

## PRESENTATION OF THE FIRST ISSUE OF *ACTES*

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Here you will find, side by side, texts that differ greatly in style and function: "finished" texts, of course, as they are called in academic journals, but also brief notes, reports of oral presentations, working texts such as drafts and interim research reports – where the theoretical intentions, empirical verification procedures, and data on which the analysis is based are more clearly visible. The desire to provide access to the workshop itself, which knows no rules other than those of method, and to deliver the archives of a work in progress, implies abandoning the most obviously ritualistic formalisms: right-aligned typography, rhetoric of coherent discourse, articles and issues of uniform length, and, more generally, everything that leads to the standardization and "normalization" of research products. Recognizing no other imperatives than those imposed by the rigor of the demonstration and, secondarily, the search

for its readability, means freeing oneself from the censorship, artifices, and distortions engendered by the concern to conform to the conventions and good manners of the academic field. That rhetoric of caution or false precision, the apparatus and pomp of celebratory discourse that is nothing more than self-celebration, is an ostentatious waste of signs of belonging to the most selective and elite groups in the intellectual universe.

By renouncing formality and sometimes even form itself, we also make it possible to seek a mode of expression that is truly suited to the requirements of a science. Taking social forms and formalisms as its object, this science must reproduce in how it presents its results the very process of desacralization that made it possible to achieve them. Here we encounter what undoubtedly makes social science unique: its achievements, won against the social mechanisms of concealment, must escape, at least partially, the laws that govern the circulation of all discourse through the social world if they are to inform individual or collective practice. In this case, transmission means providing, whenever possible, the means to reproduce, practically and non-verbally, the operations that made it possible to uncover the truth of practices. Since it must provide instruments of perception and facts that can only be apprehended by means of these instruments, social science must not

only tell but also show, presenting records of daily life, photographs, transcripts of speeches, facsimiles of documents, statistics, etc., and then reveal, sometimes through a simple graphic effect, what lies hidden within them. We only truly gain access to knowledge of objects imbued with sacred values if we surrender the weapons of sacrilege: unless we believe in the intrinsic power of true ideas, we cannot break the spell of belief except by opposing symbolic violence with symbolic violence. And, when necessary, we must put the weapons of polemic in the service of truths conquered by the polemic of scientific reason.

The discourse of science can only seem disenchanting to those who have an enchanted view of the social world. It is as far removed from utopianism – which mistakes its desires for reality – as it is from sociologism – which revels in the killjoy evocation of fetishized laws. Social science is content to destroy the pretences and evasions forged by an overly reverent vision of man, over which organized religions do not have a monopoly.