autonomization being eroticism and its commercial offshoot, pornography), is that sexual differences are both inserted and submerged within a system of anthropological and cosmological oppositions that are constitutive of a vision and experience of the world. These differences partake of a sexualized (or gendered) cosmology which incarnates itself in the sexual topology of the socialized body, of its comportment, spatiality, and motility (e.g., movements from low to high are by definition masculine).

While any particular sexual difference is arbitrary when taken in isolation (much like a phoneme), the opposition masculine/feminine is endowed with objective and subjective *necessity* by the fact that it is entangled in, supportive of, and supported by an inextricable and inexhaustible system of homologous oppositions that all reinforce each other, between high and low, above and below, before and behind, left and right, straight and crooked (in both the physical and the moral sense), dry and wet, hard and soft, tasty and insipid, bright and dark, inside and outside, etc. (Here is a small Goffmanian experiment you can do to verify this: ask a waiter at a restaurant to bring cheese and desserts. You will observe that, in nearly all cases, he will spontaneously give salty dishes to men and sweet dishes to women).

This first effect of *necessitation through systematicity* is redoubled, reinforced by “natural confirmation”: these oppositions correspond (in part) to geographical oppositions, biological cycles, and agrarian or cosmic cycles. In this manner the hierarchical, binary opposition between male and female appears founded in the nature of things because it is echoed virtually everywhere. (When I was a child, people in my village used to say that it always rains on Good Friday, and they would see in this coincidence natural proof of their religious creed).

2. Social division and corporeal dispositions

The division of days, of the calendar of agrarian activities, of space, as with the opposition between the house and the assembly, all these *objective gendered divisions* inscribed in the social order of things become inscribed into bodies in the form of dispositions and become

subjective principles of vision, cognitive categories through which individuals come to see and construct the world as meaningful, lived reality. Being issued out of the world, such schemata of perception are accorded with the objective order of things and incline us to take the world as a given. This spontaneous agreement of the social structures and cognitive structures --when it occurs-- is the basis of the *doxic experience of masculine domination* as inscribed in the nature of things, invisible, unquestioned.

In the Kabyle world, and in our own until quite recently (that is, until the onset of the second feminist revolution), masculine order is so deeply grounded as to need no justification: it imposes itself as self-evident, universal (man, *vir*, is this particular being which experiences himself as universal and holds a monopoly over the human, *homo*). This order tends to be taken for granted by virtue of the quasi-perfect and immediate agreement that obtains between, on the one hand, social structures such as those expressed in the social organization of space and time and in the sexual division of labor and, on the other hand, cognitive structures inscribed in bodies and in minds.

3. *Gendered socialization and the somatization of domination*

The work of socialization closes the circle by reinforcing and systematizing the structuring of the experience of a world structured according to this originary division. Education exercises a psychosomatic action leading to the somatization of sexual difference, that is, of masculine domination. One particularly important domain of application of this work of psychosomatic inculcation is the embodied construction of social differences between the sexes. It operates according to several modalities.

The first consists in rites of institutions (rather than rites of passage: Bourdieu, 1982/1990), such as circumcision, which mark the opposition not between a "before" and an "after," youth and adulthood, but between those who participate in the rite--men--and those who do not--women (historically, sports have played this critical role in our societies).

The second is the construction of the biological body, that is the symbolic remaking of anatomical differences. Here we observe a surreptitious inversion of causes and effects, whereby the socially constructed body serves as an ideological foundation for the arbitrary opposition through which it was itself constructed. Thus the schemata that organize the perception of sexual organs and activity are also applied to the body itself, both male and female. They differentiate between the body's *high and low parts*, the border between them being

marked by the belt (a sign of enclosure and symbolic boundary between the pure and the impure, at least for women); between *its front and its hind*, with the former as the locus of sexual difference and the latter as the place of sexual indifferentiation and thus potentially feminine, i.e., passive, submissive, as Mediterranean insults about homosexuality, both gestural and verbal, remind us (Dover, 1982); and between its *public parts*, the face, the front, the eyes, the mustache, the mouth, noble organs of the presentation of self wherein social identity is condensed, the point of honor, *nif*, on the one hand, and its *private parts*, hidden or shameful, which honor requires to keep covered, on the other.

It is through the mediation of the sexual division of the legitimate uses of the body that the link between phallus and logos (enunciated by psychoanalysis) is established. The public and active uses of the higher, masculine part of the body, to face, to con-front (*quabel*), to look in the face and in the eyes, to speak *publicly*, are the monopoly of men. Women who, as in Kabylia, must stay away from public places have to renounce using their gaze in a public manner (when outside they walk with their eyes turned towards their feet). The same applies to their speech: the only word which befits them in public is *wissen*, "I do not know," the antithesis of virile speech, which is decisive, assertive as well as thoughtful and measured.

The work of socialization tends to effect a progressive somatization of relations of gender domination through a twofold operation: first the sociosymbolic construction of the vision of biological sex which itself serves as the foundation of all mythical visions of the world; and, second, the inculcation of a bodily hexis which constitutes a veritable *embodied politics*. Masculine sociodicy thus owes its exceptional efficacy to the fact that it cumulates and collapses two operations. It legitimates a relation of domination by inscribing it in a biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction. It legitimates a relation of domination by inscribing it in a biological which is itself a biologized social construction.

At the risk of muddling the logic of my demonstration, I would like to digress briefly and develop here one illustration, the theory of swelling. Virility, even in its ethical dimension, that is, as the quiddity of *vir*, *virtus*, principle of conservation and of increase in honor (*nif*), is tacitly inseparable from physical virility, in particular via the tangible proofs of sexual potency (such as a plentiful progeny) expected of every genuine man. We can thus understand how the phallus, always metaphorically present but very rarely named and namable, concentrates all of the fantasies of fecundating power. (The European tradition, which remains alive in the masculine unconscious of today, associates physical or moral courage to virility and, much as the Berber tradition

does, establishes an explicit link between the volume of the nose, symbol of male honor, and the presumed size of the penis). Thanks to its turgidity so dear to Lacan, the phallus partakes of everything that swells and causes swelling: in the manner of the fritter or pancake that one eats during childbirth, circumcision and teething, it “rises” or “gets up.” This schema is the generative principle of rites of fertility aimed at mimetically producing swelling, and it is ubiquitous in those moments where the fecundating action of masculine power is to exercise itself, such as weddings and the commencement of ploughing, which is another occasion for a homologous action of opening and impregnation of the earth. The same associations that haunt Lacan’s (1966) analysis -- turgidity, vital flux -- can be found in the Berber words that designate the sperm, *zzel* and especially *laâmara*, whose root, *aâmmar*, means to fill, to prosper, and which evoke plenitude, that which is full of life and fills with life. And this schema of filling (full/empty, fecund/sterile, etc.) is regularly combined with the schema of swelling in the enactment of rites of fertility.

By associating phallic “swelling” to the vital dynamic of swelling immanent to every process of natural reproduction (germination, gestation, and so on), the social construction of the sexual organs *records* and *ratifies* the “pregnancy” of biologically founded objective forms, such as the erection of the penis. The fact that the cultural “selection” of semantically relevant traits symbolically endorses certain indisputable natural properties contributes, along with other mechanisms (the main one being the embeddedness of each relation within a system of homologous and interconnected relations), to transmuting the arbitrary of social *nomos* into the apparent necessity of natural *physis*. To be sure, the arbitrary character of the division is never completely obscured, as testified by symbolic struggles over the representation of sexual organs.

The third modality of the embodiment of socially constructed differences between the sexes is the symbolic coding of the sexual act whereby the man is above, on top, and the woman below, underneath. The sexual act is thus represented as an act of domination, an act of possession, a “taking” of woman by man (the same applies to homosexual relations, where the opposition top/bottom is replaced by the opposition front/back). Although it may appear as the original matrix from which are engendered all forms of unions between opposite principles, ploughshare and furrow, sky and earth, fire and water, etc., the sexual act is itself conceived through the principle of the primacy of the masculine. The opposition between the sexes is thus inscribed in a whole series of mythico-ritual oppositions: high/low, above/beneath, dry/wet, hot/cold, active/passive, mobile/immobile. Of the man who desires the Kabyle say that “his kanoun is red” and “his kettle burns”;

women on the other hand are said to have the capacity to “extinguish the fire,” to “give freshness.” It follows (mytho)logically that the position considered normal is that where the man “mounts.”

Fourth and last, the somatization of socially instituted gender differences operates via the symbolic and practical organization of the differential usages of the body (motility and deportment) and the rites effecting the virilization of boys and the feminization of girls. A multiplicity of ritual acts are deployed by the Kabyle to separate a boy from his mother; many of them involve the use of cutting objects such as knives designed to symbolize a tear or a break. Thus, after birth, the baby boy is deposited to the mother’s right, the masculine side, where typically lay masculine objects such as a large knife, a ploughshare, and a stone from the fireplace. It is the father who first cuts the hair of the baby boy, owing to the fact that hair, a feminine feature, attaches the latter to the world of women. It is the father who first takes the young son (between ages six and ten) to the market, that is, introduces him into the world of men and into the games of virile honor. The child is dressed up in new clothing and wears a silk belt; he receives a knife, a padlock, and a mirror, while his mother puts an egg in the hood of his burnouse. At the entrance door of the marketplace, the young son breaks the egg and opens the padlock, two acts of virile defloration. His father then guides him into the marketplace and introduces him to the other participants of this exclusively masculine world. On their way home, father and son buy the head of a bull, a phallic symbol closely linked to *nif*, masculine honor.

All told, such double work of inculcation, at once sexually differentiated and sexually differentiating, imposes upon men and women different ensembles of dispositions with regard to the social games held to be crucial to society, such as the games of honor and war (fit for the display of virility) or, in advanced societies, the arenas of politics, business, and science. The masculinization of male bodies and feminization of female bodies effects a somatization of the cultural arbitrary tantamount to a durable construction of the unconscious.

Cognition and Misrecognition

Whenever the dominated, in the present case women, apply unthought schemata of thought which are the product of the embodiment of this relation of power to objects of the natural and social world, and in particular to the relation of domination in which they are ensnared as well as to the persons through which this relation realizes itself (men but also other women), their *acts of cognition are inevitably acts of misrecognition*. This misrecognition leads them to construe this

relation from the standpoint of the dominant, i.e., as natural, and thereby to collude in their own domination via the complicity of the socialized body. Such bodily acts of misrecognition are not conscious acts, they are not operations of consciousness; they operate under the guise of emotions -- what seventeenth-century philosophers used to call "passions."

Indeed, the case of gender domination shows better than any other that *symbolic violence accomplishes itself through an act of cognition and of mis-recognition which lies beyond -- or beneath -- the controls of consciousness and will*, in the obscurities of the schemata of habitus that are at once gendered and gendering. And it demonstrates that we cannot adequately understand masculine domination (and symbolic violence more generally) without first jettisoning the scholastic opposition between coercion and consent, external imposition and internal desire, constraint and resistance.

But, however close the agreement between the objective divisions of the social world and the subjective principles of vision that agents apply to it, there is always room for *cognitive struggles* (which is the most profoundly political form of struggle) over the meaning of the world and in particular over sexual realities. The theory of symbolic violence I am adumbrating here differs from other theories in two major ways: in the philosophy of action it presupposes and in the manner in which it analyzes the symbolic economy.

Firstly, it is predicated on a *dispositional theory of action* that can be deployed only by forsaking the philosophy of the subject which is being reincarnated today under the fuzzy label of "agency." Men and women construct the social world, granted, but they do so with forms and categories that are constructed by the world, categories that they neither choose nor make and of which they are not the subjects. When we say that gender, race, class, and other social distinctions are "socially constructed", we must not forget that there are social conditions and mechanisms of construction of the constructors, including the State which is the great hidden constructor of agents via the mediation of legitimate identities (Bourdieu, 1994). Masculine order is thus inscribed in both institutions and agents, positions and dispositions, things (and words) on the one hand, and bodies on the other. Masculinity is stitched into the habitus, into all habitus, those of men as well as those of women. The androcentric vision of the world is the commonsense of our world because it is immanent to the system of categories of all agents, including women (and thus feminist theorists).

Secondly, the theory of symbolic violence I propose is based on a *materialist analysis of the symbolic order*. Most theories of gender

proceed either from a materialist analysis of the material order or from a symbolic analysis of the symbolic realm. What I propose to do is to import the materialist mode of thinking into the analysis of the symbolic universe (much as Max Weber did for the sociology of religion, cf. Bourdieu, 1987). Indeed, the sociology of masculine domination highlights better than most topics the severe shortcomings of materialist theories of domination.

These shortcomings are especially visible in the case of precapitalist societies in which symbolic capital is the preeminent form of power. Anthropologists have shown that one cannot understand sexual practices and meanings in such social formations without taking into account the fact that masculine action is always oriented towards prestige (Ortner and Whitehead, 1981). But to draw the full implications of this finding, we cannot rely on a symbolic analysis of the symbolic order. We need a materialist theory of the economy of symbolic goods and symbolic exchanges (Bourdieu, 1994b). *Masculine domination*, in the final analysis, *is founded upon the logic of the economy of symbolic exchanges*, i.e., upon the fundamental asymmetry between men and women instituted in the social construction of kinship and marriage: that between subject and object, agent and instrument. It is the relative autonomy of the economy of symbolic capital which explains that masculine domination can perpetuate itself despite transformations in the mode of production.

It follows that the liberation of women can come only from a collective action aimed at a symbolic struggle capable of challenging the immediate agreement of embodied and objective structures, that is, from a symbolic revolution that would overturn the very foundations of the production and reproduction of symbolic capital.

Concluding Remarks

It is not possible, in such a brief lecture, to say everything and to say it in the right order, especially on such a thorny and contentious topic. But I would like to close by suggesting three functions that this analysis of the Kabyle case can play when we transfer and apply it to the understanding of contemporary societies.

Firstly, this model can serve as a “detector” to locate and gather the infinitesimal traces and the scattered but ubiquitous fragments of the androcentric world view. It allows us to better understand the systematic character of masculine domination and the processes whereby it comes to constitute male, heterosexual rule as a natural given. Secondly, the analysis of the Kabyle case as a “realized

ideatype" provides a *benchmark for measuring change and challenge* on each of the dimensions of masculine domination I have briefly discussed. Thirdly, the notion of symbolic violence enables us to anticipate the *conditions under which a genuine gender revolution might become possible*. I have indicated that it would have to entail a symbolic revolution, that is, to encompass not only an overthrow of the order of things, of material structures, but also a mental upheaval, a transformation of the categories of perception that lead us to collude with the perpetuation of the existing social order.

To conclude, I would not like to appear to partake of the "race for theory" that I deplored earlier. But our topic is a very serious one, with immense intellectual and political consequences. In my view, we are standing at a historical crossroads as *critical reason is in jeopardy both outside the university but also inside*. Today, feminism, which has the potential for being one of the most powerful weapons of critical reason, stands in danger of being rendered inoffensive by its contamination with what is called in the United States "postmodernism".

Now it is not the anthropologist of Kabylia but the sociologist of the university and of the foreign trade in ideas who is speaking. Remember that theories, like all symbolic goods, owe many of their key properties to their social conditions of production and circulation. The academic world within which this vague and woolly academic discourse that passes itself off as "postmodernism" has its hierarchies, its forms of hegemony and imperialism. Feminism must liberate itself from the domination of the most masculine of all canonical disciplines, philosophy, and, secondarily, of philosophically inspired literary theory. This is especially necessary when most of what feminism borrows from so-called postmodern philosophy was itself borrowed, but surreptitiously, from the social sciences (one example: that reality is socially or discursively constructed is a fundamental proposition of classical social science, not a recent discovery and monopoly of so-called postmodernism).

Instead of uncritically relying on deconstruction, feminism should deconstruct deconstruction. It would then discover that the latter has transported into feminism the *illusion of the omnipotence of thought* that is constitutive of the (masculine) unconscious of philosophy. This illusion, in turn, is fueling the fantastical belief, typical of "campus radicalism," that one changes the world by changing words, that the subversion of terms, categories, and discourses suffices to subvert or dent objective structures of domination. This dangerous delusion, in turn, leads us to forget that discursive critique is not in itself automatically endowed with any social efficacy; that definite social and economic conditions must be assembled for the critique of categories to

become social critique and that we must struggle collectively to realize these conditions both in and out of the university.

I will close with a remembrance of a conversation I had with Erving Goffman, in front the Maison des Sciences de l'homme -- how apposite -- shortly before his death. He spoke about the need to wage a collective battle against the social abuses of social science. Today we need to wage this struggle also against the forces that work to reestablish the hegemony of philosophy over the social sciences at a time when, more than ever before, we need the tools of critical reason to counter the rationalization of domination.

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