

RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Sociologizing *Hau*: Translation of Maussian Concepts into Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

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### Abstract

In 1945, Lévi-Strauss declared that the coexistence and transitivity of sociology and anthropology, which can be seen in its most concrete expression in the collaboration between Durkheim and Mauss, was one of the distinctive features of French social sciences. Today, the concurrent use of concepts and methods from both disciplines is often attributed to Bourdieu, who was influenced by structuralism early in his career and engaged in ethnographic research in Algeria. Yet to limit Bourdieu's anthropological reference to the initial stages of his career or to reduce it to his relationship with Lévi-Strauss, is to run the risk of overlooking another implicit influence: It is through Mauss that Bourdieu finds the beginnings he needs when departing from a discredited structuralism after his "last happy structuralist work" Kabyle, or when he develops his own practical theory to revive sociology "which is reminded of its dominated position" and fortify its positions against anthropology, which dominated French social sciences in the 1960s. Contrary to his relationship with Lévi-Strauss, Bourdieu never ceases to refer to Maussian themes and concepts throughout his career. This article examines Bourdieu's relationship with the discipline of anthropology and elucidates how Maussian concepts are translated by him into a theory of practice.

**Keywords:** Sociology • Anthropology • Theory of practice • Marcel Mauss • Pierre Bourdieu • Claude Lévi-Strauss

**Hau'yu Sosyolojikleştirmek: Mauss'çu Kavramların Bourdieu'nün Pratik Teorisine Tercümesi**

### Öz

1945 yılında Lévi-Strauss sosyoloji ve antropoloji disiplinlerinin, en somut ifadesini Durkheim-Mauss teşvikemesisinde bulan biraradalığının ve geçişkenliğinin Fransız sosyal bilimlerinin en ayırt edici özelliği olduğunu ilan etmişti. Oysa bugün bu iki disipline ait kavram ve yöntemlerin birlikte kullanımı, sıklıkla kariyerinin ilk yıllarında yapısalcılıktan etkilenen ve Cezayir'de etnografik araştırmalar yürüten Bourdieu'ye atfedilmektedir. Ne var ki Bourdieu'nün antropolojik referansını kariyerinin ilk dönemiyle sınırlandırmak ya da Lévi-Strauss'la olan ilişkisine indirgemek daha derinden ilerleyen ve bir laymotif olarak sürekli gün yüzüne çıkan bir başka etkiyi gözden kaçırma riskini beraberinde getirir. Zira Bourdieu "son mutlu yapısalcı çalışması" Kabiliye sonrasında gözden düşmüş bir yapısalcılıktan yakasını sıyırmaya çalışırken ya da 1960'lı yılların başında *Laboratoire d'Anthropologie sociale ve L'Homme* dergisi ile sosyal bilimler alanını bütünüyle hâkimiyeti altına alan antropoloji disiplini karşısında "bastırılmış pozisyonu hatırlatılan sosyolojiyi" ayağa kaldırmak ve mevzilerini tahkim etmek için kendi pratik teorisini geliştirirken ihtiyaç duyduğu başlangıçları Mauss'ta bulur. Bourdieu, Lévi-Strauss'la ilişkisinin aksine, kariyeri boyunca Mauss'a ait ya da Mauss'tan mülhem kavramları kullanmaktan hiç vazgeçmez. Bu makalede Bourdieu'nün antropoloji disipliniyle kurduğu ilişki ve Mauss'a ait kavramların Bourdieu tarafından bir pratik teorisinin inşasında nasıl işe koşulduğu incelenmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyoloji • Antropoloji • Pratik Teorisi • Marcel Mauss • Pierre Bourdieu • Claude Lévi-Strauss

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Brazilian sociologist Otavio Bezerra recounted a challenge when he introduced Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital with Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert's article "A General Theory of Magic" at the Federal University of Fluminense (Rio de Janeiro). His students found it difficult to grasp the connection between this anthropological text and Bourdieu's sociology (2014, p. 28). In fact, it is historically and theoretically correct and appropriate that Bezerra initiated the discussion about Bourdieu with Mauss. In France, the thought of Mauss, who is considered to be both an important pioneer of the Durkheimian sociological tradition and the founding figure of anthropology, remain up-to-date, not through direct heirs, but rather through an indirect and continuous influence that has permeated the work of researchers across various disciplines. As Fournier noted, there is no single way to be Maussian, and what makes Mauss a remarkable exception in the history of social sciences is that everyone finds a different starting point into his *oeuvre* (2010, p. 481). "This Durkheimian" is the spiritual father of many thinkers who wanted to establish new theoretical frameworks (Cazeneuve, 1968, p. 4).

When discussing Bourdieu's contact with the discipline of anthropology, the emphasis is always on his relationship with Lévi-Strauss and structuralism. It is an old story: Structural anthropology, with its tendency to ignore the individual, made the mistake of confining practice to its execution, built structural systems in which the ways of social action were rigidly institutionalized,<sup>1</sup> and Bourdieu finally (!) came on the scene, replacing rules with strategies and developing a theory of practice that combines the phenomenological model of knowledge with objectivist models, having elements of both but transcending them. Bourdieu's story of the killing father is interesting, especially to see how his addressings to Lévi-Strauss evolves from "Cher Maître" to "Cher Maître et cher ami" and then to "Cher Colleague" in his archived letters...<sup>2</sup> However, limiting Bourdieu's anthropological reference to the beginning of his career, or reducing it exclusively to his relationship with Lévi-Strauss, risks overlooking another implicit influence on Bourdieu which keep surfacing as a leitmotif in his studies. It is Mauss from which Bourdieu finds the beginnings he needs to develop his own theory of practice after his "last happy structuralist work" Kabyle (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 22), and during his quest to emancipate himself from the shadow of Lévi-Strauss.

In fact, it is an interesting coincidence that Bourdieu encountered Mauss while seeking distance from Lévi-Strauss, just as Lévi-Strauss turn to Mauss while seeking

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1 It should be noted that this is a cliché, especially in Anglo-American social sciences, caused by a retrospective reading of Lévi-Strauss.

2 Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Fonds Claude Lévi-Strauss: NAF 28150 (184): Bourdieu, Pierre.

separation from Durkheim.<sup>3</sup> However, he is not the “spontaneous structuralist” Mauss whose heir Lévi-Strauss proclaimed in his preface to *Sociologie et anthropologie*,<sup>4</sup> but “another” Mauss who emphasized self-perception, symbolic meaning, the sense of honor, the techniques of body. Unlike his relationship with Lévi-Strauss, Bourdieu does not stop referring to Maussian concepts throughout his career, and in particular, he puts into practice the reflexive thought he advocates in his own line by repeatedly revisiting the theme the gift with its different dimensions across various periods:<sup>5</sup> *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (1972), *Le sens pratique* (1980), *Raisons pratiques* (1994), *Méditations pascaliennes* (1997).

By reading Bourdieu's central concepts such as symbolic capital, masculine domination, practical sense, and habitus, and his ethnographic research on Kabyle society as a step toward a general sociological theory where Mauss left off, this article aims to indicate how Maussian concepts are translated into a theory of practice. However, the intention here is not to undermine the originality or explanatory capacity of Bourdieusian approach, nor to retrospectively position Mauss as the beginning of everything, but rather to underline a continuity and transitivity, to show ideas in their inspirational and nascent stages, and to broaden the perspective on the formation of not only the concept of habitus but also Bourdieu's scientific habitus.

While recent studies on the relationship between Mauss and Bourdieu have focused on the theme of the gift (Silber, 2009; Fournier, 2010; Chaniel, 2010; Athané, 2011), a deeper understanding of this relationship warrants a broader research scope. This article first analyzes the historical conditions of the anthropological moment of Bourdieu's career in the specific context of the French intellectual field of his time and then examines the influence of Mauss' three articles, *Essai sur les variations saisonnières des sociétés Eskimos* (Seasonal Variations of the Eskimo: A Study in Social Morphology with Henri Beuchat, 1904-1905), *Essai sur le don* (The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies, 1924), and *Les techniques du corps* (Techniques of the Body, 1934), on Bourdieu's sociology.

3 Lévi-Strauss was threatened with expulsion from the university during his years as a professor of sociology at the University of São Paulo for refusing to teach Durkheim's sociology in his classes (Lévi-Strauss, 2018, p. 38). But in the same period, he was in constant correspondence with Mauss and consulted his *Cher Maître* on every step he would take regarding his career. When he finally returned to France after his years in Brazil and the USA, he first defended his doctoral thesis (*Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*) in 1949, which was largely inspired by Mauss' approach, and then declared himself “legitimate heir” of Mauss in a sense with his controversial preface to *Sociologie et anthropologie* (1950), a collection of Mauss' articles published in *L'Année sociologique*.

4 Lévi-Strauss, C. (2016). Introduction à l'œuvre de Marcel Mauss. *Sociologie et anthropologie*. 13<sup>e</sup> édition/2<sup>e</sup> tirage, Presses Universitaires de France, IX-LII.

5 For a detailed analysis of how Bourdieu's approach to the theme of the gift has changed over the years, see: (Silber, 2009).

### I. A Durkheimian Initiative?

In a 1988 interview with Didier Eribon, Lévi-Strauss describes how he became involved in anthropology as a provincial teacher with a philosophical agrégation: “Not only for me, but for numerous ethnologists, turning ethnology was perhaps a refuge against a civilization, a century, in which we did not feel comfortable” (2018, p. 94). Bourdieu, in retrospectively evaluating his own ethnographic experience, follows precisely the same line: “I thus understood retrospectively that I had entered into sociology and ethnology in part through a deep refusal of the scholastic point of view which is the principle of loftiness, a social distance, in which I could never feel at home, and to which the relationship to the social world associated with certain social origins no doubt predisposes” (2008, p. 41).

To understand Bourdieu’s initiation into anthropology, it is necessary to look closely at the landscape of French intellectual life in the 1960s and the positioning of actors, and be aware of the fascination created by *Tristes tropiques* (1955), the influential role played by the *LAS* (Laboratory of Social Anthropology) and the journal *L’Homme*, established by Lévi-Strauss at the Collège de France. Firstly, *Tristes tropiques*, which oscillated between being a travel writing and a monograph, enjoyed remarkable success, reaching a wide enough readership to influence the direction of social science publishing in France in the 1960s (Loyer, 2015, p. 439).<sup>6</sup> Notably, intellectuals such as Emmanuel Terray, Michel Izard, and Pierre Clastres, agrégatives in philosophy, switched to anthropology after reading the book, and Sartre’s close friend Jean Pouillon began to follow Lévi-Strauss’ seminars. Bourdieu admitted that it was in the ambition of every one of his generation to write a book like *Tristes tropiques*.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Lévi-Strauss substituted the term of “ethnology” in France with “anthropology” he brought from the United States. Through his adaptation of the phonological method to the analysis of kinship systems and myths, he effectively instilled a “sense of doing science” after Sartre. For the first time, with charts and graphs, a discipline of social science gave the impression that a rigorous and positive science could be done, was practiced “in the laboratory”, restored the dignity of the “so-called social sciences”, and caused both admiration and irritation among philosophers (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 51). The establishment of the laboratory and the journal wielded an immediate and decisive impact, shifting the center of Parisian intellectual life from the Café de Flore to the Collège de France. Lévi-Strauss’ structural anthropology came remarkably close to realizing the longstanding ambition, initially pursued by Durkheim and later by the Annales school, to unify the social sciences or assert dominance over other disciplines. These

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6 In *Le Figaro*, Raymond Aron likened the book to Montesquieu’s *Lettres Persanes*, Bastide to Chateaubriand, and the *Combat* compared Lévi-Strauss to Cervantes (Wilcken, 2021, p. 291). In 1955, the jury of the Goncourt Academy, France’s most famous literary prize, issued a statement expressing their regret that they could not award the book a prize because “it is not a novel” (Levi-Strauss, 2018, p. 84).

7 Even when Béarn was designing his research, Bourdieu had in mind that it would be interesting to write the *Tristes tropiques* in reverse (Bourdieu ve Wacquant, 2014, p. 161-162).

circumstances played a crucial role in facilitating Bourdieu's initiation into ethnography, and for Bourdieu, his experience in Algeria represented the most crucial moment of the transformation that accompanied the transition from philosophy to the social sciences, a "coming of age" (Ökten, 2012, p. 3).

However, the idea of transitivity between sociology and anthropology, which is entirely valid for Mauss (who considered them synonymous), requires certain hesitation when it comes to Bourdieu. Considering the conditions of his time, it becomes evident that Bourdieu's attitude was not to combine the concepts and methods of sociology and anthropology,<sup>8</sup> but a quiet "Durkheimian" initiative to revive sociology, which had been reminded of its "dominated position" vis-à-vis anthropology which had surged in prestige during the early 1960s (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 34). Bourdieu sought to expand sociology's research domains, explore its potentialities, and enhance its capacity for conceptualization. Hence, it would be more precise to assert that Bourdieu does not position himself on the boundary between the two disciplines; rather, he translates anthropological concepts and methods into a broader sociological theory, or rather sociologizes the concepts in anthropology.

## II. Vision and Di-vision in the Eskimos and Kabyles

Bourdieu refers to his article on the Kabyle house as evidence of his "fascination with the structuralist constructions of Lévi-Strauss" (2008, p. 61). Undoubtedly, this article owes much to nature-culture dichotomy analysed deeply by Lévi-Strauss in *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (1949) and the principle of division attributed to the savage mind. The text was published for the first time in 1969 in the collection *Échange et Communication*, a tribute to Lévi-Strauss.<sup>9</sup> However, Bourdieu's main idea, that the organization of living space cannot be explained in terms of physical conditions and functionality alone, but is deeply rooted in the social imaginary and is organized mainly within this framework, is based on an earlier work -the findings of

8 Indeed, Bourdieu distinguishes between these two disciplines. For him, there is a reasonable distance between sociology and ethnology, which "permits" and even "encourages" aesthetic postures when the present is confronted: "(Ethnology) This science without a contemporary stake can at best churn the social unconscious, but very delicately, without ever wounding or traumatizing it" (2008, p. 43-44).

9 Bourdieu, P. "La maison kabyle ou le monde renversé", dans J. Pouillon et P. Maranda (dir.), *Échanges et communications. Mélanges offerts à Claude Lévi-Strauss à l'occasion de son soixantième anniversaire*, 1964, 739-758.

which Lévi-Strauss also followed-<sup>10</sup> Mauss' article "Seasonal Variations of the Eskimo: A Study in Social Morphology," co-authored with his student Henri Beuchat. According to Camille Tarot, this study of social morphology, based on a detailed description of Eskimo habitation, in which Mauss posits that the spatial distribution of Eskimo communities as the embodiment of their mythic-ritual systems, is the precursor, even the prototype of Bourdieu's article on the Kabyle house (1999, p. 32-33).

Mauss argues that the only continuity that allows Eskimo communities scattered across a vast geography to be distinguished as a common identity is settlement. These settlements, comprising clusters of houses, tent sites, and hunting grounds on both land and sea, serve as the fundamental unit of Eskimo societies. However, their appearance undergoes a stark contrast between the summer and winter seasons. During the summer, tents (known as *lupik*), made from reindeer or seal skins, are set up sparsely, with distance between them. In contrast, winter brings about a transformation as these tents are replaced by long houses. These winter dwellings, built close together, are typically dug into the ground and made from whale bones.

For Mauss, the most important feature of these two types of settlement is the contrast between them. Contrary to the tent symbolizes the nuclear family, winter brings about a gathering of families within a communal house, and these houses coalesce into densely packed living units. During winter, the performance of religious and ritual duties in winter is subject to strict control and sanction; misfortune, severe storms, the scarcity of hunting animals, or unfortunate events such as the breakup and thawing of glaciers are associated with the violation of a ritual prohibition. After the winter days, when myths and stories are passed down from one generation to the next, when there is a constant state of religious exuberance ("We can think of all winter life as one long feast.", "An atmosphere of kindness seems to pervade everyone.", "Cases of crime are very rare."), life undergoes a secularization process in the summer. Even magic, once integral to winter life, is perceived as an ordinary medical science. From this perspective, Mauss discusses two distinct judicial systems, one in summer and one in winter. While Eskimos who remain in their winter settlement embark on long journeys during the summer.

This division between summer and winter extends far beyond mere differences in settlement type and the fluctuation of religious beliefs; it permeates the entire mentality

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10 In *Tristes tropiques* Lévi-Strauss, after noting that the life of the Nambikwara is divided into two periods, the rainy season and the dry season, attempts to describe these periods in detail. However, he does not place them in opposition to each other as Mauss does, nor does he mention that they take almost two different forms of social existence (2016, p. 287-288). In the pages where he analyzes the Bororo, he argues that the organization of the villages is registered in the social collective unconscious. In the Bororo, the planning of the village plan was so important, both in terms of social life and worship, that the missionaries who came to the region immediately understood that in order to Christianize the Bororo, it would be enough to change the plan of the village (2016, p. 229-230). Years later, Bourdieu compared the operations of the French army, which he called regrouping, with this example given by Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes tropiques* (Ökten, 2012, p. 18).

of the Eskimos, shaping their conception of the universe and the way of thinking. In Eskimo culture, people, animals, natural phenomena, and even material objects are divided according to whether they belong to summer or winter. This “binary opposition” between the two seasons is deeply ingrained in the Eskimo myths and ritual prohibitions. As Mauss elucidates, “There are things that belong to winter and things that belong to summer, and the opposition between these two basic types is so strongly felt by the Eskimos that it is forbidden to mix them in anyway” (2016, p. 448-449).

Bourdieu perceives a similarity to the Eskimo opposition observed by Mauss within the internal organization of traditional Kabyle houses:

“The dark, nocturnal, lower part of the house, the place for things that are damp, green, or raw -jars of water placed on the benches on either side of the stable entrance or next to the wall of darkness, wood, green fodder - and also the place for natural beings -oxen and cows, donkeys and mules- natural activities -sleep, sexual intercourse, childbirth, and also death- is opposed, as nature to culture, to the light-filled, noble, upper part: this is the place for human beings and especially the guest, for fire and objects made with fire, such as the lamp, kitchen utensils, the rifle -a symbol of the male point of honour (*nif*) which protects female honour (*hurma*) -and the loom, the symbol of all protection; and it is also the site of the two specially cultural activities performed within the house, weaving and cooking” (1977, p. 135-136).

The interior of the Kabyle house is organized into sections that are in strict opposition to each other, and the order itself is protected by a mythic-ritual framework. The analysis of the symbolic organization of the house reveals these homologous oppositions: fire corresponds to water, cooked to raw, high to low, light to shade, day to night, male to female, *nif* to *hurma* (the principles of purity and impurity), fertilizing to fertilized. This signifies that the house is divided between itself and its counterpart “according to a principle of opposition” that organizes all spheres of existence. Hence “The house is an empire within an empire, but one which always remains subordinate because, even when it exhibits all the properties and all the relations which define the archetypal world, it remains an inverted reflection, a world in reverse” (1977, p. 158).

In his Eskimo article, Mauss shows, in an almost Montesquiean approach, that climate, social morphology, food sources, population density, social relations, family structure, frequency of rituals, religious life all coalesce as a cohesive whole, and that this movement is shaped by the contrast between summer and winter settlements. Mauss illustrates that the dualist structure observed in Eskimo settlement patterns stems not only from environmental and physical conditions but is also primarily driven by social factors. Both the arrangement of settlements and his interior layout serve as symbolic spaces in which social relations and hierarchies are encoded. These spaces

are not only geographical, but also and above all social.<sup>11</sup> Just as the way society organizes its living space is social, part of a symbolic system, so social relations can be read through the way the house, a microcosm, is organized. This idea, inspired by Mauss, resonates deeply with Bourdieu.

According to Bourdieu, the Kabyle house occupies a central position within a complex of parallel oppositions, primarily rooted in the contrast between *nif* (male) and *hurma* (female). This contrast transcends mere technical necessities and functional needs. Instead, in both the construction and interior design of the house, the principles of symbolic organization are intertwined with technical requirements. Even in cases where technical necessities impose limitations on the application of symbolic organization principles or where these principles must be adapted to accommodate external constraints, the symbolic system uses all its full capacity to reinterpret these material elements “in terms of its own logic” (1977, p. 135).

For the Eskimos, the principle of division focuses on the distinction between seasons (summer and winter), whereas for the Kabyles, it centers on gender (male and female). The Kabyle house, viewed from the male perspective as “to come out of” and from the female perspective as “to go into” serves as a social and symbolic microcosm where the distinction between the sexes is embodied in all its fundamental and connotative dimensions. Masculine domination has become an opposition registered in space. Mauss used to say, “There is a society of men and a society of women” (1950, p. 373). Bourdieu, for his part, based his analysis of masculine domination, which he would develop in subsequent years, largely on his research on the Kabyle house (Ökten, 2012, p. 21).

### **III. *Hau* or Symbolic Capital: Bourdieusian Perspectives on Gift Exchange**

In *The Gift*, Mauss unveils an advanced pre-capitalist economy which is grounded the negation of the economy as it is understood today by based on the Pacific Coast, the Northwest American communities and the ancient legal systems of Indo-Europe. He shows that far from being a “primitive” economy rested on individual exchange and devoid of surplus, the gift economy is a complex system of relations surrounded by a mythic-ritual framework and governed by certain rules, rituals, and symbolic meanings. Mauss elevates ritualized forms of exchange, such as potlatch and kula, from being ethnographic phenomena peculiar to certain human societies to concepts

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<sup>11</sup> For a long time, observers of Eskimo igloos explained the fact that several families come together in winter and live in houses dug into the ground by climatic conditions. However, Mauss states that this is only a partial view of reality and that it is absolutely not true that Eskimos live in the coldest regions of the world. He shows that the Montagnees, who live in much colder regions than the Eskimos, and the Inuit, who live in the interior of Labrador, and the Crees, who live in the forests of Alaska, live in tents all year round. And even as the climate changes, the Eskimo way of life remains the same. According to Mauss, once the Eskimos became a community, they had a perfectly created dual culture, but this was not because of the struggle against the cold, but because of the intensity of social life and the way it affected the individual (2016, p. 439).



that can be used to explain the functioning of the pre-capitalist economies. As long as things (objects) and their spirit (*mana and hau*<sup>12</sup>) are exchangeable, the society develops three types of obligations rooted in both symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships regarding the gift: giving, receiving, and returning (reciprocating). These obligations and their corresponding counter-obligations, termed by Mauss as the “system of total presentations,” find fulfillment through the act of gift exchange. Consequently, the gift emerges as a “total social fact,” intricately intertwined with various aspects of social life.<sup>13</sup>

Mauss envisioned the possibility of developing a sociological theory of symbolism (Lévi-Strauss, 2016, p. xxii). For behind the whole theory of the gift lay the principle of reciprocity, and behind this principle was a perspective that considered the social world as an entirely symbolic space. Mauss' approach, viewing actions and things as components of a symbolic system, paved the way for a highly fruitful path, perhaps found its highest representation in French thought with Bourdieu. According to Chaniel, Bourdieu emerges as the true heir who fully realizes the potentialities, which remained at the level of outline in *The Gift*. One could even be argued that Bourdieu developed his general sociology theory through an ongoing dialogue with *The Gift*, sometimes in agreement and sometimes in opposition, but always in constant dialogue (2020, p. 484).

According to Bourdieu, there are two different positions on gift exchange: The “phenomenological” perspective represented by Mauss, which reduces the gift to a lived experience, and the “objectivist” approach represented by Lévi-Strauss, which takes the gift as seen from the outside.<sup>14</sup> Mauss describes gift exchange as “a discontinuous succession of acts of generosity,” while Lévi-Strauss describes it as “a structure of transcendent reciprocity of acts of exchange”. To transcend this duality, Bourdieu employs praxeological knowledge, which requires a dual break with both the objectivist and objectifying modes, as well as the phenomenological subject of naïve humanism. Third form of theoretical knowledge, the praxeological, is concerned “not only with the system of objective relations constructed by the objectivist form of knowledge but also with the *dialectical* relationships between these objective structures and the structured dispositions of individuals” (Bourdieu, 2018, p. 141-142).

12 For Mauss, property is not an economic concept in the possession of wealth in these cultures. Property is spiritual; the person who owns an object also takes on the spirit that belongs to that object. As Mauss interpreted these concepts *hau* is the spirit and power of inanimate things. And *mana* is reserved for humans and spirits (2016, p. 239).

13 For a detailed review of *The Gift*, see (Tunçbilek, Ş. S., 2023).

14 Bourdieu bases this categorization on Lévi-Strauss' criticism of Mauss in the preface to *Sociology and Anthropology*. According to Lévi-Strauss, Mauss made a mistake by relying on an indigenous rationalization, an enigma created by the natives, especially with regard to the spirit of things (*la force des choses*) (2016, p. XXXVIII-XXXIX). Based on this criticism, Bourdieu assumes that there is a dichotomy to be overcome.

For Bourdieu, what was missing from Mauss and Lévi-Strauss' analysis was the crucial role played by the temporal interval between the gift (*le don*) and the counter-gift (*le contre-don*). In *Practical Reason*, Bourdieu raises the question of the temporality of the gift (*la temporalité du don*) to explore the distance between the structure representing the rule and the experienced reality. He contends that the temporal interval between giving and returning (gift and counter-gift) constitutes the essence of gift exchange (1998, p. 91-123). The main question here is as follows: Since the gift received cannot be returned immediately -since it would amount to refusal- why must the counter-gift be deferred and different? Because no matter how small, there will not be a return, therefore a suspense, an uncertainty, which means the interval between the two gifts turns this highly ritualized exchange into a confrontation of strategies:

“When a marriage is proposed, the head of the family whose daughter is asked for must reply immediately if he refuses, but he almost always delays replying if he intends to accept. By this means he is able to draw out as long as possible the conjunctural advantage (related to his position as the person solicited), which may coexist with a structural inferiority (the solicited family often being of lower rank than the family making the request) and which is concretely expressed in the initial imbalance, progressively reversed, in the gifts exchanged between the two families” (1977, p. 116).

The possibility for agents to manipulate the structure by altering the tempo of the exchange, whether by accelerating or decelerating the giving and returning as a strategy maneuver, is inherent within the rules and dynamics of the game, leads to a deconstruction that cannot be reduced to a simple change of reference (1977, p. 116). Despite society appearing to have established an extensive set of rules to guarantee its functioning, it is, in reality, a field of “regulated improvisations” that go around it without directly violating the rules it has set itself: “The system of honour values is enacted than thought, and the grammar of honour can inform actions without having to be formulated” (1977, p. 128). If sociologists limit themselves to an objectivist description, reducing gift exchange to swapping they can no identify the difference between an exchange of gifts and an act of credit. Moreover, the temporal interval between the gift and the counter-gift has also a second function, “masking” the obligatory character of the exchange, allowing it to be presented “gratuitously” over time, to be socially forgotten or pretended to be forgotten.

Mauss' first observation regarding the exchange of gifts posits that while gifts are theoretically voluntary, they often come with an underlying sense of obligation in practice (2016, p. 147). This notion of “the twofold truth of the gift” (*la double vérité du don*) serves as the foundation for Bourdieu's formulation of the logic behind the economy of symbolic goods: “Everything occurs as if the time interval, existed to permit the giver to experience the gift as a gift without reciprocity, and the one who gives a counter-gift to experience it as gratuitous and not determined by the initial gift”

(1998, p. 94). According to Bourdieu, this phenomenon represents a *common miscognition*, the game in which everyone knows -and does not want to know- that everyone knows- and does not want to know- the true nature of the exchange (1998, p. 192). This self-deception, supported by the logic of ceremonial rituals such as *potlatch* and *kula*, transforms into “the twofold truth of the social” in Bourdieu’s sociology that can be applied to the economy of symbolic goods whose principle is the fact that social agents having an interest in “disinterestedness”.

Mauss contrasted the gift economy, in which people, spirits and things are intertwined, with the capitalist model of accumulation, wherein objects are reified; he explained the “anti-economic” rationality of extravagant spending by introducing the concept of “honour”. Similarly, Bourdieu distinguishes the exchange of gift as an economy of symbolic goods from the economy of economic goods. In his article, “The Sense of honour” (1977, p. 95-132), he revisits the concept of honor, which is central to Mauss’ understanding of gift exchanges, exploring it through various modes such as the game of honour, the competition of honour, and the ethos of honour, and reflects on the regulative and reproductive function of the dialectic of honour in Kabyle in terms of relations and hierarchies within society and places it in a “game theory” similar to the exchange of gifts: “The competition of honour can be situated in a logic very close to that of the game or wager, a ritualized, institutionalized logic. (...) The challenge, properly so-called, and also the offence, presuppose, like the gift, the choice of playing a particular game in accordance with certain rules” (1977, p. 105-106). As the dialectic between gift and honor is conceptualized through the lens of game theory, a range of concepts such as *illusio*, *susceptibility to play*, *wager*, *strategy*, and *practical sense*, which will be the main components of Bourdieu’s theory of practice, come into play. Of particular interest is the articulation of the concept of *symbolic capital* in the discussion of *hau* concerning *The Gift*.

Mauss’ primary focus on the exchange of gift centers on the question of reciprocity. It is not surprising that giving and receiving gifts happen; what is intriguing is why, after a certain period, the recipient feels obliged to give back in a different: “What is the rule of law that shows that in undeveloped or archaic societies a gift is necessary to be given in return for a gift that is received?” (2016, p. 148). Mauss interprets *hau* -who entered the literature with the definition of the Maori sage Tamati Ranapiri of the Ngati-Raukawa tribe, the indigenous informant of the anthropologist Eldson Best- as a spirit that accompanies the gift, seeking to return to its first owner, with dire consequences if it does not, and made it the keystone of gift exchange.

However, the ambiguity surrounding the term has led to ongoing controversies that remain heated even today. British anthropologist Raymond Firth accused Mauss of misunderstanding Ranapiri’s transmission. According to Lévi-Strauss, the *hau* was

not the ultimate explanation for exchange; instead, “it is the conscious form whereby men of a given society, in which the problem had particular importance, apprehended an unconscious necessity whose explanation lies deeper” (2016, p. XXXIX). For Sahlins, the meaning of *hau* was at least as secular as the exchange itself, and even if calling it “profit” might not be the most historically or economically accurate term, it still provided a more fitting translation than Mauss’ choice of “spirit” (2017, p. 159-167). Bourdieu also waded into this contentious discussion, offering a sociological perspective. He explained this “magical power” through the concept of “symbolic capital”:

“Symbolic capital is an ordinary property (physical strength, wealth, warlike valor, etc.) which, perceived by social agents endowed with the categories of perception and appreciation permitting them to perceive, know and recognize it, becomes symbolically efficient, like a veritable *magical power*: a property which, because it responds to socially constituted “collective expectations” and beliefs, exercises a sort of action from a distance, without physical contact. An order is given and obeyed: it is a quasi-magical act” (1998, p. 187).

When symbolic capital and magic theory are thus positioned as substitutes, they can now be applied to different areas of the social world: Just as in the logic of gift exchange, all seemingly generous and disinterested actions in society can ultimately be seen as efforts to preserve or accumulate symbolic capital. But if accepting *hau*, which Mauss defines as “the magical, religious and spiritual power of the clan,” as Sahlins does, as surplus is an example *par excellence* of economic reductionism, the question arises as to whether it is also a form of sociological reductionism to define *hau* as symbolic capital, thereby eliminating all its metaphysical connotations, as Bourdieu does?

Once the logic of symbolic exchanges is farmed in this way, in *Pascalian Meditations*, Bourdieu revisits the theme of the gift, this time confronting the economic economy.<sup>15</sup> Mauss’ work highlighted different forms of exchange worldwide that would seem completely meaningless from a modern economic perspective. In these societies, prestige and power were not based on accumulation and private property, but on extravagant spending, distribution, and sometimes even destruction. Classical economic theory would undoubtedly struggle to explain the actions of a tribal chief who willingly gives away or loses everything, including his wife and child (Mauss, 2016, p. 148). The act of chiefs in rituals such as the *kula* of the Trobriand Islands, or the Kwaituls in the American Northwest, who ritually discard their most valuable possessions into the sea and even burn their homes, once provided Lévi-Strauss with a comfortable

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15 Bourdieu is not the first to put forward the arguments in Mauss’ article that question classical economic theories. Mauss’ emphasis on the anti-utilitarian act of spending was the starting point for a journal, *La Revue de M.A.U.S.S. (Mouvement anti-utilitariste dans les sciences sociales)*, founded in 1981. With Mauss’ work at its center, this journal was a movement against the economist models of explanation that had become established in the academy, especially in sociology and political philosophy, by the end of the 1970s, and that had completely dominated the political scene outside the academy.

position vis-à-vis Marxist anthropology, and Bourdieu with the means to attack economic economy (especially against the Althusserians) and his “chess or bridge player.” This is because the exchange of gifts, seen as the paradigm of the symbolic exchange, is not based on a rational, “calculating subject”, but rather by “agent socially disposed to participate” (1998, p. 98). Obviously, structural models that precisely determine the agent’s margin of action are impossible, but their habitus serves “as a strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations.” Even when it might look like a strategic calculation, habitus is first defined concerning a system of objective potentialities, firmly inscribed in the present (2013, p. 76):

“The gift economy, in contrast to the economy in which equivalent values are exchanged, is based on a denial of the economic (in the narrow sense), on a refusal of the logic of the maximization of economic profit, that is to say, of the spirit of calculation and the exclusive pursuit of material (as opposed to symbolic) interest, a refusal that is inscribed in the objectivity of institutions and in dispositions. It is organized with a view to the accumulation of symbolic capital (a capital of recognition, honour, nobility, etc.) which is brought about in particular through the transmutation of economic capital achieved through the alchemy of symbolic exchanges (exchange of gifts, words, challenges and ripostes, murders, etc.) and only available to agents endowed with dispositions adjusted to the logic of ‘disinterestedness’” (1998, p. 195).

Bourdieu’s application of concepts such as symbolic capital, the twofold truth of the social, the dialectic of honor, and strategy, which he thinks through the lens of *The Gift*, extends far beyond his time as an ethnographer in the field. Bourdieu consistently translates and applies these concepts to modern societies:

“In my earliest analyses of honour (which I have reformulated again and again), you will find questions that I still ask today: The idea that struggles for recognition are a fundamental dimension of social life and that the main stake in these struggles is the accumulation of a special kind of capital, honour in the sense of prestige, respectability, and therefore there is a specific logic of the accumulation of symbolic capital as a capital based on recognition and being recognized; the idea of a strategy that is neither conscious and calculated nor mechanically determined as the orientation of practice, and a logic of practice whose specificity derives from its temporal structure...” (1987, p. 33-34).

#### IV. Techniques of the Body and Habitus

Another significant work by Mauss that can be related to Bourdieu is “Les techniques du corps” (Techniques of the Body), a paper presented at the *Société de Psychologie* in 1934, where Mauss discusses how individuals and societies utilize their bodies. He observes that every society has its unique way of using the body, which he considers the first and most natural instrument of human beings (2016, p. 367). These varying ways of using the body across societies are termed “techniques of the body” (les techniques du corps). Mauss was one of the first to recognize that sociality is registered

in the body -since it is relatively recent for the body to become the central research subject of social sciences-, and he explained this with the concept of *habitus*:

“Hence I have had this notion of social nature of the ‘habitus’ for many years. Please note that I use the Latin word -it should be understood in France -*habitus*. The word translates infinitely better than ‘habitude’ (habit or custom), the ‘exis,’ the ‘acquired ability’ and ‘faculty’ of Aristotle (who was a psychologist). It does not designate those metaphysical *habitudes*, that mysterious ‘memory,’ the subjects of volumes or short and famous theses. These ‘habits’ do not just vary with individuals and their imitations, they vary especially between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestiges. In them we should see the techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason rather than, in the ordinary way, merely the soul and its repetitive faculties” (2016, p. 368-369).

What are the characteristics of body techniques and habitus that Mauss cites from different societies in various areas such as walking, swimming, resting, childbirth, and sexual positions? First, they must be traditional, meaning they are registered in collective consciousness and effective. If it is not repeated, if it is not passed on more or less consciously from generation to generation, it cannot be considered a habitus. Second, these techniques vary from society to society, as well as according to gender and social position. In fact, the habitus between genders has diverged to such an extent that it appears as though “there is a society of men and a society of women” (2016, p. 373). According to Mauss, the social and the physical are intertwined; this constant adaptation “is pursued in a series of assembled actions, and assembled for the individual not by himself alone but by all his education, by the whole society which he belongs, in the place he occupies in it” (2016, p. 372).

Mauss states that, these socially characterized body techniques primarily comprise a series of movements designed to prevent or moderate excessive and unmeasured actions, enabling individuals to provide coherent responses to the situations they encounter. The ability to resist excitement and impulse is fundamental to social and mental well-being: “In every society, everyone knows and has to know and learn what he has to do in all conditions” (2016, p. 384).

Every society provides its members the with a sense of comfort by establishing norms of behavior and a in dealing with excitement and the unpredictable. However, this does not automatically lead to an understanding of the individual absorbed by society. For Mauss it is thanks to society that there is an intervention of consciousness. It is not because of unconsciousness that there is an intervention of society. These series of actions differ from society to society are idiosyncracies which are simultaneously matters of race, of individual mentality and of collective mentality.<sup>16</sup> Mauss, in his observation of Maori women teaching their daughters a certain way of walking,

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16 Mauss’ preference to use the concept of “mentalité collective” rather than “conscience collective” is significant for understanding his relationship to Durkheim’s sociology (2016, p. 380). For a deeper analysis of the relationship between uncle and nephew see: (Tunçbilek, 2020).

emphasizes that this manner of walking is learned, not inherently natural or spontaneous. He goes further to suggest that there might not even exist a universally “natural” way of walking for adults (2016, p. 370). What may appear as natural behaviors within a society are, in fact, “socially constructed.” These arguments, which give today the impression that Bourdieu’s sociology is on its foundations, are in fact the traces left by Mauss, who conducted his people to the edge of infinite possibilities.<sup>17</sup>

Bourdieu frequently criticizes Lévi-Strauss, accusing him of interpreting or attempting to interpret his sociological approach as a regression to pre-structuralism, a return to subjectivism. Bourdieu, however, rejects subjectivism just as radically as Lévi-Strauss did, as evidenced by his development of the concept of habitus (1987, p. 77-78; 2008, p. 44-45). This concept, which Bourdieu describes as “socialized subjectivity” and “the social made body” draws inspiration from Mauss (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 125-127; Fournier, 2010, p. 478). The parallelism between the interpretations of habitus by these two social scientists is significant. However, the concept is no longer a narrative of the forms of action observed by Mauss in the sickbed or on the front line, but is embedded in a general field theory in Bourdieu, and is transformed into a strategy-generating principle that enable agents, unequally endowed with different types of capital, to cope with different situations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 18).

According to Bourdieu, habitus functions as a structuring mechanism that exists at the intersection of social coercion and individual spontaneity. It represents the “ontological complicity” that connects the social world with the individual agent (1987, p. 22). The habitus, which takes the form of a set of historical relations “registered” in the bodies of agents in the form of mental and bodily perception, preferences, and action is creative, inventive, but within the limits of its structures. Both Bourdieu and Mauss argue that the share of coincidence within a social context is quite small:

“People are not fools; they are much less bizarre or deluded than we would spontaneously believe precisely because they have internalized, through a protracted and multisided process of conditioning, the objective chances they face. They know how to ‘read’ the future that fits them, which is made for them and for which they are made (by opposition to everything that the expression ‘this is not for the likes of us’ designates), through practical anticipations that grasp, at the very surface of the present, what unquestionably imposes itself as that which ‘has’ to be done or said (and which will retrospectively appear as the ‘only’ thing to do or say.)” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 130).

The concept of habitus serves as the key to understanding the regularity and reproduction of social phenomena. It is through this inherent sociality, inscribed within bodies, that structured frameworks are imposed, what Mauss refers to as “constant

<sup>17</sup> At this point, it is worth remembering the famous lines in which Lévi-Strauss compares Mauss to the prophet Moses: “Why did Mauss, halt at the edge of those immense possibilities, like Moses conducting his people all the way to a promised land whose splendour he would never behold?” (Lévi-Strauss, 2016, p. xxxvii).

adaptation,” creating a symbolic field where “everything occurs as if ...” (1998, p. 98). Social fields form bodies by inculcating, through the conditionings attached with a position in that field, the cognitive structures that these conditionings apply to them (2000, p. 183). Consequently, habitus, which acquires its symbolic power depending on the position of the agent in the field and this positioning, becomes a thing, an embodiment, a “second nature.”

Bourdieu, after introducing the concept of habitus in this way within *The Practical Sense*, mentions about his reformulation of the concept in *In Other Words*, stating that the concept had been used by Hegel, Husserl, Weber, Durkheim, and Mauss before him, all with the same theoretical intention in mind, but that he approaches the concept from a completely different (!) perspective. For Bourdieu all these names before him used the concept for a break with Kantian dualism (Hegel), and philosophy of consciousness (Husserl), or like Mauss for the “systematic functioning of the socialized body” (1990, p. 12). Thus, Bourdieu suggests that the key difference between his use of habitus and Mauss’ is that Mauss used the concept to break away from the idea of social agency and to appropriate the individual to society. This statement should be taken with caution. Despite the fact that the most controversial aspect of Durkheim sociology is that it suggests a definition of individuality fully absorbed by collective consciousness, and deprives the individual of the capacity to act and make decisions, at no time in his career did Mauss use the concept of collective consciousness, a recurrent theme in Durkheim’s sociology (Tarot, 2003, p. 20), nor did he ever define the individual as an *ersatz individu*, controlled directly by social consciousness. Instead, in many of his works, he preferred the term “agent,” derived from the verb *agir* (to act), indicating a nuanced understanding of individual action and autonomy.

Mauss was indeed an intuitive pioneer of his time. However, during his Descriptive Ethnology course at the Institute of Ethnology, he had to describe his observations on the use of the body in societies around the world under the title “Miscellaneous” because he could not find a more appropriate title.<sup>18</sup> For Bourdieu, the concept of habitus became a theoretical tool for unveiling and demystifying the mechanisms of reproduction of the relations of domination. Just as Mauss had revealed that what was thought to be “natural” was, in fact, “social,” Bourdieu articulated the mission of sociology was to eliminate the naturalizing effect that made forget the social conditions underlying individual and collective existence and historicizing the mechanisms that “also affect the thinking thought”, the social order that produced its own *sociodicy*. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Mauss consistently advised the students he was training to venture into the field with caution: “Don’t believe everything, don’t be

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18 “We can be certain that there are truths to be discovered: first because we know that we are ignorant, and second because we have a lively sense of the quantity of the facts. For many years in my course in descriptive ethnology, I have had to teach in the shadow of the disgrace and opprobrium of the ‘miscellaneous’ in a matter in ethnography this rubric ‘miscellaneous’ was truly heteroclitite.” (Mauss, 2016, p. 418)



surprised by everything, keep your distance” (Wileken, 2021, p. 33). Can one think of an heir who has absorbed and applied these warnings more than Bourdieu?

### Conclusion

Mauss once attempted to break free of the theoretical rigidity of Durkheimian sociology, to stretch it, to give the individual a breathing space within the Durkheimian imagination of society, without “turning his back on the studies of a school to which he was so attached.” Seeking a way out of schemes, rules, mathematical abstractions, and what he termed “discourses with capital letters”, Bourdieu succeeded in the mid-1970s in reorienting the attention of the French intellectual field from rules to strategy and practice, introducing concepts such as habitus, symbolic capital, the twofold truth of the gift, practical sense, and strategy, all of which trace their roots back to Mauss. Thus, a new approach emerged in French sociology, organized around a research center (*Centre de sociologie européenne*) and a journal (*Actes de recherche en sciences sociales*).

Bourdieu never directly expresses what he discovered in Mauss. In 1997, during the opening session of the colloquium “L’Héritage de Marcel Mauss” at the Collège de France, he employed an interesting method: rather than discussing Mauss in his own words, he opted to read selected passages from Mauss’ essays, occasionally providing brief commentary and at times letting the passages stand on their own (Bourdieu, 2004). Despite his initial reservations, he encouraged Marcel Fournier, Canadian sociologist who had completed his PhD under Bourdieu’s supervision, to write a biography of Marcel Mauss.<sup>19</sup> Fournier noted that Bourdieu’s main emphasis on Mauss revolved around the idea of “expectation”: *That is, in society we are all always in expectation of something, a countergift...*

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19 For more details: (Tunçbilek, Ş. S.; Founier, Marcel, 2002).

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