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The Family's Contribution to Social Reproduction : A State Concern

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A force of inertia

A key element common to classical social utopias — from Thomas Campanella to Charles Fourier — and all great revolutionary projects — from the theories of Saint-Simon to the anarchist movements — resides in the idea of a radical transfer of the functions of social reproduction from the context of the family and the private sphere to that of the collective and the public sphere. Everything happens as though one had to attack the family institution, the driving force behind the reproduction of private property and social inequalities, in order to allow the emergence of a new type of man and a new form of society with neither divisions nor relationships of dominance between the classes, sexes and generations, still characterising modern civilisations to the present day.

Indeed, despite the promotion of official values of democracy and equality in contemporary societies, a number of forms of social injustice and inequality of opportunity remain that prove to be of a remarkable historical inertia. This despite the existence of all kinds of institutional devices, such as the system of public competition, trying to achieve a so-called objective assessment of citizen's individual merits. These devices nevertheless fail given that the screening processes are so deeply rooted in the most insignificant social practices that classify individuals by revealing their origins and social status (e.g. Bernstein, 1971 ; Overmann, 1972).

One only has to refer to existing national statistics to immediately see that in Great-

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as in Italy, in Sweden as in Portugal, the daughter or son of a mechanic is much less likely (statistically speaking) to have a university education or to be earning a high salary than his or her friend, daughter or son of a senior-manager working in the same town and within the same company.

Likewise, in all advanced industrial countries, when comparing children with similar educational qualifications, those belonging to the higher-education socio-professional classes "stand out" from their friends of more modest backgrounds in numerous ways relating to taste and behaviour. These differences, no matter how insignificant in appearance when seen in isolation, prove to be very effective concerning the most sensitive screens of social selection given that they are often socially classifying and classified (Bourdieu, 1979).

"The more it changes, the more it's the same thing..."

Nevertheless, the logic of the family reproduction of social positions and their associated economic, cultural and symbolic assets does not imply the inertia of the concrete socio-structural reality. Indeed, this reproduction often happens through a transfer of the social structure which may lead the son of a small landowner, for example, to find himself working as a minor official occupying a position equal to that of his father in conditions that are socio-historically transformed. There is an exchange, as on the stock-market, between the economic values accumulated by the precursors and the cultural assets in the form of academic qualifications that might be turned to profit in the labour market. The idea of social reproduction with the family as the protagonist according to our theoretical hypothesis, is in no way a mechanical one nor does it stem from the image of a society fixed and immobile. On the contrary, it bases itself on the idea of permanent social change, with the players moving within a given social field, or on the basis of a systematic movement between the different fields. At the same time, one ought to underline, as does Max Weber, the fact that the historical conditions and the social structures of Western countries always differ in a non negligible manner and that one must therefore anticipate meeting strong contextual particularities regarding any empirical manifestations of social change.

In short, even when formally equal in the competition to overcome one or other obstacle, or to gain one or other economic or cultural asset, there will always be some present who prove to be what Orwell describes as "more equal than others". Such social disparities survive despite the meritocratic logics of national systems of academic and professional selection and seem to reflect initial inequalities. From birth,

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every individual is part of a particular family universe, marked by a specific socio-historical path and a set of material or immaterial properties — an inheritance or “family possessions” — produced, accumulated and transferred from one generation to another. He or she therefore inherits a “baggage” more or less well equipped with which to enter the game of social competition. These initial differences seem to be subsequently reflected in the unequal chances of relative success when faced with one or another commitment. They therefore contribute to reproducing — if not reinforcing — according to a recurring logic, the existing inequalities between the diverse family contexts and to thereby reproduce the structural information of the global social context. Also, one must not forget those living without a family, an increasingly widespread phenomenon in European societies (Kaufmann, 1992). Already under the Ancien Regime, to be without a home or family (“*être sans feu ni lieu*”) represented the archetypal condition of non-conformism and social exclusion, just as today, the absence of family links as a source of aid and solidarity still characterizes the most deprived social categories within prosperous societies such as those receiving RMI (a minimum guaranteed income) in France, or those on state social benefits in Germany or Belgium (Schultheis et al., 1994). To have a family already constitutes a type of resource or basic asset (whose absence is often accompanied by other forms of deprivation), a fact much more obvious in pre-modern times where certain regions such as Bavaria in the XIXth century still banned marriage amongst the poorest populations.

The function and reproductive power of the family is not limited to the domain of social stratification and relationships of dominance between the social classes. On the contrary, as the nerve-centre of daily life, “family culture” proves to be a major centre for the production and reproduction of social differences such as those existing between religious subcultures (e. g. in multid denominational societies like Germany or Holland where there used to be until quite recently a segregation between Catholic and Protestant spheres of life), or again between linguistic categories (e.g. the situation in Belgium or Switzerland, the Basque, Breton, Alsatian and Corsican minorities in France...).

From where does the family derive this power, so particular, so crucial to making the conditions and the social structures last — uncertain and arbitrary though they may seem — beyond the life span of individuals? How does the family group, the privileged centre of impartiality and devotion — at least concerning the romantic notions attached to the idea of family love and to Epinal's image depicted a thousand times of a “heaven in a heartless world” — come to occupy such a strategic position? A position so decisive in the struggle surrounding social, material or symbolic goods

and in the transfer from generation to generation of unequal opportunities of access to these social values.

Firstly, it should be remembered that the family is situated at the crossroads of several essential social functions: not only does it have a quasi-monopoly of legitimacy in matters of biological or genetic reproduction, but at the same time it plays a key role in the intergenerational transfer of economic values, knowledge, cultural competence and symbolic goods. This strategic position of the family group in the different social fields, however, does not sufficiently explain the total impact of the family factor in social interactions. It seems necessary to conceive of the family as a relatively autonomous player in these interactions and to question oneself as to the motivations and stakes compelling it to participate.

A first plausible theoretical answer to this question may be found in the theory of justice developed by John Rawls (1990). This theory emphasizes that the principle of equity between generations implies that, in practice, each generation finds itself under the obligation to assure the transfer of the hereditary capital by transferring to the descending generation, at least, the "stake" left by the ascending generation and to therefore maintain the relative position in the social interplay inherited by oneself, for the descendants. The driving force of the work of family reproduction therefore may be found in the principle of a fundamental moral obligation.

Family selfishness

From another theoretical angle, it is the family as a group that is cast in the role of an autonomous social player, able to pursue interests and collective strategies non-reducible to those of its members. Family existence, that finds its material base in a heritage produced, accumulated and transferred from generation to generation, would function — from such a theoretical viewpoint as that implemented by Max Weber — not only according to an economic rationality of individual utilitarianism but also, on the contrary, according to a "family selfishness" (Von Hartmann) or a "collective individualism" (De Tocqueville) characteristic of pre-market societies. This implies the notion of "collective conscience" (Durkheim) *sui generis* of the family group able to direct the actions of the group and to impose an interest to pursue, that is not necessarily identical to that of its members. To paraphrase Rousseau, one might say therefore that the "family will" is not "the will of all" and that a number of family strategies may — if not must! — inevitably produce structural victims. The archetypal image of such victims is represented by the younger son set aside by the right of succession of the first born "primogeniture", or even by daughters preventing from

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furthering their education in order to benefit their brothers' education (Augustus, 1994).

All reproductive strategies imply a form of *numerus clausus*, that may be "quantitative" in nature (e.g. limiting the number of descendants to prevent too great a division of the family assets during legal partition, or directing as once practiced — for the same reason — the younger son as well as all the daughters towards a religious career), or "qualitative" in nature (e.g. favouring the most promising child to take over family affairs to the detriment of the others; favouring a male descendant by the strategic use of voluntary interruption of pregnancy methods etc.).

So how may one define the stake and the logic of family strategies in the matter of the transfer of both material and immaterial values? Whilst the reason for individual action may be summarized by the utilitarian principle of the pursuit of a maximum well-being, family actions often requiring sacrifices on the behalf of its individual group members, seem on the contrary directed towards a "transcendent" goal relative to individuals' lives. The purpose of family reproduction lies within itself; this explains why Pierre Bourdieu (1994) enunciates: "without the family there would be no reproductive strategies, without reproductive strategies there would be no family". One must "reproduce" a maximum "power of reproduction" in the general social competition surrounding access to the means of material and immaterial existence, in order to increase the chances of being able to "transcend" the limited life span of the individual and thus carry on the lineage. This aim leaves its mark on a whole set of actions, of more or less heterogenous strategies, more often implicit than explicit, more un- or pre-conscious than consciously directed. It is only through a considerable work of sociological reconstruction and reflexive detachment that the genotypic cohesion of these actions may be revealed hidden behind the phenotypic heterogeneity.

If this work, for example, brings to light only certain socioprofessional classes — employees and above all the civil servant classes — already characterized for over a century by a particularly pronounced lower birth-rate; and if sociology tries to understand such neo-Malthusian behaviour as accompanying the particular living conditions of this group, characterized on the one side by a lack of material heritage and on the other by a type of family reproduction with costly investments in education; one should not confuse such a theoretically constructed relationship with the rationality and motivation of the players' "real-life" actions. Even if the latter imagine that their choices in fertility matters go without saying, the gap relative to other socioprofessional classes has proved to be so systematic that one must expect a kind of strategic relationship between the characteristic social practice of this group,

his/her associated collective *habitus* and the ethos of foresight regarding family planning to which the socio-demographic indicators testify.

In order to have a systematic theoretical viewpoint when faced with the different forms of reproductive strategies, we will follow the typology suggested by Pierre Bourdieu (1974, 1989). To prevent frequent misunderstandings often associated with the use of this theoretical approach, we would like to stress that it concerns only a theoretical construction of universal pretension aiming to serve as a reference model for the comparative evaluation of the respective national particularities in the field of social reproduction. Unfortunately, to date, this model has yet to be applied in the context of comparative research, that alone might provide an answer to the question of knowing whether European countries differ according to the strength of their social reproduction.

The strategic paths of family reproduction

First observation : the strongly interdependent reproductive strategies — each of them creating new conditions to be taken into account by the other strategic choices — seem to be chronologically constructed around the guiding cycle of family life and its changes, i.e. birth, marriage and death.

Fertility strategies seem to have two types of principal aims, i.e. a family regulation of the problem of succession and the safeguard of inheritance faced with the constraints of a legislation prescribing the equal division of the inheritance ; and a delimitation of family responsibilities (number of children) in accordance with available resources and the particular conditions of the family economy. In the first case, it seems that the imposition of legal sharing by the majority of modern codifications is followed by — at least in the European rural world — a general trend towards family-planning of a neo-Malthusian nature, whose logic aims to counter the effects of egalitarianism in modern family law in the form of the break-up of land ownership, by the rarefaction of heirs.

As regards to the second neo-Malthusian trend of fertility strategies, in general, the middle classes are the prototype players whilst the working-class especially those in the very underprivileged sections, as well as the ruling social class, are always characterized by a distinctly higher fertility. Thus it would appear that the social levels most concerned with the struggle for social ascension form, as underlined a century earlier by Arsène Dumont in his theory of "social capillarity", the avant-garde of the neo-Malthusian movement. On closer inspection, one observes certain intercultural differences regarding fertility strategies in European families. Today, countries

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typified by at least a partial socialisation of reproductive work in the form of public childcare structures such as those in France or Scandinavia, are less concerned by the lower birth-rate than those countries with little public childcare services and where the cost of children for families in general and women in particular is high.

In all European societies, matrimonial strategies express themselves through the existence of a rate of homogamy — thus of marriages concluded between men and women of similar origin and social status — remarkable even if, in parallel, one must remember that the benefits of such alliances vary considerably according to gender and professional status. This is likely to surprise — considering the romantic ideal of pure love beyond material interest — but plausible given the considerable level of social segregation produced and reproduced daily by the national systems of education whose institutional categories (primary, secondary, tertiary) always broadly reflect those of the social sphere. The segregation then reappears in a similar fashion in the world of work where the socioprofessional classes generally meet “amongst themselves”, thereby forming a matrimonial market predisposed to homogamy.

The successoral strategies framing the problem of the intergenerational transfer of inheritance, once formed the linchpin of the family system of social reproduction under the family order of the Ancien Regime. The logic of such strategies could — and still can — vary from one European country to another, to such an extent that the founding fathers of family sociology the Frenchman F. Le Play or the German W. H. Riehl, made it the distinctive principle of the different types of European families. Indeed, during the agrarian mode of production era, the mode of land transfer by inheritance was decisive for the forms of family life and social reproduction. The custom of the paternal right to make a will, characteristic of Great-Britain, as well as that of primogeniture, in Germany and the Scandinavian countries, formed a reproductive strategy particularly favourable to the safeguard of the entire inheritance. The custom of equal sharing between the heirs characteristic of northern France however, led to the splitting of the inheritance. With the advent of so-called “bourgeois” societies and modern codifications, we find that, with the exception of Great-Britain where the right to make a will is preserved to this day, in nearly all European countries equal and legal sharing is the only principle of family transfer legitimized and sanctioned by law. Nevertheless, this official homogeneity represented by the “law in books” still masks, in the context of contemporary Europe, diverse practices of family transfer, rooted in the unwritten laws of local customs and marked by a surprising historical inertia. These regional particularities concern not only the successoral strategies of agricultural families (entailing, for example, in a number of German regions, the *de facto* survival of the principle of primogeniture based on the

financial compensation of sisters and younger brothers excluded from the inheritance), but also those of industrial families (close to agricultural families in their practices and reproductive strategies). The right to make a will, still accorded to fathers of English families, allows the heads of industrial dynasties to concentrate the inheritance into the hands of a one and only heir and to assure a transfer without the dispersion of "family assets". German industrial families often benefit strategically from a margin of legal free-choice relatively large in order to safeguard against the excessive break-up of inheritance. French-style "family-capitalism" (Sartre) however, seems marked by an equal sharing of the inheritance with a "communal" component i.e. by a division of labour in the management of the inheritance between the heirs. Let us also remember that European Nation-States directly intervene in the process of family succession, although this is very variable, by imposing as is the case in France or Scandinavia, considerable taxes on the heirs, motivating families to research strategically ways — whether legal or not — of circumventing the inland revenue and of safeguarding the inheritance.

Other reproductive family strategies are consistent with the particularities of the social fields in which they are deployed and are therefore defined by the stake or specific type of capital they are aiming for :

- Economic strategies help to assure material existence and the future of the family group by forms of investment in the power of work or capital in the world of production, by the build-up of savings and pensions and by a rational management of the inheritance; These strategies take on very different directions from one European country to another, going hand in hand with other contextual particularities such as the structure of capital, social inequalities in relation to capital access, the existing relationship between the obligatory public system of redistribution between generations and its private counterpart in the form of a network of family exchanges. The sociological observer notes, for example, that family investment in property, particularly in a transferable house, is relatively frequent in the French context whilst British families see such assets more as a kind of "insurance-policy" for old-age to sell in case of need. German families, in contrast, being property owners distinctly less often, prefer to choose life-insurance as a way of accumulating family assets.

Family economic strategies are expressed in the form of the gender based division of labour which varies greatly from country to country in Europe. Whilst in France or Scandinavian countries there is a continuously high level of salaried women, even when there are young children to support, German or Dutch families are still defined by a traditional sexual division of labour between the sphere of production and the one of reproduction, women's private domain. Alongside the observation of such

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differences, one may thus evoke a quite clear opposition between these countries as far as the organization of reproductive work is concerned. On the one hand, this largely "externalized" work is taken care of by a powerful tertiary sector hiring women; on the other, in countries like Germany, there is a very large family (or more precisely maternal) monopoly of the reproductive work especially concerning the education of young children.

- Social investment strategies aim to conserve, if not increase the aid resources — whether self-interested or solidarity based — available in case of need (finding a guarantor to secure a loan, having business "contacts", finding work for one's children etc.). Such social capital relies on family relationships, alliances created by matrimonial strategies, relations of friendship and even relations derived from corporative or associative life. Mediterranean regions in particular, have an enlarged parental network that plays an important role as far as solidarity based mutual aid is concerned; in other European countries, it is the associative life, often compartmentalized according to criteria of social membership, that forms a source of social capital. An example may be found in the German student corporations, where fathers "place" their sons according to hundred year old traditions in order to assure the reproduction of a certain type of masculine *habitus* and exclusive profitable social relations during their professional career. In other national contexts, institutions such as past-student associations of the French Grandes-Ecoles, British clubs, Swiss Protestant sects, freemasonry in Italy or the "Rotary" or "Lions" clubs found a little everywhere, may fulfil analogous social functions for the social investment of families.

- Prophylactic strategies aim for the conservation if not the ennoblement of the family human capital through the practice of hygienic, health and nutritional prevention and a life-style beneficial to keeping in shape both physically and mentally (bodycare, leisure and sporting activities, revitalisation treatments, etc.).

- Symbolic investment strategies revolving around the principle of "family honour" often oppose economic rationality itself by according considerable importance to external appearances and to life-stylisation (external signs of social status and prestige to which one aspires). The archaic practice of "pot-latch", for example, aiming through the systematic destruction of material goods to increase the consideration and respect of others, as well as the symbolic investment strategies deployed by modern families such as bleeding themselves dry in order to have a "proper" interior or car, or getting dangerously into debt to create envy at a daughter's wedding, often seem to follow reasons that reason ignores. Of course this also concerns both the classical titles of "nobility" (even in the democratic age, the titles of

"knight" or "count" still prove to be of considerable appeal and of a non-negligible exchange-value in the matrimonial markets of countries with a strong royalist tradition like England) and those of "modern times" (think of the university doctorates which owners are bound to assume in German speaking regions, of the decorations such as the French Legion of Honour or the set or orders still insisted upon in Austria). Let us also remember the existence of such institutions as the English clubs, the German student associations, the past-student bodies of the French Grandes-Ecoles or again certain regiments in the Swiss army, which to this day each contribute in their own manner to the production of an elite *habitus* and to the recruitment of the ruling classes. Social bodies recognisable through the use of subtle symbols (colour of ties or banners, signet rings etc.) and recognised socially thanks precisely to the distinctive value and function of their social recruitment.

- Last but not least, the educative strategies form a typically "modern" stake of social reproduction, whose impact is perfectly comparable to that of family inheritance under the Ancien Regime. Educational investment in the offspring is defined from a very early age by quite different social class strategies, marking all manner of behaviour and the small things in life such as culinary-style and the apprenticeship of taste, forms of politeness or again ways of speaking as the first expression of a distinctive social esthetic. Let us remember in passing that the strategic apprenticeship of a socially distinct code of behaviour seems more deeply rooted in the European countries having experienced, as in France, Great-Britain and to a certain extent Austria, the precocious setting up of a durable "civilized *habitus*" (Elias) and of a "polite society" recognized as the normative model by all social classes. Germany or the Scandinavian countries however, are characterized by a certain historical backwardness relative to the "process of civilisation" and by the absence of a model of *savoir-vivre* universally recognised and thus — as stressed by Max Weber — more easily transferred from generation to generation. One may speculate therefore — as one is always lacking valuable comparative research in this field — that the "family culture", that would form a kind of social laboratory for the production and reproduction of the *civilized habitus* according to Elias (all the more powerful as the child enters this universe from birth and is subjected to a thorough and durable socialisation long before the intervention of the collective), would prove to be richer and more efficient in both France and Great-Britain as regards social distinction than in the German or Scandinavian countries.

At the age of schooling — variable from one European country to the next — the quasi-monopoly of the family as regards education is questioned, as the family finds itself facing a powerful competitor, capable of redistributing the cards of the social

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game and of upsetting social reproductive strategies. It is of course the modern State, having centralized the legal means of social reproduction through the organization of the compulsory general schooling of children.

Family reproduction : A State concern

Following the intervention of the State of Law in the field of successoral strategies and the imposition of equal sharing, State monopolization of the means of cultural reproduction translates into the heavy restriction of family autonomy as regards successoral choices (*numerus clausus*) and the designation of heirs. Through school, the mode of social reproduction is organized following a strictly statistical logic. Academic qualifications, more and more essential in order to succeed a founding father, prove to be very ephemeral. Parent's qualifications, a kind of cultural heritage are not directly transferable, even if the success and academic capital of the rising generation are the best guarantees for the probable success of the new generations during the course of qualification. The family remains the protagonist of social reproduction, according to a logic of selection based on meritocracy, that creates a conflict between the class interest largely satisfied by this reproductive mode and the interest of the "sacrificed" members, having failed in front of the obstacles and screens of academic selection.

The affairs of family reproduction become increasingly less private ones. The State interferes with the explicit aim of compensating for or even blocking the mechanisms of social reproduction in favour of an equality of opportunity for all citizens regardless of social origin. This State objective often remains utopian faced with educational reproductive strategies all the more powerful given that they are practised from earliest childhood through the transfer of a cultural capital.

The logic of the family strategies of cultural reproduction represents a fundamental social fact in all modern societies. This does not mean that one must save the fairly distinct intercultural differences noticeable from one European country to another (De Singly and Schultheis 1991; Büchner et al., 1990). Within each national context, the competition between family strategies and those of the State as regards the reproduction of education is revealed in a particular way, reflecting the respective relationships of power between the different social forces (State institutions, political parties, corporations or unions, ecclesiastical institutions etc.).

Thus an often neglected element in the comparison of national educational systems, is revealing of the sociocultural representations of the limits and relationships between the public and private spheres, perceptible with the age of transition from the family

context to the public and academic one of childrens' education. The age of entrance into the public system of education is relatively early in Belgium or France where nearly 90% of three year-olds attend nursery school; the situation is totally different in Germany, Italy and Holland where in the latter case only 4% of children from that age group are involved in pre-school education. We are dealing with educational ideas, if not ideologies, often in opposition and of great historical inertia. Let us consider for example, the case of France, where nursery schools have played an important role for over a century in State secular education, explicitly aiming to counterbalance the weight of family origin in the cogwheels of reproduction and, in contrast, to the cases of Germany, Holland and Switzerland, where the education of young children is largely excluded from the domain of legitimate State intervention.

The same thing is true for what relates to the impact of private or "free" schools in the different national contexts. In Belgium, 56% of schools are "private" whilst this is only the case in 13% of Danish schools. The latter are more characterized by a highly unified structure : young Danes attend only one type of school until the age of sixteen. Other national systems of education, however, follow a dichotomous logic, creating from an early age, as the situation in Germany shows, selection and decisive paths for academic careers (Elvin 1981). Other types of intercultural differences are shown in the degree of both institutional unification and political and administrative centralisation in the respective fields of national public education.

Within this comparative dimension, France embodies the very prototype of the State monopolization of the productive and reproductive fields of academic capital. This centralisation of the French educational field is also accompanied by an increased hierarchical structure of the academic institutions omnipresent in the collective representations of the reproductive stakes of the family. Thus, in France there is a differentiation between universities and Grandes Ecoles (a distinction unknown in other European countries if one disregards the partially homologous phenomenon of "prestigious" universities in Great Britain), and within the latter between the "great" and "small" according to access to cultural and symbolic capital, transferable into economic capital on the labour market. Viewed from abroad, this specific French setting, rooted in collective mentalities, is revealed in a powerful collective belief (or "illusion" as writes Bourdieu) regarding what touches on the validity of academic competition and the legitimacy of its monopoly in the positioning of individuals in the social space. This classification system machinery and this classifying, both the object of a well-founded collective obsession, contribute in a non-negligible way to the production and reproduction of a general sentiment of social unease without direct equivalents in other European countries characterized by less centralized, omnipotent

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educational systems with regards to social classification. Egalitarian, democratic and meritocratic aspirations characteristic of the French academic system come with a particularly selective and exclusive practice of social reproduction that resembles more a mechanism of nomination, of classification and of the State sanctioning of pre-existing social differences, than a mechanism of readjustment and social emancipation.

The university diploma, the direct equivalent to the Ancien Regime's titles of nobility and to the ensuing *esprit de corps*, according to Max Weber (1974, 577), plays a distinctive role in the very variable social demarcation according to national contexts. In Germany, for instance, the so-called "Berufsschule" institution (see the Dutch and Swiss systems also) provides at the same time both vocational and academic training. This in general opens the way to vocational qualifications and to economic goods relatively close to those of the socioprofessional classes based on academic qualifications such as the baccalaureat or even a university diploma. Thus may be explained certain intercultural differences as far as academic and vocational careers as well as family reproductive strategies are concerned. Given the social recognition accorded to vocational training in countries such as Germany, Austria, Holland and Switzerland, it is hardly surprising to meet, even with children from privileged families, diverse academic and vocational biographies. Indeed, these often include "practical" intermediate stages in the form of vocational training fitted in-between the baccalaureat and university studies, or the use of practical courses in public institutions and private businesses during studies. This parallel system of qualification, both academic and vocational has another non-negligible effect for family strategies in the form of a relatively low rate of youth unemployment.

The modern State plays its role as a "factor of domestic life" (Durkheim) in different ways according to national contexts and their historical traditions (Leclercq 1989; Halsey et al 1980). Whether paradoxical or not, it appears to be educational systems characterized by a philosophy of meritocratic and egalitarian social citizenship that are associated with a strong and generalized competition centred on academic capital, with an omnipotent role of this social resource in the social reproductive strategies of the family. However, where the State shows itself to be less "monopolistic", more "liberalist", giving families a greater margin of autonomy in the management of their "affairs", the reproductive strategies of families are characterized by a greater diversification and a greater complexity, as well as by a clearly more restrained presence in the political discourse on the social reproduction phenomenon.

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