

M|A|U|S|S INTERNATIONAL • N°1
ANTI-UTILITARIAN INTERVENTIONS
IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

DIGITAL JOURNAL

“OPENING GIFT”

LE BORD
DE L'EAU

Mauss
International

“OPENING GIFT”



MAUSS International
Anti-Utilitarian Interventions in Social Sciences

Founding Director: Alain Caillé

Publication Director: Philippe Chanial

Editors-in-Chief: François Gauthier, Ilana F. Silber, Frédéric Vandenberghe

Editorial Advisory Board: Margaret Archer, Johann Arnason, Jeffrey Alexander, Christian Arnsperger, Luigino Bruni, Craig Calhoun, Elisabeth S. Clemens, Rebecca Coleswothy, Randall Collins, Catherine Colliot-Thélène, Raewyn Connel, Gerard Delanty, Pierpaolo Donati, François Dubet, Ezzine Abdelfattah, Nancy Fraser, Philip S. Gorski, Sari Hanafi, Michael Hudson, Eva Illouz, Zhe Ji, Hans Joas, Steve Keen, Farhad Khosrokar, David Le Breton, Gus Massiah, Edgar Morin, Jonathan Parry, Michael Puett, Olli Pyyhtinen, Jingdong Qu, Ann W. Rawls, Richard Sennett, Don Slater, James V. Spickard, Iddo Tavory, Peter Wagner, Mingming Wang, Björn Wittrock, Viviana Zelizer

Friends of the MAUSS: Frank Adloff, Mark Anspach, Rigas Arvanitis, Geneviève Azam, Yolande Benarrosh, Gérald Berthoud, Daniel Cefai, Genauto Carvalho de França Filho, Stéphane Dufoix, Jacques T. Godbout, Francesco Fistetti, Roberte Hamayon, Keith Hart, Marc Humbert, Ahmet Insel, Laurence Kauffman, Christian Laval, Jean-Louis Laville, Christian Lazzeri, Paulo Henrique Martins, Chantal Mouffé, Lucien Scubla, Jean-Michel Servet, François Vatin

In Memoriam: Mary Douglas, Michel Freitag, David Graeber, Marcel Hénaff, Albert O. Hirschmann, Elena Pulcini, Marshall Sahlins



La Revue du MAUSS : <https://www.editionsbdl.com/revue/mauss>

La Bibliothèque du MAUSS : <https://www.editionsbdl.com/product-tag/la-bibliotheque-du-mauss>

MAUSS International : <https://www.editionsbdl.com/revue/mauss-international>

Revue du MAUSS permanente : <https://www.journaldumauss.net/>

© LE BORD DE L'EAU 2021

www.editionsbdl.com

33310 Lormont

ISBN : 978-2-35687-834-2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRESENTATION

FIRST ISSUE OF THE *MAUSS INTERNATIONAL* • 5

- MOVING BEYOND: MISSION STATEMENT OF THE *MAUSS INTERNATIONAL*.....5
- PRESENTATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS19

OPENING GIFTS • 35

- GIVE IT AWAY! THE NEW MAUSSKETEERS35
David Graeber
- THE DISMAL SCIENCE.....42
Marshall Sahlins
- OUR GIFT PARADIGM49
Mary Douglas

LINEAGES OF THE GIFT • 52

- PREFACE TO THE CHINESE TRANSLATION OF *THE GIFT*.....52
Alain Caillé
- DIALOGICAL BRIDGES AND ANTI-UTILITARIAN ALLIANCES.....65
Ilana F. Silber
- GIVING CARE.....80
Elena Pulcini
- HEIDEGGER ON THE GIFT OF BEING: *DENKEN IST DANKEN*.....95
Stephan Fuchs

OF RATs, BIRDS, AND MAUSSES • 106

- ARE YOU READY TO EXTRACT YOURSELF FROM THE ECONOMY?..... 106
Bruno Latour
- WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE RAT'S? INTEREST, RATIONALITY
AND CULTURE IN AMERICAN SOCIOLOGY 115
Loïc J. D. Wacquant and Craig Jackson Calhoun
- ANTI-UTILITARIAN THEORIZING FROM PARSONS TO DURKHEIM
AND CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY TODAY..... 155
Jeffrey C. Alexander

- THE BIRD IN HAND RATIONAL CHOICE – THE DEFAULT MODE OF SOCIAL THEORIZING..... 160
Peter Wagner
- SELF, OBJECTS AND ACTION AS PRODUCTS OF RECIPROCITY AND COOPERATION IN CONSTITUTIVE PRACTICES..... 181
Anne Warfield Rawls
- THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER..... 201
David Le Breton

ANOTHER SOCIAL SCIENCE IS POSSIBLE • 215

- FOR ANOTHER WORLD HISTORY OF SOCIOLOGY..... 215
Stéphane Dufoix
- THE FATE OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES..... 227
Christian Laval
- CONNECTING SOCIOLOGY TO MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE POST-SECULARITY FRAMEWORK..... 243
Sari Hanafi

AN UNFINISHED DIALOGUE • 264

- MARCEL HÉNAFF, PHILOSOPHER AND ANTHROPOLOGIST 264
Francesco Fistetti
- MARCEL HÉNAFF AND THE HETEROGENEITY OF GIFT PRACTICES..... 273
Olli Pyyhtinen

PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY À LA FRANÇAISE • 281

- TOWARDS A RADICAL MODERATIONISM AND A MAUSSIAN ETHIC OF DISCUSSION..... 281
Alain Caillé

A LITERARY ACCOMPLICE • 291

- NOTE FROM THE UNDERGROUND..... 291
Fyodor Dostoïevski

PRESENTATION
FIRST ISSUE OF THE *MAUSS INTERNATIONAL*

MOVING BEYOND: MISSION STATEMENT
OF THE *MAUSS INTERNATIONAL*

For four decades now, the MAUSS (*Mouvement anti-utilitariste en sciences sociales*) has been at the heart of the debates in social sciences in France and in French-speaking countries. While this landmass of works has found resonance and relays in Latin countries such as Italy as well as across South America, it has barely percolated across the language and cultural barrier into English – and therefore international – scholarship. For those of us who do, within the MAUSS, publish in English, how often have we been obliged to disappoint interest in this perspective because of the unfortunate unavailability of core MAUSS texts? This is the aim of the *MAUSS International* journal: To bring MAUSS-branded scholarship to a truly international audience and thereby partake more forcefully in the important debates in social sciences today.

Greeted early on by scholars such as Mary Douglas, Albert O. Hirschman, Marshall Sahlins, and Annette Weiner, the MAUSS was founded in 1981 by Alain Caillé and collaborators to resist the growing encroachment of neo-classical economics and other utilitarian approaches in the social sciences. It is interesting how what is often called “French theory” continues to be at the heart of social sciences and philosophy today in English language scholarship. Yet what is intriguing from a French perspective is how this felicitous reception has excluded the critiques and debates that have occurred over the last decades within French scholarship, creating what are sometimes serious problems of interpretation and application of these theories. This continued reliance on heavyweights such as Foucault, Derrida, and Bourdieu is a sign that novel theoretical insights have failed (at least to some extent) to impose themselves within English language scholarship in the last decades. It also gives the impression that French language scholarship has dried up since these heydays and that nothing of similar or significant value has emerged since. This is not true.

The globalization of academia, meanwhile, has brought a diversity of national and regional traditions in contact with each other and has promoted certain issues as common concerns. This process is accelerated by the enmeshing of social realities as a result of these same globalizing trends. As the Covid-19 pandemic has shown, the world today is inextricably woven into a whole, to the extent that a pangolin or a bat in a market in inland China (or some other cause) has the potential to initiate a snowball effect that can reach remote areas of Africa or South America in a matter of weeks. In other words, many of the pressing issues of the day are shared ones, and we are better off if we address them from a plurality of communicating standpoints rather than in isolation.

The *MAUSS International* wants to act as a crucible for such transnational communicative processes and act as a cultural and intellectual broker for anti-utilitarian perspectives on both sides of the linguistic divide in order to better address today's important issues.

ANTI-UTILITARIAN? WHY AND HOW

What triggered the foundation of the MAUSS was a general sense that some kind of turn was occurring by which market economics and its categories were invading not only social sciences and humanities, but the whole of society. We know with hindsight that this intuition was right and that it has a name: the neoliberal revolution, by which the market displaced the state as preferred social and societal regulator. We also know how neoliberal principles and policies were spread and implemented more or less forcibly across the world, profoundly reshaping world politics and challenging many of the modern institutions, starting with the state and the ideas and ideals upon which it rested. The very unstable and shifting situation we are witnessing today is the result of this dismantling of a nation-state embedded world order.

Yet this shift is perhaps not sufficiently understood as having a counterpart within the social sciences. If the neoliberal turn can be broadly said to have occurred at the turn of the 1980s, it is around this time that system theories and structuralist approaches ceded the ground to agency-oriented approaches. While we oppose methodological individualism, we welcome

the micro-sociological revolution (phenomenology, ethnomethodology, pragmatism, actor-network theory, etc.) that brought back agency to the center. By dislocating the lonely individual, opening the monads to each other through perception, communication and empathy, the establishment of intersubjectivity constitutes the basis for detailed investigations of how actors actually coordinate their actions and cooperate to act together in their ordinary activities. In the spirit of American pragmatism, we conceive of action in concert not only as a “topic” of investigation, but also as a “resource” for the dynamic and democratic constitution of communities. Indeed, increasing solidarity at the macro-levels of society is not only an end; it is also something that already emerges at the micro-level and that is brought about through myriad of other-directed ordinary actions. It should also be noted that in all cases human interactions are always already mediated by symbolical representations of their unity and difference. The way to overcome the one-sidedness of structuralism without relinquishing its insistence on the world-disclosing and world-making function of symbolical forms which constitute and structure social practices from within, is to join symbolic representations (culture structures) and social practices in the conceptual and empirical investigation of variegated forms of life.

What we need is a new alliance between anti-utilitarian strands in political and moral philosophy, social and cultural anthropology, and the various micro-sociologies that refuse to follow the individual-focused and materialist-oriented approaches which reduce the human being to a living logarithm and their actions to instrumental-strategic behaviors. While the idea of interest is acknowledged, the MAUSS has always refused and contested the hegemony of the interest-paradigm that finds its roots in liberal political economy (classical and neoclassical) and utilitarianism. It is this latter term, “utilitarianism,” that was used as a convenient signifier against which to gather the resistance.

This requires some explanation.

In France, terms like liberal, liberalism, and utilitarianism have a significantly different meaning than in the United States or Britain. The connotation is immediately negative, and qualifies both an excessive worship of capitalism and adhesion to right-wing politics. Things are wildly different in the English-speaking world, where liberalism qualifies the progressive left wing of politics, with an emphasis on political liberalism over economic liberalism. Similarly, utilitarianism is understood in France as a loose ideology that turns the “icy waters of utilitarian calculus,” to borrow Marx’s scathing formula, into an overarching principle. In the United States and Britain, meanwhile, utilitarianism principally evokes the

philosophical doctrine inaugurated by Jeremy Bentham. It can also be charged with very positive connotations, including to the left of the political spectrum, as it is often heralded as having provided one of the bases for the welfare state and redistribution policies. Indeed, as John Rawls's theory of "justice as fairness" has amply argued, the "greatest happiness of the greatest number" is a maxim that can be reconciled with the altruistic imperatives of Christian morality. The success of this maxim also explains why liberal philosophers in the twentieth century focused with such intent on the means to protect minorities from the potential excesses of this search for maximization of the pleasures (understood as happiness) of the majority.

Grounded in the French tradition of reception of the term "utilitarian" as it appears in the MAUSS' acronym is therefore meant to encompass a wider concept than the delimited space of Bentham's philosophy. It is best understood *lato sensu* rather than *stricto sensu*. It also challenges the conception of humankind behind the philosophy of utilitarianism, its philosophical anthropology in other words, which Bentham took from a tradition that stretches back to the Physiocrats and thinkers like Bernard de Mandeville, d'Holbach, and Helvetius: the idea that human beings are first and foremost self-interested, all other motivations being negligible, and maximizing with respect to their profits and losses, pleasures and pains, and so on.

The 1970s were pivotal as concerns the way in which this anthropology became widespread and even dominant in the social sciences, as has been shown convincingly by Foucault in his lectures at the Collège de France in 1978-1979. A major actor in this process was Gary Becker, who extended liberal economic theory (recast as Rational Choice theory) to non-economic phenomena. The neoliberal revolution in the "real world" was therefore accompanied by an epistemological and methodological revolution in the division of intellectual labor. Neoclassical economists like Vilfredo Pareto were concerned about legitimizing the figure of *homo economicus* in economic affairs only, while recognizing that religion had to be understood with respect to a *homo religiosus*, morality with respect to a *homo ethicus*, and so on. In contrast, the neoliberal revolution consisted in the extension of the application of the neoclassical model and its utilitarian anthropology to the whole of human phenomena. What is remarkable is how easily social sciences, but also moral and political philosophy, conceded this putsch and internalized some of its assumptions. One need only recall how Pierre Bourdieu named his sociological theory a "general economy of practice," or how Rawls battled with the apparent self-evidence of utilitarianism in his

Theory of Justice to appreciate the extent to which economic terminology and the maximizing *homo economicus* penetrated the intellectual arena.

Today, liberal economic theory and its multiple declensions continue to have an incomparable pull over social sciences. Its influence on political sciences is especially strong. Sociology resists, but not as much as anthropology. One reason for this is the model's peculiar synergy with our neoliberal epoch. Another is its apparent, persuasive simplicity, how it conveniently pertains to translate qualities into quantities, and its totalizing pretensions. Aren't individuals and societies self-interested? While every aspect of this inductive model has been invalidated (or at least severely critiqued), it continues to provide the most powerful and totalizing theory available. New developments in experimental economics tend to bring an empirical gloss which, even when the results contradict the model's predictions as they often do, legitimize more than they delegitimize it in the end.

It is to the critique of the utilitarian framework and to the proposal of an alternative, both theoretical and normative, which the MAUSS has been devoted to, as will be the *MAUSS International* in its wake.

Yet let it be stressed from the start that anti-utilitarianism as we understand it does not mean the negation of self-interested motives as much as the refusal of a reduction to self-interest, coupled with the affirmation of a more complete and complex set of motives for human action. It means that social sciences cannot do without considering the irreducibility of what thinkers have variously called empathy, sympathy, altruism, interest-for-others, and kindred moral sentiments. Such is the meaning of anti-utilitarian, and why the MAUSS is not "an-utilitarian." We do not oppose altruism to egoism, but think them through and together to develop a much more complex and more adequate vision of human beings and societies.

A SOURCE AND AN HOMAGE: MARCEL MAUSS' *ESSAY ON THE GIFT*

So much for the acronym and the anti-utilitarianism at its core. Everyone will have noticed the reference to Emile Durkheim's nephew and inter-war leader of the French school of sociology, Marcel Mauss. Mauss is a paradoxical figure, famous yet remarkably unknown, and, arguably, misunderstood. In common renderings of the history of the social sciences, his name is associated to his uncle and his own works tend to slide into the shadows. Mauss

himself is responsible at least in part for this strange fate, as he seems to have put the Durkheimian collective enterprise before himself, and he did not tend, as Durkheim did, to systematize his own findings and intuitions. Mauss is at times elusive to read, and the most important of his propositions need to be exhumed. He also left some of his most important works, first and foremost his thesis on prayer and his text on the nation, unfinished; and never took the time to explain his trajectory, shed light on his possible turns (for example from religion to the gift), and spell things out. One can only dream of Mauss writing an equivalent to Max Weber's "Intermediate Considerations."

Why Mauss, then? In much the same way that the MAUSS was founded on what is *in fine* an intuition about the necessity of anti-utilitarianism, it was also founded on the intuition that Mauss' *Essay on the Gift* was the most potent source for its articulation. Indeed, Mauss forcefully wrote in the conclusion of the *Essay* that the very notion of interest was recent and that "*homo economicus* is not behind us," in the folds of history and the motor of human societies, but "before us," in the workings of modernity. With the hindsight that is ours today, we can affirm the fecundity and rightness of this intuition and argue that this text might just be one of the most important texts of the twentieth century in existence, with far-reaching repercussions across the human and social sciences. We hope the reader will be lenient and grant us some time before holding us accountable for such a provocative and ambitious statement. But let us also double down: the *Essay on the Gift* (and more broadly Mauss' work reread in its light) has the potential not only to provide the basis for a radical critique of utilitarianism, but also to shed new light on major social scientific and philosophical questions. We have chosen Mauss as a figurehead and his seminal essay as a guide, but want to encourage dialogue with our colleagues who may have chosen other figures and other texts to guide them – be it Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, Marx's *Parisian Manuscripts*, Husserl's *Krisis*, Polanyi's *Great Transformation* or Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*. And so many more.

The legacy of Mauss' *Essay on the Gift* is a contested one. For decades, its interpretation was defined by Claude Lévi-Strauss' introduction to the posthumous collection of Mauss' texts that was published in 1950 under the title *Sociologie et anthropologie* by the Presses universitaires de France. In this introduction, which became known as the foundational text of structuralism, Lévi-Strauss critiqued Mauss' resort to the indigenous theory of the spirit of the gift, the *hau*, and levelled the gift to the underlying structure of exchange. This interpretation

lives on in a set of influential variations. Another influential reading is that of Derrida and phenomenologist Jean-Luc Marion, who understand the “true gift” as being entirely disinterested and free, and therefore never achieved, a “figure of the impossible.” The interpretation of the gift by MAUSS-affiliated authors has tended to diverge from these understandings, stressing the gift’s irreducibility to exchange and obligation on the one hand, and its idealist fixation on pure disinterest and liberty on the other. On the contrary, the core of Mauss’ discovery and the matrix of the gift’s heuristic potential, we argue, lie in the complex interplay between these polarities as well as the indeterminacy and diachronicity which the triple obligation of giving, receiving, and returning contains.

Thanks to its attention to reciprocity, Mauss’ theory of action can easily be extended into a theory of society and a theory of social action with diagnostic and critical intent. The archeological excavation of the gift as a fundamental of social life establishes that capitalism, markets, and commodity exchange are not the only way to allocate resources and personnel. Karl Polanyi, another important figure in the history of the MAUSS, follows Marcel Mauss when he argues that the gift, the market, and the state are complementary principles of behavior. In *The Great Transformation*, he shows that for most of human history, markets were “embedded” in society. It is only with the advent of modern capitalism that markets became embedding, subjecting all spheres of life to utilitarian dictates and transforming the market economy into a market society. At the MAUSS, we have always allied Mauss’ associative socialism with Polanyi’s civic humanism in a systematic defense of a plural economy that would complement the compromise between markets and the state with a consequent call to strengthen the social economy, civic associations, and local communities.

This has gone pair in pair with the elaboration of a distinctive theoretical platform we now term the “gift paradigm” – offering novel interpretations of many areas and levels of social life via the theoretical lens of gift dynamics. While not everybody need be convinced by the insights of this specific anti-utilitarian paradigm and its many possible extensions, we do think that anti-utilitarianism more generally understood provides an ample and open platform for discussion and debate about the past, the present, and the future of the social sciences. Indeed, Mauss is not an isolated exception. His works give voice to a profoundly anti-utilitarian strand that has arguably been central to the most prominent thinkers in classical social sciences, such as de Tocqueville, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, or Simmel. This anti-utilitarian thrust, moreover, is no less vibrant in a range of major currents in contemporary

social thought, like critical theory, critical realism, pragmatism, actor-network theory, discourse theory, cultural studies, etc. By bringing these rival developments into dialogue with Maussian perspectives, the MAUSS aims to further a powerful array of intellectual resources to better face today's manifold challenges while also transcending specialization and resisting unilateral deconstructionism. In perfect alignment with the ethics of the agonistic gift, dialogue is the best way to transform adversaries into allies and allies into friends in the pursuit of a common objective.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MAUSS

The life of the MAUSS can be roughly divided into three phases of development:

- **The first decade** (1981-1993) was devoted to defining what was actually meant by anti-utilitarianism (and therefore utilitarianism) and developing a critique of Rational Choice approaches, as well as critiques of neoclassical influences in the works of prominent authors such as Raymond Boudon, Michel Crozier, Pierre Bourdieu, etc.
- **The second period** (1993-2003) was largely devoted to developing the concept of the gift and applying it to contemporary societies, showing how, far from disappearing in modernity, gift dynamics are still a vital force in contemporary societies. Contributions in this period were part of a more general attempt at devising a comprehensive, general, and empirically grounded theoretical alternative – encapsulated by the name “Gift Paradigm” – capable of counteracting the pervasive impact of utilitarian orientations in mainstream social sciences.
- **The third period** (2003-to date) has expanded the gift into a general social action theory while applying the Gift Paradigm to the study of crucial issues such as recognition, care, sympathy, identity, politics, religion, nature, gender, social class, work, organizations, economic policies, urbanity, violence, and so much more.

Today, the priority is to make these perspectives available to a much wider, global audience, and to have them taken up and developed in new directions, as the challenges we face, in the world at large as well as in the social sciences and humanities, all call for bold new ways to look at and understand the world.

A UNIQUE FORMAT

The publications of the MAUSS in French have been centered around a journal, a book collection (1993), and an online open-access forum and journal (<https://www.journaldumauss.net/>). The *Bulletin du MAUSS* started out in 1981 as an informally distributed hand-bound leaflet. It became more professionalized when taken over by the publisher La Découverte under the title *Revue du MAUSS trimestrielle* in 1988 and then *Revue du MAUSS semestrielle* from 1993 on. The current issue (n° 57) of this series as well as the book collection are now published by Les éditions Le Bord de l'Eau. Contrary to the vast majority of scientific publications in France, the *Revue du MAUSS* is independent of any institutional attachment, a characteristic that has helped preserve it from surrounding pressures towards specialization. The ongoing coronavirus crisis has resulted in the closing of some of France's major academic journals devoted to a general outlook, such as *Le Débat* and *Les Temps modernes*, leaving the *Revue du MAUSS* to be one of the very few major interdisciplinary journals remaining (with *Esprit*). One reason for this longevity and success has been a unique editorial line that combines the exigencies of peer review with an openness to various formats of texts, from longer or shorter in-depth articles to interviews, rarity reprints, translations, excerpts, classics, opinions, reviews, debates, and even prose and poetry. The *Revue du MAUSS* is probably the only outlet to have published its critiques and detractors, favoring the quality and vibrancy of debate over becoming a lulling intellectual chapel.

The *MAUSS International* wishes to pursue this tradition and make it a unique forum in the English language. In order to ensure the highest quality and be attractive for young scholars who pursue career hopes in the cutthroat world of academia today, the *MAUSS International* is peer-reviewed, yet we refuse to become yet another soulless collection of articles serving the sole purpose of career advancement. It is regrettable that peer review processes too often have the effect of stifling unorthodox and novel ideas and methods that confront the *doxa* (namely the utilitarian one). Our answer is to favor a strong editorial line and to

entrust most of the review process to our advisory board, the members of which are invited to invest themselves in the production process. The type of texts published will be as varied as in the *Revue du MAUSS*, and will include a fair portion of commissioned contributions as well as translations from the French. We are also open to publishing texts in other languages in order to stress our international ambitions and recognize the invaluable contribution of diverse linguistic traditions to our own enlightenment. Finally, our ambition is to publish one issue per year, yet this frequency may well accelerate if circumstances allow.

Freedom, originality, integrity, relevance, and a dose of irreverence in our anti-utilitarian mission are to guide us first and foremost.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

As the French corpus of the MAUSS has made clear, an anti-utilitarian social science does not discount self-interest as a motive for social action. Rather, it means resisting the sweeping reduction of social action to self-interest or domination, instead recognizing a plurality of motives and the irreducible complexity of human interactions, thus adopting a resolutely plural, interdisciplinary, and multidimensional approach to social life.

The *MAUSS International* invites contributions in the following, non-exclusive areas:

Research on the gift *stricto sensu* in all social domains

Mauss' *Essay on the Gift* is far from having exhausted possible interpretations, and its legacy remains hotly debated, including, so we hope, in our pages. While the existing studies of the gift and gifts can already fill a number of library shelves, we are very far from saturation. We therefore hope to become a relay for the publication of works focused on the gift and gift-giving in all human societies, past and present, modern and traditional. We thus aim to challenge the disciplinary divide between sociology (the study of "us") and anthropology (the study of "them") that has been more costly than is commonly appreciated, renewing with Mauss' refusal to separate them. The rapid changes in a country like China, for instance, present a fantastic laboratory for the study of the gift. Yet the gift in literature or in antique philosophy are also areas in which advances

can be expected to be made. The same can be said about the gift in politics, in the arts, in the wider culture, in migration, in economics, in religion, in ethics, and so on and so forth.

Research that develops, complements or critiques the *Gift Paradigm*

Beyond the gift *stricto sensu*, it is possible to draw from its theory to recast and reinterpret social sciences' most enduring and most pressing issues. We think of course of the age-old discussions about agency and structure, or the debate opposing methodological individualism to holistic approaches. But since then the social sciences have moved on to more empirical issues, while philosophy has become at once more speculative and more worldly. At the edge of the social sciences, the "Studies" have emerged as serious contenders that contest the scientific establishment, and deconstruct the main concepts of the social sciences. As questions of ontology, power, and identity have come to the fore, the discourses of the old and the new lefts have been outflanked by a resurgent radicalism of differently situated minorities. Post-structuralism has not only introduced a new language and a new sensibility. By deconstructing inherited oppositions, it has also dislocated old problems, advanced new positions, and opened up new territories for reflection. Its influence is stronger in anthropology than in sociology. Actor-network theory is perhaps the best example of what creative de- and reconstructions of the conceptual apparatus can accomplish. When the human and other species are confronted with the existential questions raised by the Anthropocene, the social and human sciences also reach their limits.

As a means by which both subjectivities and social bond is created, the gift opens up new avenues to approach these issues. The gift is also a constitutively *relational* framework, which can be invested in such a way as to transgress or transcend symmetrical reifications of the individual or the social structure, as well as a way to think the co-occurrence of liberty and obligation. Is not one of today's main challenge still the articulation of actor agency and social determinations? Work in this perspective is inchoative still, and the possibilities seemingly endless as a means to challenge the domination of utilitarianism.

Research that extends anti-utilitarian approaches to a broad range of social facts and issues

In the French publications of the MAUSS, the gift has proven to be a heuristic port of entry into contemporary discussions on care, sympathy, recognition, voluntary associations, the third sector and basic income policy. The gift can be similarly summoned into the study of social work, redistribution, minorities and migrant integration, organizations and institutions, welfare, health, international relations, religion and spiritualities, environmentalism and ecology, feminism, aesthetics, economic theory, the university, politics, democracy, identity issues, populism, authoritarianism, multiculturalism, postcolonialism, intersectionality, gender, postcolonialism, “race,” popular culture, the arts, etc. Similarly, what is fieldwork if not the immersion into complex and potentially reversible webs of gift relations and the construction of trust? The claim of the MAUSS is that a gift-derived and other anti-utilitarian approaches can not only be readily mobilized on virtually every social scientific and philosophical issue, but also reformulated and reclaimed.

Research that contributes to the project of an anti-utilitarian general social science

For close to a century now social sciences have been diffracting into an ever-complex spectrum of sub- and sub-sub-disciplines, moving ever-further from the original project (dream?) of a general “social science” (in the singular). A vast consensus exists today that such an enterprise as a general and unified social science is impossible and undesirable. We oppose this pessimistic diagnosis as we oppose utilitarianism on the grounds of their false pragmatism and false realism. For neoclassical economic theory and its multiple avatars, from Rational Choice to cultural capital, do in fact act as *the* general social science today, and we believe it is urgent to move beyond deconstruction to propose a viable alternative. We also believe that the lineaments of such an alternative are compounded in the gift, understood in the wake of Mauss as the matrix of social bonds and one of the “bedrocks” of the “eternal ethic.”

Such a conception is coherent with Mauss’ view that the gift is best understood as the ideal-typical “total social fact,” that it is a complex of all social dimensions: political, religious, judicial, economic, aesthetic, “morphological,” etc. In Mauss’ conclusion to the *Essay on the Gift*, he derives a method

for a social scientific analysis from this conception, according to which the “decomposition” and “dissection” of social facts into their various dimensions must be completed by a return to the social whole and attention to transversal logics which structure the various differentiated social spheres. Social scientific enquiry, for Mauss, had to aim towards generalization. It needs to be in continuous dialogue with other disciplines and provide a general framework for discussion and debate. It is indeed remarkable, in our experience, that the same debates tend to structure a vast array of areas of study (such as the opposition between agency and structure, or social reproduction versus innovation, change, and contestation). Similarly, the current valuation of deconstruction is ill-advised when it believes that it does not itself peddle a set of values and vested interests. Hyper-relativism, for instance, opens a freeway for economic theory, which does not bother itself much with introspection, epistemology, and critical deconstruction. We do not underestimate the challenges that post-structuralism, deconstruction and the Studies raise for social theory. We think, however, that it is possible to take the challenges seriously while reorienting social theory from deconstruction to reconstruction.

Research that focuses on or takes into account the intrinsic normative dimensions of social scientific enquiry

Talking about a Gift Paradigm and a general social science is a way to oppose unilateral deconstructionism and venture into the field of proposition – a proposition *en connaissance de cause*: knowingly and reflectively. Mauss’ *Essay on the Gift* sketches an alternative to the mainstream (and in our appreciation misleading) interpretation of Max Weber’s axiological neutrality as strict separation between science and the arena of values. As Mauss was both a scientist and politically involved (like Weber...), science is not so much about objectivity as a relentless – yet never achieved – quest for the latter. Today, new debates emerge which oppose supposedly “objective” science to “militant” enterprises within academia, from the controversies around *woke-ism* in the United States and *islamo-gauchisme* in France, reviving in new forms twentieth-century debates between neo-positivism and hermeneutics. An investment in these debates from the perspective of the gift or otherwise is as relevant as it is timely.

**Research that shows ramifications, resonances,
and complementariness between classical sociology,
moral and political philosophy, and anthropology**

As already mentioned, Mauss was not the only author among the classics to overtly oppose economics-derived approaches, and certainly not the only one to have elaborated anti-utilitarian alternatives. This opens a large area of research into the ramifications, resonances, divergences, and possible complementariness between not only sociology's founding authors, but also anthropology as well as moral and political philosophy more widely. We are only too aware that the disciplines come with a conceptual heritage that is contestable and contested. Our focus on reciprocity and kindred notions allows for ample discussion inside, outside, between and beyond the disciplines.

For not only is the gift, understood in the wake of Mauss as the "bedrock of the eternal ethic," a heuristic entry into issues of normativity *within* social sciences, it is also a potential entry into the production, reproduction, and contestation of norms, normativity, and ideology within human societies. This in turn opens significant avenues for comparative and critical works crossing social sciences with more philosophical approaches, from morality to education and social aesthetics. Once again, there appears to be much to be gained in the revisiting of some of the important questions raised by classical works.

Long live the MAUSS!

PRESENTATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Opening gift. Under what better auspices could we proceed to launch this first issue of the *MAUSS International*? The gift is unparalleled as a social scientific concept because of its versatility, reversibility, and plasticity. First of all, these opening gifts have us, the editors, on the receiving end, because of the privilege we have to have been given these contributions, which we feel constitute a perfect and timely statement of our aims and ambitions. Opening gift, then, also for our readers, sympathizers, and the social sciences in general. As Marcel Mauss showed almost a century ago, the universal tripartite structure of the gift as giving, accepting, and giving back, is a continuous cycle often without an assignable beginning, middle, nor end. Is there really, ever, a truly “opening gift?” Probably not. Mauss’ theory of the gift allows us to sidestep the insoluble question of “Origins” by showing how human beings and human societies are always actors in a cycle that has already started and which already has a direction. We therefore start in the middle – *in medias res*.

The gift creates obligations, and thereby a social bond. This is certainly what we hope for with our readers. Yet the obligation contained in the gift is not a “freedom killer” that paralyzes and obliterates subjectivity: it is an obligation to exercise one’s agency and freedom by choosing to give or not to give in response, and to give this or that, more or less, when and where.

This is how we feel about the texts included here, some of which we received long ago, others yesterday. As recipients, we feel obliged and filled with recognition *vis-à-vis* their authors. We feel obliged to give back, and hence to keep the gift moving, as Lewis Hyde brilliantly exposed. As donors, we wish to be recognized for our wits and liberality, yet we also wish to oblige our epistemic community, and even beyond. Oblige our readers and social sciences to ask anew some of the fundamental questions that have been buried under the ashes of hyper-specialization, neo-positivism, and misplaced “axiological neutrality.” Half a century or so after the beginning of the neoliberal revolution, by which the illusions of the free Market replaced the soteriological investments placed in the Nation-State, we wish to further question the accompanying and

corollary rise to dominance of utilitarian and economic epistemologies and their vagaries.

Our general aims as well as our history are explained in the Mission Statement. By “anti-utilitarian”, we first and foremost mean the resistance to and critique of the reduction of human motivations to self-interest and strategy, and social relations to power acquisition and domination. It also means renewing, unearthing, exploring, and proposing alternatives that respect the complexities and layered constituency of what Mauss called the “Total Human Being” (*l’homme total*). This venture includes many other sources than Mauss, or even the Durkheimians, but the former serves as a platform for discussion, a base camp from which to lead our expeditions and seek contact and dialogue with other epistemological tribes.

The MAUSS has existed for forty years. Four decades of publications in French, including the flagship *Revue du MAUSS*. Helped by linguistic proximity, the MAUSSian outlook has mostly rippled out to Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese-speaking readerships. Our truly international advisory board shows how the MAUSS has become known within wider circles, although probably in reputation more than substance. This issue therefore opens a new era for us, one in which we ambition to become interlocutors for a truly international audience, through the new lingua franca that is English.

INDEBTED WE STAND

The last year and some has been difficult to say the least, with the global COVID-19 pandemic as well as a few irreparable losses amongst our friends. One of the dearly departed, one who will be particularly missed, is *David Graeber*, who left us in 2020 at the young age of 59. David is well known as both an eclectic touch-all, an anthropologist, a prodigy, and an anarchist who always blended – with brilliance – academic thinking with political activism, namely through his role in the alter-globalization and Occupy movements. Many at the MAUSS have met David, both personally, intellectually, and politically on various occasions, for different reasons, but all hold him in high

esteem. We can only weep at the thought of all the books, ideas, and initiatives his premature death has deprived us of.

Graeber was among the few on the other side of the Channel and the Atlantic who took notice of the MAUSS, and actively engaged with it. We reproduce here as our first contribution a fitting text published in 2001 in which he introduces English readers to some of the fundamentals of the MAUSS, and more particularly to its critique of liberal political economy and its utilitarian avatars in the social sciences. Readers familiar with Graeber's works will recognize some of the arguments and style one finds in his 2011 book *Debt. The First 5'000 Years*, undoubtedly a landmark. His discussion investigates some of the most difficult questions of our time, some of which can find new insights from Mauss and the MAUSS: is it imaginable, in modern societies, to get rid of the market altogether? Probably not, according to Mauss, but it is possible to do away with a "market ethos" in order to make place in our constitutions for gifts that are collapsible neither on vested self-interests nor sacrificial disinterest. With Polanyi, we can also envisage a plural economy which includes the social and solidarity economy as one of its pillars. This was and still is one of the main arguments we have been voicing at the MAUSS.

Another tragic loss is that of *Marshall Sahlins*, former supervisor, close friend, and co-author of Graeber, who also relentlessly stressed anti-utilitarian principles in his multi-faceted and incomparably rich anthropology. The relationship between Sahlins and the MAUSS was not as long-standing as one would expect (on either side), yet it was sincere and heartfelt. Sahlins had just published the English translation of a small book by Alain Caillé on the basics of the MAUSS' anti-utilitarian social theory in his collection.¹ At the venerable age of 90, he was actively working on a three-volume project entitled *The Enchanted Universe: An Anthropology of Most of Humanity*, whose ambition was nothing less than the "revolutionizing of an obsolete anthropology." The first of these volumes, entitled *The New Science of the Enchanted Universe*, is to appear at Princeton University Press in 2022, and the two other volumes were to busy themselves with studies of *Enchanted Economics* and *Cosmic Politics*, respectively. The text published here, "The Dismal Science", is the last text completed by Sahlins before his death, on

¹ Alain Caillé (2020), *The Gift Paradigm. A short Introduction to the Anti-Utilitarian Movement in the Social Sciences*, Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

April 5th, 2021. ¹ It was to form part of the introduction to the second volume and captures a radical critique of economic theory that stresses its metaphysical constitution and methodological shortcomings, issues for which a well-constituted anthropology can provide a more fruitful and empirically sounder alternative.

Sahlins' critique adds to that contained in his classic *Stone Age Economics*, yet in a way it only re-actualizes the critiques formulated by Mauss and the Durkheimian school. Critiques which have been ritually repeated since with manifold variegations, from both within (Keynes, Granovetter, Keen, Hudson) and outside economic's "orthodox" clubhouse (institutional economics, economics of convention, sociology and anthropology of economics, Cultural Studies, etc.). As Durkheim's collaborator François Simiand complained over a century ago, "how can you fight ideology with facts?" How is it possible, indeed, that all of these critiques of liberal economic theory end up like water off a duck's back? The answer, suggests Sahlins – as did Simiand and Mauss –, has to do with their power of enchantment. The basic assumptions of the neoclassical model are not as much the building blocks of a scientific theory as they are the elements that make up the powerful mythology on which our market-based societies are built. They are not analyses of something that exists (and even less so "naturally"); rather, they are performative propositions that are socially instituted and produce an economic "reality."

Moving away from frontal critiques of economic theory, *Mary Douglas'* intervention draws our attention to what should be the next step: proposing an alternative social theory. The text published here is the content of an exchange between Douglas and Alain Caillé in 2006 in which she confides identifying with his project of a unified anti-utilitarian social scientific theory while drawing attention to the perils of overdoing it (that is, of versing into a form of imperialism) as well as to the importance of the agonistic element in Mauss' gift. By any measure, though, it is obvious that Douglas' work constitutes an essential piece of a bigger puzzle that still needs to be constructed, namely, as she suggests, in discussion with 'unorthodox' economic currents derived from Keynesianism.

¹ Marshall was supposed to write a short text on anti-utilitarianism for this issue. We warmly thank his son Peter for having proposed us this text, his last. Talk about being indebted...

LINEAGES OF THE GIFT

This first issue of the *MAUSS International* could not exist without highlighting some key reflections on Mauss' gift. The contributions in this section include translations of French publications as well as new material. This mix is a good sample of what we aim to do with this journal by making French works and French-writing authors available in English, alongside new material by English-writing authors.

We open this section with *Alain Caillé's* preface to the Chinese translation of Mauss' *Essay on the Gift* by our friend Zhi Je.¹ Here, Caillé makes his case that the *Essay* is the most important text in the history of the social sciences. This is of course a perilous statement that is bound to attract skepticism and even dissent, yet it is this conviction that has animated his reflections and works over the course of the last decades. This preface constitutes an excellent entry into Caillé's work and his very clear and systematic way of constructing his arguments and syntheses. Here, the author sketches Mauss' life, the *Essay's* structure, as well as the list and critique of the canonical interpretations of the gift by Lévi-Strauss for instance, before insisting on the possibility of deriving a general social theory from the triple obligation of the gift – a project to which he and others have devoted a significant part of their intellectual careers.

In the following contribution, *Ilana Silber* argues for a partial de-connection from the utilitarian/anti-utilitarian divide in favor of ecumenical endeavors in the latter camp. She proceeds to bring two French sociological currents into a fruitful dialogical relation, namely the “sociology of critique and justification” heralded by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot and the MAUSSian approach. What is more anti-utilitarian, can we ask, than Silber's endorsement of a “slow” and “complexifying” approach to dialogue, especially when this is capped by a serious desire and attempt at synthesis? One of the most important connections between these theoretical approaches is the fact that they do not deny the existence of “utilitarian orientations.” Rather, they integrate them within a more complex

1 莫斯, « 礼物: 古式社会中交换的形式与理由 » (Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*), traduit du français en chinois par Zhe Ji, Shanghai : Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2002 ; nouvelle édition, Pékin : Shangwu yinshuguan, 2016, avec une préface d'Alain Caillé (p. 2-14) et une introduction de Florence Weber (p. 137-175).

set of motivations and embed them in their supporting “cultural structures” and “worlds of meaning” – while also welcoming multidimensional theorizing and a conception of social interaction as ever rife with plurality and uncertainty as well as solidarity and conflict. The battle against utilitarianism, which has the advantage of its simplistic and would-be commonsensical “neatness”, can only be won if competing alternatives strive to unite their forces rather than by diffracting into as many autistic and self-serving chapels.

Another great loss over the last months has been that of *Elena Pulcini*, social philosopher at the University of Florence and long-standing friend and collaborator of the MAUSS. Elena has been a pioneer in the translation of a MAUSSian perspective on issues related to gender, equality, and care. She deserves our highest honors, and we are grateful to help disseminate the work she shared with us. The following is one of her most stimulating and essential texts, in which she concisely and powerfully brings together gift theory and care in a way that contributes to some of the current debates in which the limits of the construction and deconstruction of gender act as a key variable and a dividing line. The text starts by the stereotypical association of care with women before panning out to reflect on feminine difference and insisting that care theory, such as that of Gilligan, is a way to think subjectivity as a relational process. She writes that “care, like the gift, simultaneously involves autonomy and dependency, freedom and vulnerability.” Yet recognizing female difference must be accompanied by the expansion of care to include the masculine subject and the acknowledgments of its public and even global dimensions. Understood in this way, care and gift theory can produce a dialogue that invigorates and renews theories of emancipation beyond the epistemic couple opposing the individual to the collective.

Anthropologist and sociologist *David Le Breton* pioneered the social scientific study of the body in France in the late 1980s with an approach inspired by Mauss, Bataille, Caillois, and symbolic interactionism. Here, he takes us with him on a reflection about laughter and its social eroticism: “Sharing a moment of hilarity, he writes, is akin to sharing a moment of intimacy by uniting bodies in the same discreet break with more refined ways of being.” Laughter is about letting go, transgressing, and thereby shedding social norms and expectations of a return for a moment of communion. While opening the floodgates of spontaneity and generosity, the gift of laughter is also traversed by obligations and

participation in a group's normativity and expected conduct, thereby showing the ambiguities of the gift and the complex mechanisms of sociality.

Is there such a thing as a “pure gift?” By pure, what springs up to mind is an entirely graceful and disinterested gift, unsullied by the self-interest so dear to utilitarians. From the purity of the gift to the “real gift”, there is a line that many authors have crossed, like Derrida and Bourdieu, who conclude that the gift, in essence, is impossible. Theologians would perhaps reply that only God can author true gifts, and that we, mortals, can't do better than to die trying. Mauss' conception of the gift, however, steers clear from such absolutism. The “archaic” gift, based on Boas and Malinowski's works among many others, is *mediocre*: “the gift is both self-interested and disinterested, and both free and obligated” Mauss tells us in the opening lines of the *Essay*. Or so is our reading. Yet, while Durkheim's sociology projected to use new methods to interrogate anew philosophy's millennial questions, it is pertinent to revert back and reconsider some of philosophy's answers to the question of donation – the “pure” moment of giving.

This is what *Stephen Fuchs* invites us to do with “Heidegger and the Gift of Being.” According to the author, the German philosopher's attempt to refocus philosophy on the question of Being is intended as neither the refutation nor the revision of metaphysics, but as the attempt to “seek a path out of metaphysics.” We should not be surprised if the language of the gift comes to the rescue in such a project. To the question “What is Being?”, Heidegger answers that there can be no cause and that Being simply is – it is given: “*Es gibt Sein.*” Being is “*Gegenbenheit*”: The fact of being given. “Heidegger thinks ontological truth not as the fixed and established property of matters of fact, but as a revealing, an unearthing, an opening, a dis-closure.” With this text on the phenomenology of donation, an intellectual line connects Heidegger to Merleau-Ponty and Derrida, but also to Claude Lefort and Marcel Hénaff, to whom we return below.

From the banality of laughter to the depths of Being, these contributions shed light on the gift's powerful heuristics, and illuminate Mauss' intuition that the gift is “the bedrock” of human societies.

OF RATs, BIRDS, AND MAUSSES

From these contributions on the gift *stricto sensu*, we move to the epistemological heart of social theory. We start out with a remarkable 1989 text by *Loïc Wacquant* and *Craig Calhoun* which was heretofore published only in French in the *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, a journal founded by Pierre Bourdieu. The authors, who have become some of the leading figures in the social sciences, start by evoking a “recent exchange in the *American Journal of Sociology* between the neoclassical economics-inspired sociologist James S. Coleman on the one hand, and the historian-sociologist William H. Sewell, Jr., influenced by Geertz’s cultural anthropology, on the other”, which they take as an occasion to discuss the rise of Rational Action Theory (or RAT) and historical and cultural sociology. What is amazing in retrospect is how this richly documented and referenced text remains pertinent today, as if the field of social sciences was still traversed by the same currents as then. Certainly, the rise of RAT and other neoclassic economics-derived approaches has not waned since back then. For the pessimists, the authors remind us that a strong anti-utilitarian resistance has met utilitarian approaches’ conquering thrust then as now. For the optimists, they take us through a thorough analysis of the RAT’s shortcomings, yet historical hindsight shows that these critiques have had virtually no effect on the careers of either Coleman or others, who chose to simply avoid answering the difficult questions, starting with the empirical validity of the model’s basic assumptions. Let us say it clearly: RAT authors have never addressed the core of these critiques; in fact, they cannot do so without being obliged to drill a hole in their own vessel and abandon ship. We deem Wacquant and Calhoun’s substantial piece to be an essential read for all social scientists, as it collects and connects the essential discussions, arguments, and critiques of a period that is unfortunately far from bygone, in a synthetic and readable format.

Peter Wagner’s piece is drawn from a chapter in a book, edited by Margaret Archer and Jonathan Tritter,¹ in which they call for a resistance against the colonization of the social sciences by rational choice, and deserves to be widely

1 Archer, Margaret and Jonathan Tritter (2000), *Rational Choice Theory. Resisting Colonization*, London: Routledge

disseminated. It perfectly complements Wacquant and Calhoun's text by addressing further problematic issues of the present-day "default mode of theorizing" that is Rational Choice. The article is a fine exercise in comparative metaphysics. It starts with an insightful contrast between two proverbs. In English, one finds that "one bird in hand is better than two in the bush", whereas its German equivalent – "The sparrow in the hand is better than the dove on the roof" – does not so much compare quantities, but qualities. To clarify the distinction between American and European ways of moral and political valuation, Wagner draws on the pragmatic sociology of the orders of worth of Boltanski and Thévenot to show that the demoralizing approach of Rational Choice finds its origins in wars and revolutions (in Europe) and in the Wild West (in America). Where no other guidelines are to be found than survival, Rational Choice becomes the "default mode" for the coordination of action between unencumbered individuals without common culture and history. "Individualist rationality is then proposed as some kind of bottom-line on which everyone can agree." By retracing the origins of instrumental action to situations of emergency, Wagner brilliantly shows that Rational Choice theory relies on a very "particular", even peculiar "theory of modernity", and that the latter's postulate of "autonomy" presupposes a certain type of rugged individualism. Wagner's text, and the last part in particular, is essential to understand the history and lineages of English-language social sciences, and how the emergence and resilience of Rational Choice fits in this bigger picture, namely with respect to the European/American divide.

These critiques of Rational Choice are complementary and corollary to Graeber and Sahlins' critique of orthodox economics, as well as of the actual dominance of market economics over all other social dimensions. Rational Choice is therefore best understood as one of the channels by which a social and cultural consensus is constructed and legitimated. It is to this entertained consensus to which *Bruno Latour* draws our attention, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is an English translation of a short text published in 2020 in the French outlet *AOC*, and gracefully handed over to our care by the author. Latour highlights how the supposedly inevitable, natural, or at least essential global capitalist economy was put to a halt overnight. The market economy, Latour argues, "holds in place only as long as the institution that performs it – *and not a day longer.*" This sudden full-stop put on the economy during the generalized confinement of Spring 2020 has an empirical force that surpasses any

accumulation of theoretical arguments. As we now witness attempts to “return to normal” and forget that no catastrophe automatically ensues when the reign of the market is bridled, this contribution is a welcome reminder. During the lockdown, the market showed its total incapacity to provide answers, solace, or practical solutions, not to mention hope. It is social bonds and social solidarity that spontaneously stepped in to cater for redistribution and coordination. The state, meanwhile, showed that it played a vital role in such occasions and could still be warrant of the common good, by setting rules, providing the unconditionality required by urgency, and mobilizing amounts of resources, technical, human, and financial, which surpass anything the market can and could drum up.

Proposing a new outlet for an anti-utilitarian social science in the English language cannot do without revisiting the anti-utilitarian strand in American sociology, and namely that which threads through Parsons and his particular reception and dissemination of Durkheim. In this concise piece originally published in French¹ and drawn from a presentation at the MAUSS conference in the bucolic surroundings of Cerisy-la-Salle dedicated the multi-disciplinary reflection on the anti-utilitarian foundations of the social sciences, in Normandy, in 2015, *Jeffrey Alexander* returns to Parsons’ anti-utilitarian project to situate the birth of cultural sociology and his own work at the end of the 1980s in response to the rise of neoliberalism-backed utilitarian epistemologies. Cultural sociology aims to transcend the impasse opposing conflict and consensus theories by showing how a shared social order involves meanings that do not need to be and are only rarely consensual. Given that the MAUSS does not defend a consensus, but a conflict theory of society, it is not a coincidence if cultural sociology arrives at similar conclusions by revisiting Durkheim without Parsons.

What follows is another contribution at this same conference. Here, *Ann Warfield Rawls* delves further into the question of the social structuration of the “self, objects, and action” by arguing that the basics of a fully operational and non-reductionist interactionist theory can be found in Durkheim’s 1893 classic *Division of Social Labor*, as long as we read it with its original introduction; an introduction that was removed from the second edition (1902) onwards. This introduction contains a critique of classical rationalism and idealism and clearly

1 Alain Caillé, Philippe Chaniel, Stéphane Dufoix and Frédéric Vandenberghe (eds.) (2018), *Des sciences sociales à la science sociale. Fondements anti-utilitaristes*, Paris: Éditions Le Bord de l’eau.

situates the project of a new science of society as an answer to their shortcomings. Hence Durkheim's thesis was not limited to the division of (paid) labor but the division of social labor, including the vast landmass of non-marketed and non-marketable social activities. Durkheim's theory therefore discusses the social differentiation that is typical of modern societies, insisting on how the latter achieve meaning and social cohesion *without consensus*. The parallel with Alexander's approach is evident, notwithstanding the authors' differences. What is particularly interesting from a French, and especially a MAUSSian perspective, is how this reading of Durkheim radically changes the usual view of the father of French sociology as promoting a totalizing, consensual, and top-down vision of society (and therefore dismissed in the typical first paragraphs of social scientific literature, and evermore so as the focus in recent decades has turned resolutely towards the "actor"). Rawls' Durkheim bypasses the consensus/conflict episteme by showing how what is striking in modern societies, and what differentiates them from "archaic" societies of smaller scale, is the way they achieve social order, meaning, and morality "*without consensus*", resulting in the need for a concept and a mechanism of *justice*.

Such an ethnomethodological reading of Durkheim is welcome, to say the least. Even if parts of French sociology carry such a stereotypical vision of Durkheim's sociology as that mentioned above, other traditions, including ours, are more than relieved by Rawls' efforts and new translations. Like Alexander, Rawls "corrects" Parsons' reading of Durkheim by showing that for him collective representations and moral facts must be constantly and continuously created to be sustained. Durkheim's view of society is thus far from monolithic. As Rawls writes, social facts "are interactional and dependent on mutual cooperation." Perhaps because of the necessities of her own concerns and argumentative requirements, Rawls focuses chiefly if not exclusively on Durkheim's doctoral thesis. Yet a refreshed read of *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* supports Rawls' interpretation. What we can perhaps add to the author's conclusions with respect to justice is the insistence by Durkheim, after 1895, on the idea that morality and justice rely on sacred categories and therefore on religious mechanisms, as is his focus in the *Elementary Forms* of 1912. Durkheim, and his collaborators with him, first of whom Mauss himself, were not only *precursors* of social interactionism: they *were* social interactionists. We definitely intend to build on these foundations in the issues to come.

ANOTHER SOCIAL SCIENCE IS POSSIBLE

Social theory is not unbound from social and cultural conditions. It is embedded in the societies in which it produced, at a given time. It is also true about the acknowledged or unacknowledged, implicit normative concerns and content of social theories. The on-going globalization processes affecting social sciences, and in which we are intently participating, has various effects. On the one hand, and somewhat paradoxically, the further interconnection of national, linguistic, and regional social scientific traditions leads to forms of radical relativism and localism which forbid a priori any type of synthesis or generalization on the grounds that such attempts are both impossible and intrinsically imperialistic. We see this as an exaggerated reaction to the excesses of former grand theoretical enterprises, which only lead down “empirical” rabbit holes and false neutrality claims. On the other hand, voices are calling for a form of “relative universalism”, which recognizes the irreducibility of social realities and their contexts, yet at the same time builds on the contributions of structuralism and post-structuralist anthropology by accepting that the possibilities of social organization are neither infinite nor random. Hence social facts in different cultures and societies can be compared and organized, and generalizations can be made. Mauss’ own teachings in ethnography stated this repeatedly, and his contentions as to the universality of the gift, which to our knowledge has never been convincingly repudiated, offers the perfect platform for such endeavors.

It is no secret that Western social sciences have been extremely ethnocentric. This trend has begun to change in recent years, namely through the rise of Postcolonial Studies and Global History, yet much remains to be done. One area that requires more attention is the history of social sciences in the non-Western world. This is indeed a precondition for any generalizing effort and the connection of an anti-utilitarian front. This is why *Stéphane Dufoix’s* notes on a world history of sociology is important. What this rapid tour of the origins of sociology from Latin America to Asia shows us is the importance of Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer as primary sources, as well as the often joint development of sociology and economics. Dufoix’s text says little, however, about the content and general theoretical orientations of these social scientific traditions, and it is worth commissioning a follow-up for a future edition. This portrait is enough

though to see how non-Western sociology mostly evolved from Western influences, and with a potentially strong utilitarian impulse. What remains to be seen is the nature and relative strength of non-Western non-utilitarian sociologies and social sciences more widely, and if the utilitarian/anti-utilitarian divide is a global episteme or not.

Sari Hanafi, currently president of the International Sociological Association, has been at the forefront of debates concerned with the construction of a global social science. Here, he situates one of the reasons behind the current crisis affecting the social sciences in the fragmentation and isolation of each specialization, as well as in their dissociation from moral philosophy. Reconnecting all of these, he argues, is key to the correction of positivist tendencies, the recognition of the normative dimensions of any social scientific enterprise, and the opening *in fine* onto forms of engagement. More specifically, Hanafi joins in on a criticism of the secularization paradigm that has shaped the attitude of social sciences regarding religion in a way that “hinders our understanding of the contribution of social actors within social movements and prevents us from appreciating how social actors forge their normative position in everyday life.” Drawing from examples in the Middle East, Hanafi argues that such inflexions have detrimental effects, like in our leaders’ analyses of Islamist movements.

The concept of “institution” stands at the core of social sciences, yet its definition is anything but assured. *Christian Laval* is a core member of the MAUSS and one of France’s prime public intellectuals. In this substantial essay, he shows how the “institution” is also at the center of some of the most important and structuring debates of the last century and more, as it is situated at the junction of society and the actor. Laval charts the parallel developments of sociology and critical economics in opposite directions (anti-institutional for the former, pro-institutional for the latter), and argues for their reconciliation. From Durkheim through to Parsons (again!), institutions had been increasingly thought of as ensuring functions of social cohesion and social order. Yet sociology had to acknowledge that institutions also threaten individual autonomy and exert forms of alienation and domination (Goffman, Bourdieu and Passeron, Foucault). As often, one form of excess (functionalism) produced its opposite (critical sociology’s critique of institutions as inherently totalitarian: Castells) as the pendulum swings from one side (social order) to the other (“actor” focus and individual autonomy). Meanwhile, in economics, the neoliberal wave

paradoxically ushered in a movement against naturalism (economic actors behave as in a state of nature) and a return to the question of institutions. As so often though, trained economists do a poor job at seizing the true – that is: social – nature of institutions as they recast them within a utilitarian framework (“benchmarking” and “efficiency” evaluation). This is an occasion to appreciate how the MAUSSian way out of such conundrums is through a “Middle Way”. Here, Laval’s proposition avoids both functionalist and utilitarian reductions while recognizing the ambivalent nature of institutions as both order-producing *and* a simultaneous alienating and/or capacitating potential.

OUR DEBTS: MARCEL HÉNAFF

Any social scientific work is a collective work. As there might be no truly “opening” gift, there is never any work *ex nihilo*. We are all daughters and sons before becoming mothers and fathers, and we all have cousins when not siblings. We noted above how we have lost some of our dearest friends and important voices in the last two years. In this section, we pay tribute to one of those with respect to whom we stand indebted: Marcel Hénaff, who passed away in June 2018. Marcel taught French literature, philosophy, and anthropology at the University of California in San Diego, and contributed an impressive body of work on structuralism, Lévi-Strauss, Mauss, and the gift among other things. His relation with the MAUSS was agonistic, yet always under the seal of camaraderie. His analysis of the gift converged with that of many MAUSSian authors on the most important elements, and he participated generously in our conferences and in the *Revue du MAUSS*. Just before leaving for hospital, he wrote an email to Alain Caillé saying that he had some small problems to deal with and would signal himself as soon as he was back on his feet.

We present two short texts in homage to Marcel. The first is a critical review of Hénaff’s book *The Philosopher’s Gift: Reexamining Reciprocity*, recently translated in English and published by Fordham University Press, by Finnish social theorist *Olli Pyythinen*. The author recalls Hénaff’s critique of the pure gift (which is basically the same as that of the MAUSS), and relates his proposition to distinguish between three different orders of the gift: “the ceremonial gift, characterized by the strict obligation to reciprocate”; the disinterested gift,

whose aim is graciousness; and mutual aid to either familiars or strangers, with therefore a more social character than the gracious gift. This conceptualization of the gift insists on a third party that is either implicit or explicit, allowing to overcome the limitations of dyadic representations of reciprocity. This presentation of Hénaff's tripartite categorization of the gift would need to be complemented by an account of the debates within the pages of the *Revue du MAUSS semestrielle*. Indeed, this discussion helped identify some fundamental questions raised by the gift, on which the following contribution sheds some light.

The second text, then, is a eulogy by Francesco Fistetti that we translated from Italian. Fistetti has been a close collaborator of the MAUSS for many years and also knew Marcel Hénaff very well. His text retraces the intellectual career of Marcel and highlights how fecund his generalist approach was. Few contemporaries are as cultivated as Marcel, who understood Western philosophy, and Western rationalism in particular, as an anthropologist: that is as the particular cosmology or *Weltanschauung* of a particular tribe, the “West”. Hénaff's project, which remains unfinished, was a rereading of Western philosophy and history in the light of Maussian anthropology, namely through the lenses of the gift. Fistetti's discussion complements Stephen Fuchs' piece above, when he reconstructs Hénaff's analysis of Western metaphysics, including Heidegger's question of Being, from the angle of the gift and *Gegebenheit*. As Fistetti rightly indicates, Marcel Hénaff's understanding of the gift remains bound to Lévi-Strauss' even as he proposes an important inflexion that tames the latter's formalism. The points of dissent between Marcel Hénaff and the MAUSS (and Alain Caillé in particular) concern essential questions relative to the other Marcel – Mauss that is –'s gift.

A GLIMPSE OF PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY À LA FRANÇAISE

So what does a MAUSSian public sociology look like? Here is a glimpse, penned by MAUSS' founder Alain Caillé, from whom we now take up the torch. This is an excerpt from a short book published in the discrete series “*Les Extras du MAUSS*”, in which the author proposes a way out of the actual toxic atmosphere which permeates public debate, from the trials surrounding the so-called “Cancel Culture” and “Woke-ism” in the US and the critique of “*islamo-gauchisme*” in France. Is it possible, in the age of social media insults and

algorithm-fed conspiracies to lead a cordial discussion? Or at least disagree without delving into violence, verbal or physical? Analyzing the causes behind recent escalations, Caillé proposes what he calls an attitude of “radical moderationism”, or “well-tempered radicalism”, which he places under the banner of a non-violent Maussian ethics of discussion. Is not democracy, whose luster is ever waning, “a means to disagree without resorting to open conflict?”

IN CLOSING: AN UNEXPECTED ACCOMPLICE

The *MAUSS International* is committed to relevance and salience, but also to editorial freedom and the celebration of thought in all its forms. For decades, the French *Revue du MAUSS* has published a wide variety of texts, including literature, whether prose or poetry, when it appears fitting. We aim to continue this tradition of eclecticism in the *MAUSS International*. We therefore close this issue with an excerpt of Fyodor Dostoïevsky’s *Notes from the Underground*, perhaps one of the most anti-utilitarian texts ever written. This text figured in the very first edition of the *Bulletin du MAUSS*, exactly forty years ago, and it seemed fitting to cap this opening issue with it, once again, and launch a new cycle of gifts.

GIVE IT AWAY! THE NEW MAUSSKETEERS¹

David Graeber

Have you noticed how there aren't any new French intellectuals anymore? There was a veritable flood in the late 1970s and early 1980s: Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard, Kristeva, Lyotard, de Certeau... but there has been almost no one since. Trendy academics and intellectual hipsters have been forced to endlessly recycle theories now 20 or 30 years old, or turn to countries like Italy or even Slovenia for dazzling meta-theory.

Pioneering French anthropologist Marcel Mauss studied “gift economies” like those of the Kwakiutl of British Columbia. His conclusions were startling.

There are a lot of reasons for this. One has to do with politics in France itself, where there has been a concerted effort on the part of media elites to replace real intellectuals with American-style empty-headed pundits. Still, they have not been completely successful. More important, French intellectual life has become much more politically engaged. In the U.S. press, there has been a near blackout on cultural news from France since the great strike movement of 1995, when France was the first nation to definitively reject the “American model” for the economy, and refused to begin dismantling its welfare state. In the American press, France immediately became the silly country, vainly trying to duck the tide of history.

Of course this in itself is hardly going to faze the sort of Americans who read Deleuze and Guattari. What American academics expect from France is an intellectual high, the ability to feel one is participating in wild, radical ideas demonstrating the inherent violence within Western conceptions of truth or humanity, that sort of thing but in ways that do not imply any program of political action; or, usually, any responsibility to act at all. It's easy to see how a class of people who are considered almost entirely irrelevant both by political elites and by 99% of the general population might feel this way. In other words, while the U.S.

¹ This article was published in the magazine *In These Times* (August 21, 2001) under the title “Give it away,” and was advertised on the cover with the headline “The new maussketeers.”

media represent France as silly, U.S. academics seek out those French thinkers who seem to fit the bill.

As a result, some of the most interesting scholars in France today you never hear about at all. One such is a group of intellectuals who go by the rather unwieldy name of *Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales*, or MAUSS, and who have dedicated themselves to a systematic attack on the philosophical underpinnings of economic theory. The group take their inspiration from the great early-20th century French sociologist Marcel Mauss, whose most famous work, *The Gift* (1925), was perhaps the most magnificent refutation of the assumptions behind economic theory ever written. At a time when “the free market” is being rammed down everyone’s throat as both a natural and inevitable product of human nature, Mauss’ work which demonstrated not only that most non-Western societies did not work on anything resembling market principles, but that neither do most modern Westerners is more relevant than ever. While Francophile American scholars seem unable to come up with much of anything to say about the rise of global neoliberalism, the MAUSS group is attacking its very foundations.

A word of background. Marcel Mauss was born in 1872 to an Orthodox Jewish family in Vosges. His uncle, Émile Durkheim, is considered the founder of modern sociology. Durkheim surrounded himself with a circle of brilliant young acolytes, among whom Mauss was appointed to study religion. The circle, however, was shattered by World War I; many died in the trenches, including Durkheim’s son, and Durkheim himself died of grief shortly thereafter. Mauss was left to pick up the pieces.

By all accounts, though, Mauss was never taken completely seriously in his role of heir apparent; a man of extraordinary erudition (he knew at least a dozen languages, including Sanskrit, Maori and classical Arabic), he still, somehow, lacked the gravity expected of a grand professeur. A former amateur boxer, he was a burly man with a playful, rather silly manner, the sort of person always juggling a dozen brilliant ideas rather than building great philosophical systems. He spent his life working on at least five different books (on prayer, on nationalism, on the origins of money, etc.), none of which he ever finished. Still, he succeeded in training a new generation of sociologists and inventing French anthropology more or less single-handedly, as well as in publishing a series of extraordinarily innovative essays, just about each one of which has generated an entirely new body of social theory all by itself.

Mauss was also a revolutionary socialist. From his student days on he was a regular contributor to the left press, and remained most of his life an active member of the French cooperative movement. He founded and for many years helped run a consumer co-op in Paris; and was often sent on missions to make contact with the movement in other countries (for which purpose he spent time in Russia after the revolution). Mauss was not a Marxist, though. His socialism was more in the tradition of Robert Owen or Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: He considered Communists and Social Democrats to be equally misguided in believing that society could be transformed primarily through government action. Rather, the role of government, he felt, was to provide the legal framework for a socialism that had to be built from the ground up, by creating alternative institutions.

The Russian revolution thus left him profoundly ambivalent. While exhilarated by prospects of a genuine socialist experiment, he was outraged by the Bolsheviks' systematic use of terror, their suppression of democratic institutions, and most of all by their "cynical doctrine that the end justifies the means," which, Mauss concluded, was really just the amoral, rational calculus of the marketplace, slightly transposed.

Mauss' essay on "the gift" was, more than anything, his response to events in Russia particularly Lenin's New Economic Policy of 1921, which abandoned earlier attempts to abolish commerce. If the market could not simply be legislated away, even in Russia, probably the least monetarized European society, then clearly, Mauss concluded, revolutionaries were going to have to start thinking a lot more seriously about what this "market" actually was, where it came from, and what a viable alternative to it might actually be like. It was time to bring the results of historical and ethnographic research to bear.

Mauss' conclusions were startling. First of all, almost everything that "economic science" had to say on the subject of economic history turned out to be entirely untrue. The universal assumption of free market enthusiasts, then as now, was that what essentially drives human beings is a desire to maximize their pleasures, comforts and material possessions (their "utility"), and that all significant human interactions can thus be analyzed in market terms. In the beginning, goes the official version, there was barter. People were forced to get what they wanted by directly trading one thing for another. Since this was inconvenient, they eventually invented money as a universal medium of exchange. The invention of further technologies of exchange (credit, banking, stock exchanges) was simply a logical extension.

The problem was, as Mauss was quick to note, there is no reason to believe a society based on barter has ever existed. Instead, what anthropologists were discovering were societies where economic life was based on utterly different principles, and most objects moved back and forth as gifts and almost everything we would call “economic” behavior was based on a pretense of pure generosity and a refusal to calculate exactly who had given what to whom. Such “gift economies” could on occasion become highly competitive, but when they did it was in exactly the opposite way from our own: Instead of vying to see who could accumulate the most, the winners were the ones who managed to give the most away. In some notorious cases, such as the Kwakiutl of British Columbia, this could lead to dramatic contests of liberality, where ambitious chiefs would try to outdo one another by distributing thousands of silver bracelets, Hudson Bay blankets or Singer sewing machines, and even by destroying wealth sinking famous heirlooms in the ocean, or setting huge piles of wealth on fire and daring their rivals to do the same.

All of this may seem very exotic. But as Mauss also asked: How alien is it, really? Is there not something odd about the very idea of gift-giving, even in our own society? Why is it that, when one receives a gift from a friend (a drink, a dinner invitation, a compliment), one feels somehow obliged to reciprocate in kind? Why is it that a recipient of generosity often somehow feels reduced if he or she cannot? Are these not examples of universal human feelings, which are somehow discounted in our own society but in others were the very basis of the economic system? And is it not the existence of these very different impulses and moral standards, even in a capitalist system such as our own, that is the real basis for the appeal of alternative visions and socialist policies? Mauss certainly felt so.

In a lot of ways Mauss’ analysis bore a marked resemblance to Marxist theories about alienation and reification being developed by figures like György Lukács around the same time. In gift economies, Mauss argued, exchanges do not have the impersonal qualities of the capitalist marketplace: In fact, even when objects of great value change hands, what really matters is the relations between the people; exchange is about creating friendships, or working out rivalries, or obligations, and only incidentally about moving around valuable goods. As a result everything becomes personally charged, even property: In gift economies, the most famous objects of wealth heirloom necklaces, weapons, feather cloaks always seem to develop personalities of their own.

In a market economy it's exactly the other way around. Transactions are seen simply as ways of getting one's hands on useful things; the personal qualities of buyer and seller should ideally be completely irrelevant. As a consequence everything, even people, start being treated as if they were things too. (Consider in this light the expression "goods and services.") The main difference with Marxism, however, is that while Marxists of his day still insisted on a bottom-line economic determinism, Mauss held that in past market-less societies and by implication, in any truly humane future one "the economy," in the sense of an autonomous domain of action concerned solely with the creation and distribution of wealth, and which proceeded by its own, impersonal logic, would not even exist.

Mauss was never entirely sure what his practical conclusions were. The Russian experience convinced him that buying and selling could not simply be eliminated in a modern society, at least "in the foreseeable future," but a market ethos could. Work could be co-operatized, effective social security guaranteed and, gradually, a new ethos created whereby the only possible excuse for accumulating wealth was the ability to give it all away. The result: a society whose highest values would be "the joy of giving in public, the delight in generous artistic expenditure, the pleasure of hospitality in the public or private feast."

Some of this may seem awfully naive from today's perspective, but Mauss' core insights have, if anything, become even more relevant now than they were 75 years ago now that economic "science" has become, effectively, the revealed religion of the modern age. So it seemed, anyway, to the founders of MAUSS.

The idea for MAUSS was born in 1981. The project is said to have emerged from a conversation over lunch between a French sociologist, Alain Caillé, and a Swiss anthropologist, Gérald Berthoud. They had just sat through several days of an interdisciplinary conference on the subject of gifts, and after reviewing the papers, they came to the shocked realization that it did not seem to have occurred to a single scholar in attendance that a significant motive for giving gifts might be, say, generosity, or genuine concern for another person's welfare. In fact, the scholars at the conference invariably assumed that "gifts" do not really exist: Scratch deep enough behind any human action, and you'll always discover some selfish, calculating strategy. Even more oddly, they assumed that this selfish strategy was always, necessarily, the real truth of the matter; that it was more real somehow than any other motive in which it might be entangled. It was as if to be scientific, to be "objective" meant to be completely cynical. Why?

Caillé ultimately came to blame Christianity. Ancient Rome still preserved something of the older ideal of aristocratic open-handedness: Roman magnates built public gardens and monuments, and vied to sponsor the most magnificent games. But Roman generosity was also quite obviously meant to wound: One favorite habit was scattering gold and jewels before the masses to watch them tussle in the mud to scoop them up. Early Christians, for obvious reasons, developed their notion of charity in direct reaction to such obnoxious practices. True charity was not based on any desire to establish superiority, or favor, or indeed any egoistic motive whatsoever. To the degree that the giver could be said to have gotten anything out of the deal, it wasn't a real gift.

But this in turn led to endless problems, since it was very difficult to conceive of a gift that did not benefit the giver in any way. Even an entirely selfless act would win one point with God. There began the habit of searching every act for the degree to which it could be said to mask some hidden selfishness, and then assuming that this selfishness is what's really important. One sees the same move reproduced so consistently in modern social theory. Economists and Christian theologians agree that if one takes pleasure in an act of generosity, it is somehow less generous. They just disagree on the moral implications. To counteract this very perverse logic, Mauss emphasized the "pleasure" and "joy" of giving: In traditional societies, there was not assumed to be any contradiction between what we would call self-interest (a phrase that, he noted, could not even be translated into most human languages) and concern for others; the whole point of the traditional gift is that it furthers both at the same time.

These, anyway, were the kind of issues that first engaged the small, interdisciplinary group of French and French-speaking scholars (Caillé, Berthoud, Ahmet Insel, Serge Latouche, Pauline Taieb) who were to become MAUSS. Actually, the group itself began as a journal, called *Revue du MAUSS* a very small journal, printed sloppily on bad paper whose authors conceived it as much as an in-joke as a venue for serious scholarship, the flagship journal for a vast international movement that did not then exist. Caillé wrote manifestos; Insel penned fantasies about great international anti-utilitarian conventions of the future. Articles on economics alternated with snatches from Russian novelists. But gradually, the movement did begin to materialize. By the mid-1990s, MAUSS had become an impressive network of scholars ranging from sociologists and anthropologists to economists, historians and philosophers, from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East whose ideas had become represented

in three different journals¹ and a prominent book series (all in French) backed up by annual conferences.

Since the strikes of 1995 and the election of a Socialist government, Mauss' own works have undergone a considerable revival in France, with the publication of a new biography and a collection of his political writings. At the same time, the MAUSS group themselves have become evermore explicitly political. In 1997, Caillé released a broadside called "30 Theses for a New Left," and the MAUSS group have begun dedicating their annual conferences to specific policy issues. Their answer to the endless calls for France to adopt the "American model" and dismantle its welfare state, for example, was to begin promulgating an economic idea originally proposed by American revolutionary Tom Paine: the guaranteed national income. The real way to reform welfare policy is not to begin stripping away social benefits, but to reframe the whole conception of what a state owes its citizens. Let us jettison welfare and unemployment programs, they said. But instead, let us create a system where every French citizen is guaranteed the same starting income (say, \$20,000, supplied directly by the government) and then the rest can be up to them.²

It is hard to know exactly what to make of the Maussian left, particularly insofar as Mauss is being promoted now, in some quarters, as an alternative to Marx. It would be easy to write them off as simply super-charged social democrats, not really interested in the radical transformation of society. Caillé's "30 Theses," for example, agree with Mauss in conceding the inevitability of some kind of market – but still, like him, look forward to the abolition of capitalism, here defined as the pursuit of financial profit as an end in itself. On another level, though, the Maussian attack on the logic of the market is more profound, and more radical, than anything else now on the intellectual horizon. It is hard to escape the impression that this is precisely why American intellectuals, particularly those who believe themselves to be the most wild-eyed radicals, willing to deconstruct almost any concept except greed or selfishness, simply don't know what to make of the Maussians why, in fact, their work has been almost completely ignored.

¹ *The Bulletin du MAUSS* (1982-1988), then *La Revue du MAUSS trimestrielle* (1989-1992), and finally *La Revue du MAUSS*, published by La Découverte and, since January 2021, by Le Bord de l'eau.

² David Graeber attributes to MAUSS the first positions initially presented by Philippe Van Parijs under the name of "allocation universelle," whereas MAUSS defends a citizenship income that is in no way incompatible with the maintenance of the minimum wage and of certain specific social policy measures, if necessary. Both positions have in common that they assert an unconditional principle of humanity and/or citizenship that is hierarchically superior to any consideration of instrumental efficiency. \$20,000 only makes sense as unconditional capital, not as a minimum income.

THE DISMAL SCIENCE

Marshall Sahlins

["The Dismal Science" is the last text completed by Marshall Sahlins before his death on April 5th, 2021. It was to form part of the Introduction to the second volume of a projected three-volume study, The Enchanted Universe: An Anthropology of Most of Humanity. As he described the project: "The overall goal of the project was to revolutionize an obsolete anthropology. One could characterize much of twentieth century anthropology as a salvage operation. Certainly in the midcentury, as students, we were told we had an obligation to preserve traditional culture as it was before it was transformed by the Euro-American juggernaut. One could say that anthropology then was the study of a disappearing object, and my three-part book was an effort to preserve the object and the ethnographers who inscribed it. Part one set the ethnographical stage and ontological stakes: it was a kind of prolegomena to the study of culture, about the way anthropology should be conducted and has been, I thought, sadly misconducted. [Entitled The New Science of the Enchanted Universe, this first volume will be published by Princeton University Press in 2022]. Parts two and three were to be applications of the "The New Science": one was a study of Enchanted Economics; and the last covered "Cosmic Politics." The following excerpt is from the Introduction to Enchanted Economics.]

It should have been obvious from the beginning in the eighteenth century that the transcendental notion of "economy" refers to the economizing individual who balances one means against another in order to derive the greatest possible satisfaction. How much wasted effort could have been avoided if this economizing individual had not been confused with the cultural and historical constitution of the mode of material provisioning. Suppose indeed the rational choice among alternate ends to achieve the greatest satisfaction was the universal characteristic of humanity, why then should the outcome differ

in one society from another – why do Fijians eat their own yams, unlike the Trobriand Islanders who present their yam harvest to their sisters’ husbands. “Rationality” is a constant, the variations are due to factors that the economists deem “exogenous” which is to say, the social, cultural, and historical order in which the activities take place. This is also to say that economics, by defining itself in terms of the principle of rational choice has eliminated all other factors from the economy.

This banishment of materially-relevant “exogenous factors” is one of the more fateful “zombie economic ideas that refuse to die” (to adapt the telling phrase of the Australian economist John Quiggin [2010a; 2010b]). Quiggin’s apt characterization would cover a large series of customary economic ideas that have had stakes repeatedly driven through their heart for going on two centuries, yet are still walking around alive and well. One would think the whole discipline had been mortally wounded by the critical attacks of its own practitioners – let alone the likes of anthropologists – on its abstract, unrealistic, post-hoc, pseudo-scientific, fantastic, fetishistic, Platonic, chimerical, rhetorical, ideological, non-empirical, teleological, metaphorical, tautological, mythological, and otherwise louche theoretical propositions. Here is a brave, new “invented world of the eighteenth century” that has no actual people in it (Servet, 2009, p. 88). Rather, it is populated solely by this “rational fool,” *Homo Economicus* (Sen, 1977, p. 336): a “character without character” (Klamer, 2001, p. 93); an impulsive, manipulative, and shallow sociopath (McCloskey, 2006, p. 135), whose single-minded pursuit of his own pleasure or gain by the rational choice of the alternatives presented by a supposedly self-regulating market is “the central illusion of our age” (Polanyi, 1997, p. 5; cf. 1947). “Few textbooks contain a direct portrait of rational economic man,” write Martin Hollis and Edward Nell (1975, p. 53–54):

“He is introduced furtively and piece by piece... He lurks in the assumptions, leading an enlightened existence between input and output, stimulus and response. He is neither tall nor short, fat nor thin, married nor single. There is no telling whether he loves his dog, beats his wife or prefers pushpin to poetry. We do not know what he wants. But we do know that whatever it is, he will maximize ruthlessly.”

Deirdre McCloskey writes that although Adam Smith took his theory and Chair of moral sentiments seriously, with consideration of a range of human

motivations, his successors, beginning with Jeremy Bentham & Co., “came to believe that a profane Prudence, called ‘Utility’, rules.” In the twentieth century came those such as Paul Samuelson, Kenneth Arrow, Milton Friedman, and Gary Becker, “good men, great scientists, beloved teachers, and friends of mine. But their confused advocacy of Prudence Only has been a catastrophe for the science Adam Smith inaugurated” (McCloskey, 2006, p. 119. See also Harcourt, 2011; Kaul, 2011; Reddy, 1994; and Zelizer, 2011; among many others).

The problem is, of course, with the commodification of everything, thus mystifying cultural facts as pecuniary values, and entailing the notion that the cultural order is the effect of people’s economizing, rather than the means thereof, became the native bourgeois common sense as well as its social science. Thereupon, as Karl Polanyi (1977, p. 6) observed:

“Realistic thinkers vainly spelled out the distinction between the economy in general and its market forms; time and again the distinction was obliterated by the economic *Zeitgeist*.”

The same hedonistic zombie has long stalked anthropology in the guise of the Trobriand Islander, the Inuit, the Maori, or some such exotic fellow whose seemingly “irrational” behavior is recuperated for rational choice theory by the supposition that he is really maximizing motherhood, chiefly honor, friendship, or any you-name-it “value” other than material utility. Thus assuming the value preferences by which the choice of value is explained, the tautology is the epistemological absolute zero of anthropological understanding. For example (Firth, 1950, p. 331):

“The motives underlying Tikopia marriage and funeral exchanges, as well as those in exchange of other kinds, involve a strong response to complex social situations. But these may be considered part of a rational economic choice, if a preference for other types of advantage or satisfaction than the mere increase of wealth be regarded as legitimate, in view of the value of securing and maintaining social co-operation.”

Rational choice theory has to give itself the culture *a priori*, inasmuch as it is the cultural order that makes the material action rational, but hardly the rationality that makes the culture. In order to understand why a Trobriand islander every year gives half his yam harvest to his sister’s husband, only to receive half

his wife's brother's yams – a circulation which in fact involves neither choice nor gain – one has to know that in this markedly matrilineal society, sisters' sons succeed their mothers' brothers whose harvest thus fed their households. How else can we understand that what is a rational disposition of yams in the Trobriand Islands makes no sense at all in New Britain – let alone old Britain?

As a humanized form of economic activity, the transcendentalist economics would not hold much further interest here except that in precluding the spiritual creation of material praxis it produces an intellectual system in some ways more “mythical” than in the immanentist societies. Economics as practiced in the last couple centuries has been doubly dismal. What to expect from the premise that economic activity is based on universal human instinct to maximize one's personal utility by applying scarce means against alternate ends to achieve the greatest satisfaction. To adopt this as a major premise is to suppose differences could be explained by a constant. If all the world is some version of the principle of Maximal Utility then why should the Trobriand Island's acquisition and distribution of goods be any different from the economics of neoliberalism, or for that matter of any other people. If one says that the answer lies in the differences in cultural order thus implied by the acting subject why then are such differences systematically banished from the economist's concern as “exogenous factors.” In fact, all economies are organized by exogenous cultural factors. The relations of societies, historically, sociologically and otherwise. The most dismal fact about economics is that what is determining the economy is by definition not economics.

The business section of any major newspaper is from one page to another replete with the effective causation of so-called exogenous factors on the major economies of the world. The cultural inputs into prices are evident at various levels from planetary geopolitics to cultural habits of oil consumption. The planetary distribution of oil resources is brought into play through an international system of alliances and hostilities. At the national level, we have seen what Middle Eastern uprisings can do to barrel prices, not to forget the ordinary national politics of tariffs and taxes, energy lobbies, and alternate energy initiatives. At the provincial and municipal levels: taxation again, and the battle of public and private transportation. Recall General Motors successful campaign to eliminate streetcars in American cities; or the recent refusal by the neoliberal governor of Wisconsin of federal funds that were designated for the construction of a highspeed railway between the state capital of Madison and the principal city of Milwaukee. As for consumer preferences, the unexamined life may not

be worth living, but for economists it is business as usual insofar as there is no disputing consumers' tastes. In regard to oil, consider such socially and historically founded obsessions as privately owned and operated automobiles, which thereupon choke the underfunded American highways with cars occupied by single drivers and no passengers; or the American standards of bodily comfort as these regulate energy use in heating and cooling – with the effect that the average surrounding temperature in which Americans live is warmer in the winter than in the summer.

The econometric reduction of the qualities of the economy to abstract equations began at the turn of the twentieth century and was well articulated by the economist and logician William Stanley Jevons (1871, p. 7):

“The Theory of Economy thus treated presents a close analogy to the science of Statistical Mechanics and the Laws of Exchange are found to resemble the Law of Equilibrium of a lever as determined by virtual velocities. The nature of Wealth and Value is explained by the consideration of indefinitely small amounts of pleasure and pain, just as the Theory of Statics is made to rest upon the equality of indefinitely small amounts of energy. But I believe that dynamical branches of the Science of Economy may remain to be developed, on the consideration of which I have not at all entered.”

In this work I have attempted to treat Economy as a Calculus of Pleasure and Pain, and have sketched out, almost irrespective of previous opinions, the form which the science it seems to me may ultimately take. I have long thought that as it deals throughout with quantities, it must be a mathematical science in matter, if not in language. I have endeavoured to arrive at accurate quantitative notions concerning utility, value, labor, capital, etc. And I have often been surprised how I find clearly some of the most difficult notions, especially the most puzzling notions of value admit of mathematical analysis and expression. (*Ibid.*, p. 6-7) : “Our equation of production will now be modified, and become.” X is the quantity of our commodity, and y the quantity of another's commodity, with the $-x_1$ showing the diminution or addition through exchange. is the rate of production, or ratio of produce to labor, and the respective degrees of utility for each commodity. “Thus we have proved that commodities will exchange in any market in the ratio of the quantities

produced by the same quantity of labour.” (how do you prove something abstractly? Or are these Kantian analytic truths?)

Not to rehearse the further history of econometrics; only to note a large trade-off in intelligibility. Curiously enough, Lévi-Strauss figures this contrast between mathematical explication or translation and meaningful and logical propositions as distinguishing the physical from the social sciences.

In anthropology truth and method are one: to decode meaningful relations in a cultural order is to replicate in method and reason the cultural facts one seeks to explicate. The effect is: the more we know about an exotic culture, the more we reproduce it ourselves. In his inaugural lecture at the college de France, Lévi-Strauss outlines this radical distinction. Roughly speaking, the more we know about the physical composition of things, the less familiar they are to our experience. We know the table upon which I write is made of molecules, but this is hardly the table we write on. A further penetration of the physical composition of things, results in formula which are actually contradictory to our own experience to the extent they posit concepts we could never experience. In quantum mechanics, things may be in two different places at the same time.

Let me contrast a practice which at the first seems equally remote, from our world, but which, upon examination becomes not only meaningful but logical. Like the fact that when a young man in the interior of the main island of Fiji, Viti-Levu, must in order to secure the betrothal of a young woman, present to younger brother of the woman a fine Fijian war club. What could be the equivalence between a young woman and a war club? Briefly the answer is, they have the same finality, in that the women bear children that reproduce the group, and the men secure cannibal victims whose sacrifice to the gods brings such benefits as the fertility of women and crops. Indeed, the illustrated club, has a generic name of “the penis of the warrior” the same can be said for the constituted position of Fijian warrior-groups, as procurers of human sacrifice in return for their privilege as wife-takers to the chiefs. Here is the same equivalence between the betrothed woman and the cannibal victim. By this time, however it probably will appear to you that in the Fijian culture this relationship is logical, for this one need not only receive congratulations for the ability to recreate symbolically the relationships of a culture with a strange ontology. But notice in addition, that logic is something that goes on within your own mind, what has transpired is one’s ability to internalize as one’s own meaningful logic the way another society is culturally organized. Method and truth are one. By the powers of Human minds to symbolically appropriate at least the lineaments of

cultural orders, people are able to express and communicate the Other as the self. This is called anthropology.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- FIRTH, Raymond, 1950, *Primitive Polynesian Economy*, New York, The Humanities Press.
- JEVONS, William Stanley, 1888 [1871], *The Theory of Political Economy*, London & New York, MacMillan and Co.
- HARCOURT, Bernard, 2011, *The Illusion of Free markets: Punishments and the Myth of Natural Order*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- HOLLIS, Martin & NELL, Edward, 1975, *Rational Economic Man*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- KAUL, Natasha, 2011, “How many zeroes are there in a trillion? On economics, neoliberalism, and economic justice”, March 23, URL : www.opendemocracy.net
- KLAMER, Arjo, 2001, “Late modernism and the loss of character in economics”, in *Postmodernism, economics and knowledge*, edited by Stephen Cullenberg, Jack Amariglio, David F. Ruccio, p. 75-101, London, Routledge.
- MCCLOSKEY, Deirdre, 2006, *The bourgeois virtues: Ethics for an Age of Commerce*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- POLANYI, Karl, 1947, “Our obsolete market mentality”, *Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 109-117.
- POLANYI, Karl, 1977, *The Livelihood of Man*, edited by W. Pearson Harry, New York, Academic Press.
- QUIGGIN, John, 2010a, *Zombie economics: How dead ideas still walk among us*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- QUIGGIN, John, 2010b, “Five zombie ideas that refuse to die”, October 15, URL: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/10/15/five-zombie-economic-ideas-that-refuse-to-die/>
- REDDY, William M., 1984, *The Rise of Market Culture: The Textile Trade and French Society, 1750–1900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- SEN, Amartya, 1997, “Rational fools: A critique of the behavioral foundations of economic theory”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 6, n° 4, p. 317–344.
- SERVET, Jean-Michel, 2009, “Toward an alternative economy: Reconsidering the market, money, and value”, in *Market and society: The Great Transformation Today*, edited by Hann Chris, Hart Keith, p. 72–90, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- ZELIZER, Viviana A. Rotman, 2011, *Economic Lives: How Culture Shapes the Economy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

OUR GIFT PARADIGM¹

Mary Douglas

Dear Alain,

[...]

I admire your large-scale review of the social sciences, and you know that I also deplore the dominant reigning paradigm, methodological individualism. I relish your account of its history as an imperialist land-grabbing attack on the small nations. A lot of sociologists and economists are beginning to be aware of the chains of their serfdom, but are completely floored for lack of any alternative approach. You make me suspect that the successful alternative must be on the same imperial scale.

Your presentation of the Maussian gift model proposes just such an alternative. Wittily you ask what we, as heirs of Durkheim and Mauss, in this intellectual gift-exchange system have to offer in exchange for what we have received from Lévi-Strauss and Lacan? Your answer is to analyse the system of the gift. As you say, it is a totally counter-intuitive notion for the economists.

Why? Because they are enslaved by their psychological model of the rational individual. Their sovereign rational being is the system of motives and desires which explains the market system. The two systems interlock as one. You said this.

To remove the obstacle, you/MAUSS need, like all would be imperialists, to make allies, and try some *ju-jitsu*. You might subvert their root paradigm by embracing and extending it. I suggest the ethnomethodologists and phenomenologists and English anthropologists of the “sixties” and “seventies” and later, could help the exchange of arguments.

The idea of “market” is stripped of all its social features, it is a mechanism, a system working automatically and impersonally. Mauss’ boldest and most central idea is that gift is always a system. This, to my eye, is prior to the matter of paradox, ambiguity, and the questions of who is the giver and who the recipient

¹ This letter addressed by Mary Douglas to Alain Caillé was published under the title “Notre paradigme du don,” in *La Revue du MAUSS*, n° 27, « De l’anti-utilitarisme. Anniversaire, bilan et controverses », 2006, p. 88-91.

They are important, but secondary to questions about gift systems. To do justice to the originality of Mauss, and to the power and depth of *The Gift*, requires his scheme to be given the same treatment. Strip it of adventitious elements, cut out loose items of psychology, but keep the essential rationality of the exchanging humans. Present Mauss's idea of gift systems as able to be as abstract as market theory.

You have abstracted three elements of gift: to give, to accept and to reciprocate. They are fundamental to social interaction, therein lies their obligatory nature. Consistently to refuse any one of these interactions puts the person outside of the community. Anthropologists define humans as rational social beings. On that definition behaviour that leaves the individual with no scope for social interaction is irrational. A basic demand for ongoing interaction corresponds to the three rules of a gift-system, give, accept, reciprocate, and be prepared to go on obeying all three.

Mauss' fourth principle is rivalry, the agonistic element, which is more or less prominent in different gift systems. It follows ineluctably from the way the various social systems have institutionalized the distribution of status. And it inevitably it varies, a big subject, so I ask if I may leave it aside for the present.

Ethnographers naturally tend to focus on major systems of gift exchange. Exchanges of women are often highly regulated; rules for betrothal, marriage, adultery, inheritance, etc are generally integrated with other major exchanges, such as tribute, compensations and penalties. We tend to take it for granted that any such collection of rules has distinctive patterns through which the daily life of the members of a society percolate. It is a special merit of the sociology students of the late 1960s and early 1970s to have examined the ethnography of every day behaviour and thereby to uncover the rules that sustain the possibility of social interaction. Garfinkel and his colleagues were looking at the infra-structure of communication. They remarked the agonistic element in the shortest exchanges. Their discussion of the function in speech of inarticulate noises such as 'mm' or 'er' or 'hmm' is relevant. When two are conversing, one may be entitled to be silent for long stretches of time, but continued commitment to the speech event is necessary. The monologist needs to receive at regular intervals such grunts from the silent other as tokens of attention. In the *Ethnography of Speech* such a rule of voiced interaction corresponds to the obligation in the system of gift to make some return.

Mauss's three rules for a gift exchange system hold good right through to the smallest and least regarded social exchanges. From experience we know it works,

but has to be controlled, at the family Christmas or birthday confrontations. It is the reading of the social situation that informs the 'too lavish' or 'too miserly' judgment, not the direct equivalence of one material gift with the other.

Mauss' three elementary rules apply to markets also. Market's three basic requirements are: first, an item offered to open the series; second, acceptance; and third, a return. The crucial difference is that it is an exchange system that seeks immediate equivalence of items. The valuation is short term. Market is not mixed up with creating social status, so the agonistic element is confined to the very big exchanges, such as when one press baron or media company makes a bid in the hope of eliminating its rivals.

On this basis we, (MAUSS), might hope to out-bid the claim of the economic paradigm to hegemony in the social sciences? We might be able to absorb it in a more general theory of exchange, emulating Keynes' General Theory which integrated the separate theories of money, interest and labour into one grand model. That is what your project of a *Mouvement anti-utilitariste dans les sciences sociales* will push you to!

[...]

PREFACE TO THE CHINESE TRANSLATION
OF *THE GIFT*¹

Alain Caillé

This preface exposes the theoretical debates that ensued after the publication of Marcel Mauss's The Gift, and presents the major lessons the journal MAUSS has drawn from it.

It is a great honor that Zhe Ji asked me to write a preface to his Chinese translation of *The Gift* by Marcel Mauss. A great honor, but a daunting one if, as I believe, this text – and it is hard to say whether it is a long article or a short book – is the most important text in the history of the social sciences. By the same token, it is also one of the most decisive in forming an understanding of the paramount questions in moral and political philosophy, not to mention economics or psychology. If this is a formidable honor, it is because of the particular difficulty in trying, in just a few pages, to convince a reader who knows nothing of Marcel Mauss of the importance that I attribute to him. It is all the more difficult given that, while Mauss is essential to sociology, the discipline's textbooks do not consider him a sociologist. Even though all the French philosophers of the post-Second World War era had read him – notably Jean-Paul Sartre, who dedicated the most comprehensive section in his *Notebooks for an Ethics* to him – Mauss does not appear in any histories of philosophy. Economists, for their part, are almost totally unaware of him, even though he is required reading for anyone interested in Karl Polanyi – and even though, in the United States, the works of George Akerlof, Samuel Bowles, and Herbert Gintis, the theorists of strong reciprocity, have simply rediscovered a few fragmentary aspects of what *The Gift* reveals on a large scale.

¹ English version of Alain Caillé, « Préface à l'Essai sur le don en chinois », *Revue du MAUSS*, 2012, n° 39, p. 429-442.

In short, for specialists in the humanities and social sciences, Mauss is an ethnologist, and nothing more. And a very specific sort of ethnographer at that: in 1928, along with Paul Rivet, he founded the Ethnology Institute at the Sorbonne, which historically has been the primary training ground for professional scientific ethnologists in France. He was the author of an *Ethnography Handbook*, which codified the discipline. But he never did research in the field, never specialized in any population, and would therefore be immediately rejected by any contemporary department of ethnology. So, what sort of ethnologist is he? A desk ethnologist, who had read all of the ethnographic literature of his era, who spoke or read more languages than we can now be sure of, and of whom spellbound students often said, “Mauss knows everything.”

We will see that it is his capacity to gather and synthesize an enormous quantity of ethnographic data, from every region of the world, which endows *The Gift* with its unparalleled breadth. And this is a central reason why this text – written by an ethnologist who wasn’t – is so important for sociology, philosophy and economics. All of these disciplines necessarily begin with their own anthropological assumptions, with a certain representation of the human subject and its deepest motives. *Homo economicus*, for example, in economics. But even in sociology, this vision of man is, most often, an almost totally speculative, *a priori* vision constructed to suit the needs of a style of argumentation specific to that discipline. With Mauss, for the first time a form of anthropology developed that was not speculative but empirical, based on the study of dozens or hundreds of societies. And that changed everything. Without assuming the perfect accuracy of the empirical data he draws from, we finally have a more or less assuredly factual point of departure for studying how man functions in society.

MARCEL MAUSS

But if this is correct, the reader is right to ask why, then, is Mauss so little known or little recognized? To put a finer point on it, borrowing an excellent formulation by commentator Camille Tarot, why has he remained an “ultra-famous unknown?” “Ultra-famous” in the history of ethnology, where he is considered a classic author – even though some ethnologists, who specialize in a particular field and systematically refuse to make any generalizations, read

him only with distance and mistrust. But he is mostly unknown, and little recognized outside of this discipline. It may be time to extract him from this small niche.

Born on May 10, 1872, in Épinal, France, to a Jewish family, his mother was the sister of Émile Durkheim, founder of the French school of sociology. Mauss would become not just Durkheim's student and unruly disciple (he never turned in his papers on time), but also his intellectual heir, who would be tasked, after his uncle's death in 1917, with taking over as director of *L'Année sociologique*, the French school's central, interdisciplinary voice. We must understand, then, that if Mauss specialized in ethnology and comparative history of primitive religions, it was within the perspective of a Durkheimian brand of general sociology. Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that Mauss represents a crystallization and a repository of the entire French sociological tradition, initiated by Henri de Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte, and systematized by Durkheim: one of the three great traditions along with the German school (of Max Weber and Georg Simmel) and American school (the Chicago School, John Dewey, and Talcott Parsons).

One of the most significant reasons for Mauss's limited visibility in the history of sociology, apart from his ethnographic specialization, is the fact that he never wrote "a real book." Hundreds of articles and reviews, but never a whole book. Not even his dissertation on prayer was ever completed. As though he had wanted to forever preserve a sort of youthful vigor, an amateur or dilettante quality, enthralled as he was by so many subjects, it was impossible for him to remain weighed down for too long by any one in particular. His career thus proved to be brilliant but erratic. After passing the philosophy *agrégation* – a high-level competitive examination for the recruitment of teachers – in 1895 he enrolled in the École Pratique des Hautes Études, a place of distinction for scholarly studies in France, where he delved into Sanskrit and Indology under the supervision of Sylvain Lévi, a great Indologist whom he came to consider a second uncle. In 1901, although he still had not defended his dissertation, he was appointed chair for "the history of the religions of non-civilized peoples." We must read into this appointment a recognition of the Durkheim school of sociology, and acknowledgment of the importance of *L'Année sociologique*, directed by Durkheim with Mauss as its driving force, alongside his friend Henri Hubert. These two went on to publish two works which today remain authoritative in their fields: *Essay on the Nature and Function of Sacrifice* (1899) and *A Sketch of a General Theory of Magic* (1904).

It is also important to mention another extraordinary text, co-authored with Durkheim, *Concerning Some Primitive Forms of Classification* (1905), which was a veritable incubator not only for *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), Durkheim's great opus, but also for all the later structural works by a certain Claude Lévi-Strauss, as well as Georges Dumézil's work addressing archaic categories of thought. A great many other significant articles could be added to this list.¹ These served, in 1931 – still without a dissertation – to gain him an appointment to the Collège de France, the most prestigious place for higher education in France. With the country under Nazi occupation, in 1941 he was forced to quit his post by the Vichy government's anti-Jewish laws. He died in 1950. His most important text, which in a way condensed all his other work, and which both elucidates those other works and is elucidated by them in turn, is undeniably the text in the reader's hand now, *The Gift*, published in 1925 in *L'Année sociologique*.

THE GIFT

Before saying anything about this book's content, it is best to draw attention to one surprising characteristic: it is, both very easy and very difficult to read. This, in turn, surely explains its strange destiny as a book that is both very well-known – “ultra-famous” – but in fact very little recognized. Fond as he was of the factual and concrete, and foe of abstraction, it is easy to read because Mauss's writing is always perfectly simple and transparent. Almost invisible – it is unimpeded by style. Despite all this, what makes the text difficult to read is the great diversity of practices described, and ethnographic data in such extraordinary profusion that it makes the head spin. But all of this data is so well classified and organized based on clearly formulated questions, that the reader can get oriented and find his way easily. The other difficulty in reading this text, paradoxically, relates to the very simplicity of Mauss's writing, and his refusal of any form of abstraction. At first reading, or even the second, one does

¹ Of note, *Sociologie [Sociology]* (1901), with Paul Fauconnet, *Essai sur les variations saisonnières des sociétés eskimo [Essay on Seasonal Variations in Eskimo Societies]* (1906), with Henri Beuchat, *Appréciation sociologique du bolchévisme [A Sociological Assessment of Bolshevism]* (1924), *Les Techniques du corps [The Techniques of the Body]* (1935), *Une Catégorie de l'esprit humain, la notion de personne, celle de moi [A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self]* (1938).

not easily perceive that behind an enormous *exposé* that appears to be purely empirical, there is in fact an extremely rich, powerful theoretical organization that does not reveal itself as such. Therein lies another reason for Mauss's low visibility: he is not the author of an explicit sociological system that can easily be taught in university lecture halls. Having worked for more than thirty years in Mauss's footsteps, in my attempt to systematize some of his discoveries through a general, sociological lens (or, shall we say, a social science lens), I can testify to the fact that each time I felt I was making a theoretical or conceptual discovery, I realized that Mauss had already made that discovery and formulated it, but I hadn't noticed it before. Furthermore, and herein lies this text's paradoxical difficulty despite its apparent simplicity and accessibility: Mauss says just about everything there is to say on the – enormous – subject that he focuses on, but he does not say that he has said it. Only in saying it for him does one realize that he has already said it!

So, what has he said? What did he tell us, explicitly? The stated purpose of *The Gift* is to carry out a sort of archaeology of exchanges and contracts. By gathering data from the ancient world to Scandinavia, from the American Pacific Northwest to Melanesia, he determined that at the origins of human society there were no markets, there was no buying and selling, no give-and-take, no bar-ter. Nor were there contracts, and this discovery clearly has crucial implications for an entire strain of western political philosophy, stretching at least as far back as Thomas Hobbes and extending to John Rawls, by way of Locke, Rousseau, Spinoza and Kant, for whom the root of all society, at least in normative terms, was the original social contract. No market, no contract. What, then? The gift. As Mauss wrote in the first lines, “exchanges and contracts take place in the form of presents; in theory these are voluntary, in reality they are given and reciprocated obligatorily.” Formulated in a more synthetic manner: archaic society relied upon the three- fold obligation of giving, receiving, and reciprocating. Not upon exchange, but upon exchange-gifts, or gift-exchanges, in Mauss's words, as he vacillates between the two expressions. Not upon the contract, but upon what the theory of solidarism championed by Léon Bourgeois and Alfred Fouillée, influential in forming the French republicanism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, termed the “quasi-contract.”

Mauss unveiled the logic of the threefold obligation to give, receive, and reciprocate, by paying particular attention to the cases where this logic is manifested in the exacerbated form which he calls “total services of an agonistic

type.”¹ Why “total services”? The archaic system of giving is total in that it is not individuals who exchange with each other, but rather, they serve as intermediaries for entire families or clans. By the same token, it constitutes what Mauss calls a “total’ social phenomenon,”² by which he means that all of the society’s tightly interwoven dimensions – religious, judicial, moral, political, and economic – are expressed through this system, made visible, and set in motion. In a way, it makes the whole society resonate. This system of total services, wherein everything is given – “not solely property and wealth, moveable and immovable goods, and things economically useful,” but above all “acts of politeness, banquets, rituals, military services, women, children, dances, festivals, and fairs,”³ proves agonistic when the givers’ primary aim is to demonstrate, in an ostentatious manner, that they can give more and do it better than their recipients and rivals. Giving becomes a battle or even a war of generosity. Essentially, *The Gift* is devoted solely to the study of agonistic giving, and it intentionally leaves the question of simple, non-agonistic total services in shadow. These are what can be called gift-sharing.

The three principal examples developed by Mauss are the following: 1) the famous *potlatch* of the tribes of the Pacific Northwest, from Vancouver to Alaska, which were described particularly by Frantz Boas; 2) the *kula* trade practiced in the Trobriand Islands (in northeastern Papua New Guinea) as reported by Bronislaw Malinowski in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*; and 3) the *taonga* exchange of treasured property among the Maori of New Zealand. *Potlatch*, famous in anthropological literature, is particularly impressive for the dimensions of its agonistic rivalry. All is won or lost during the *potlatch*, great festivals in which the aim is to “flatten’ one’s rival,”⁴ for each to place the rival “in the shadow of his name”⁵ by giving more than he does. This game, wherein the winner is the one who seems to have lost the most (according to a logic that is closely related to the fight to the death for recognition, as described by Hegel’s master-and-slave dialectic), relies, says Mauss, on two principles: credit and honor.

¹ All English citations are from Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, [Transl.] W. D. Halls (New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1990); Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 7.

² Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 3.

³ Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 5. Additionally, one could say, to demonstrate how close the system of giving is to the system of war, vengeance, insult, blows, injury, witchcraft, and death.

⁴ Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 37.

⁵ Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 39.

Credit: one does not return the gift immediately, but later on, as late as possible, and in excess of what has been given. And all the more strikingly, the later the gift is reciprocated. Only those who are, or believe themselves to be, powerful enough can defer the counter-gift this way. For he who does not reciprocate in excess of what he received, loses *honor*: what in China is called losing face¹ – and falls under the power of the giver, to the point of becoming his slave. This is the second principle of *potlatch*. When this rivalry between equals becomes exacerbated, each in turn trying to prove that he can always give more, it is no longer a question of giving but of destroying, consuming the most treasured property to show that he lives by desire, and is not a slave to needs, that he lives beyond utility, and against all utility. No doubt the institution of *potlatch* is paroxysmal, and it was observed in a period of great disruption in these Indian societies. But this does not diminish the essential anthropological lesson: the gift that cannot be reciprocated, and which, beyond this, annihilates the recipient. It is the maker of masters and slaves.

The Trobriand *kula* is clearly more peaceful, but it, too, involves a noble form of trade that links the Trobriands and neighboring islands in a form of rivalry revolving around a point of honor, since, when one's turn comes, it is necessary to give the most treasured and coveted possessions, the *vaygu'as*, necklaces and bracelets in “a pretty mother-of-pearl made from red spondylus,” of which no one is ever really the final owner. They must always be put back into circulation, and back into jeopardy – like the Davis Cup, for example. The value of these objects increases depending on who the previous owners have been, and the means by which they changed hands. As in the case of the *potlatch*, there are many forms of barter involving utilitarian possessions, but this utilitarian trade, or *gimwali*, is only tolerated when it occurs in the interstices of this noble trade. Above all, the two must not be confused. Nothing is worse for a Trobriand *big man* than to be accused of having conducted his *kula* “like a *gimwali*.”

The Maori example of giving treasured possessions, known as *taonga*, plays a particularly important role in *The Gift* because it was on this system that Mauss based his answer to the question posed at the beginning of the text, regarding this

¹ Mauss also observed, in reference to the *potlatch*, that “every Kwakiutl Häida noble has exactly the same idea of ‘face’ as the Chinese man of letters or officer.” He adds, “To lose one’s face is indeed to lose one’s soul. It is in fact the dancing ‘face’ the dancing mask, the right to incarnate a spirit, to wear a coat of arms, a totem, it is really the *persona* [...] that are called into question in this way, and that are lost at the potlatch” (p. 39).

system of circulating property and services, regulated by the threefold obligation to give, receive, and reciprocate:

“What rule of legality and self-interest, in societies of a backward or archaic type, compels the gift that has been received to be obligatorily reciprocated? What power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?”¹

He answers this question by drawing from the words of a Maori sage, Ranapiri, leading him to conclude that there is a *hau*, a “spirit of things given,” a magical and spiritual power, a *mana*, an energy that is at once propitious and dangerous, capable of killing him who wishes to keep for himself that which he received without reciprocating or giving in turn. This spirit of things given is the spirit of the first giver. The corollary to this proposition is that in these societies there is no clean separation between people and things, between subject and object. The archaic universe is a totally personalized universe. This is why giving means giving something of oneself. In giving, the self is given.

MAUSS’S COMMENTARY

Is this the right answer? Moreover, is this the right question? The only important question? This is not the time for us to enter into this debate which has already produced a mass of literature. As all great texts have done, such as those by Marx and Weber, *The Gift* generated numerous critiques and attempted refutations, from the most empirical to the most conceptual, some diametrically opposed to others. Ideal-typically, it is possible to distinguish four broad readings of *The Gift*. The first, from an economic perspective, sees the act of giving as a distortion of economic interest, a form of socially-instituted hypocrisy. Another, which could be labeled inexistentalist, refuses to speak of giving in reference to the actions described by Mauss, or only recognizes the existence of giving in very limited regions or time periods. A third type of interpretation recognizes the reality of the act of giving, but sees it only as the result of a more profound and original reality, such as sacrifice, exchange, or debt. In

¹ Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 3.

opposition to this third interpretation, I believe that the fourth reading is correct: the system of giving unearthed by Mauss must be recognized as an original social act, which, as such, cannot be explained by anything other than itself, nor can it be related to deeper realities such as religion or the economy, because it is the act of giving that serves to properly elucidate these other realities.

But this position, which attributes to *The Gift* all the importance that it deserves, can be difficult to defend. It must be conquered, or reconquered from Mauss's most brilliant disciples and heirs, whose glory has partially eclipsed his own, as if they had placed him in the shadow of their names. The three primary heirs, if we consider only France, are Claude Lévi-Strauss, Georges Bataille, and Pierre Bourdieu. In 1950, differentiating himself from Mauss in his introduction to a collection of texts including *The Gift*, Lévi-Strauss, one of the greatest anthropologists of the second half of the twentieth century, the author of *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, signed the birth certificate of what would become structuralism. In other words, this was the debut of the system of thought which, beginning in France in the 1960s, would go on to conquer university campuses across the United States, along with Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, Lyotard, and followed by Baudrillard, among others, under the name "French Theory." Today, a number of dominant strains of thought in the social sciences around the world belong to a framework that has come to be called poststructuralist.

Lévi-Strauss' criticism of Mauss is twofold. First, he criticizes him for having taken seriously the remarks made by a native, Ranapiri, who explained gift reciprocity through *hau*, a spiritual power – whereas Lévi-Strauss believed that it was Ranapiri himself who ought to be explained. He then criticizes Mauss for naming three distinct obligations – giving, receiving, and reciprocating – when in reality, he says, there is only one obligation, that of exchanging. Lévi-Strauss went on to task himself with formalizing and explaining the structure of the exchange of women, and did so brilliantly. But this came at the price of forgetting; as his primary critic at the time, philosopher Claude Lefort, said, of "forgetting the struggle of men." And, it could be added, forgetting giving itself, as it was dissolved in the concept of exchange.

Bataille, in the footsteps of Hegel and Nietzsche, established an erotology which proved to be very influential among the literary avant-garde, emphasizing the dimensions of struggle and destruction, to the extent that ultimately all that he saw in the act of giving was the agonistic quality of consumption and the

destruction of what he called “the accursed share.”¹ Lastly, Bourdieu saw in the act of giving a means for accumulating “symbolic capital,” the capital of prestige, which simultaneously served to mask, embody, and distract from the accumulation of economic capital.

The drawback to these different readings, regardless of their respective merits, is that they flatten the system of giving unveiled by Mauss, reducing it to a formal structure of exchange, to total debauchery, or, finally, to economic interest. There is much to be won, on the other hand, by taking Mauss seriously and transcending these first-degree readings of *The Gift* to reveal its true theoretical framework.

FROM MAUSS TO MAUSS

For thirty years, this has been the work undertaken by *Revue du MAUSS*, an international interdisciplinary journal of social science and political philosophy, whose name, Anti-utilitarian Movement in the Social Sciences (in French: *Mouvement anti-utilitariste en sciences sociales* or *MAUSS*), explicitly pays homage to Marcel Mauss, but also indicates the aims of the journal: to combat all utilitarian and economic reductionism. Its objective is not, or is only marginally, to contribute to the scholarly study of Mauss’s work; rather, it is to reveal the contemporary issues contained in Mauss’s work, to elucidate its theoretical contributions to the social sciences as they address today’s problems. The starting point for this journal, which was founded in 1981, and for the school of thought that has slowly built around it, was the observation that since the 1970s, social science and political philosophy have become massively utilitarian and economically oriented. In other words, they had increasingly become organized, via Rational Choice Theory (also called Rational Action Theory), into a sort of generalized economic science. Their central premise is that ultimately human subjects are merely economic beings, mutually indifferent to one another, solely concerned with maximizing their personal utility. The resulting conviction, which has become dominant around the world, is that the only form of efficient coordination among these beings is the market, and, ultimately, the

¹ Jacques Lacan later gave a structuralist interpretation of Freudian psycho-analysis, inspired both by Lévi-Strauss and Bataille.

speculative, financial market. Social science in the late twentieth century may thus be said to have served as an alibi for financial, profit-driven globalization. To express our opposition to this evolution of ideas, *The Gift* seemed necessary, as one of its primary conclusions is that “it is our western societies who have recently made man an ‘economic animal’. But we are not yet all creatures of this genus.”¹

But in focusing on *The Gift*, with the aim of formulating a critique of utilitarianism, we came to recognize little by little that we had underestimated the text’s richness; it contains, like hidden treasure, all the necessary elements for a general theory of sociology. The journal contributes to this theory in developing what it calls the “gift-paradigm,” a way of considering society as the result of its members’ decisions to give or to not give – or to take. Compare it to the sum of the shifts between the cycle of give-receive-reciprocate unearthed by Mauss, and the complementary cycle of accept- refuse-keep. Each time, what is at play is a decision to shift from war to peace (or *vice versa*), or from individual interest to common interest (or *vice versa*).

Clearly, it is impossible to present here the general sociological theory thus derived from *The Gift*. I will only mention, very briefly, four of its essential ideas.

- The first, and perhaps the most difficult to understand, is that giving, of the type reconstructed by Mauss, has nothing, at least in its origins, to do with charity, generosity, or altruism. It is above all a political act, *the* political act, through which the actor shifts from war and hostility to alliance and peace. But the inverse is equally true. Giving is political. Politics, in turn – that is, a society’s generative moment – is nothing other than the sum of gifts and gift refusals mentioned above. And a society certainly must be politically instituted before it can begin to think about utilitarian questions or production.
- The great defect in all economic theories, whether utilitarian or Rational Action Theories, is that they presuppose that human beings have only a single motive or personal interest. They are one-dimensional. The attentive reader of *The Gift* will find a four-dimensional theory, much more powerful and convincing, which shows that we do not obey just one motive, but

¹ Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 76.

four, organized in two opposing pairs: self-interest versus interest for others (empathy); and obligation (social and biological) versus creative-freedom. Mauss shows in his “Conclusion Regarding General Sociology and Morality”¹ that these four motives are equally present and work to balance each other. One could say that this is the only way we can reach the middle road.

- One of the greatest obstacles to the recognition of Mauss in sociology has to do with the fact that he bases his conclusions on archaic societies. He sees clearly that at the very heart of modern society there remain, and must remain, traces of what he calls “noble gifts.” But he does not develop this observation enough. A large part of the work of *MAUSS* for the past twenty years has been to demonstrate that the universe of giving is still omnipresent today. This presence is at the forefront of what we call “primary sociality,” the sphere of the family, the neighborhood, camaraderie, and friendship, within which individual personality is more important than functional efficacy. But also in “secondary sociality,” in business or administration, where, on the contrary, functionality matters more than personality. Because these functions are borne by human beings – by people, the logic of the threefold obligation of giving, receiving, and reciprocating remains a determining factor. It must be noted that primary and secondary sociality can only function or unfold within a more general political framework, that is, the sum of gifts and gift refusals (or predations), made by the members of a political community.

- Finally, in Mauss’s view, his moral and political conclusions were undoubtedly most important. By unearthing the universe of archaic giving, Mauss believed that he had unveiled what he termed the “rock of eternal morality.” And rightly so, I believe. It is indeed by joining in the uncertain game of giving that we gain access to morality. But it is this game, by the same token, which inspires politics. To truly understand this point, it is important to know that as a young man, Mauss was a friend and collaborator of Jean Jaurès, the leader of French republican socialism, who was assassinated in 1914. A Marxist socialist, but of a brand of Marxism that refused to reduce morality to economic determinism. Mauss would remain a socialist militant his whole life. But also, in the name of this same ideal, he became one of the

¹ Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 100.

first and most lucid critics of the excesses of Soviet Bolshevism. He wrote *A Sociological Assessment of Bolshevism* (1924) around the same time as *The Gift*. What is true in one case is true in the other: he aimed to show that, while man cannot be reduced to *homo economicus*, a cold automaton of personal interest, nor should we swing to the other extreme, forcing him to become an altruist. This can only lead to violence and mass murder. The secret to politics and democracy is to arrange a space in which men “learn how to oppose and give to one another without sacrificing themselves to one another.”¹

This lesson is timelier than ever, when it has become so urgent to apply it on a global scale.

CONCLUSION

I hope that I have given Chinese readers a few reasons to take a close look at the book they are holding now. I would have liked to do a better job of showing why Mauss, of all western writers, is certainly one of the most apt to engage in dialogue with Chinese thought. But time, space, and, above all, competence were lacking for that task. Nonetheless, I would like to venture two remarks in conclusion. First, it seems to me that in his insistence on considering “total social facts,” and placing every social phenomenon within a complex whole, Mauss is nearest to the radical dialectical immanence that seems to be characteristic of Chinese thought. On a related note, there is a question I have not yet addressed, though it is doubtless central to the debate on giving: in the gift, what is given? Utility? Friendship? Hostility? Who is giving, in reality: he who gives, or he who receives? There is no assured answer to these questions. It all depends on context, and quantity. Giving can be the best or the worst of all things. The worst? Confucius wrote: “The small man thinks of favors he may receive.” To receive, and not to give, then. But I repeat that this is all a matter of intention, timing, style, and quantity. The fact remains that, ultimately, the true object of giving is certainly energy: *hau*, or *mana*. Or perhaps the vital breath, the *qi*.

¹ Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 82.

DIALOGICAL BRIDGES AND ANTI-UTILITARIAN ALLIANCES¹

Ilana F. Silber

INTRODUCTION

Like all binary structures, the opposition between utilitarian and non-utilitarian conceptions is energizing and “good to think with.” But it is also one that threatens to become dangerously simplifying and taken for granted. The more so when it carries the assumption of a sharp inequality between the two parties: not only does it reinforce the belief that there are two main camps opposing each other, one utilitarian, the other non or anti-utilitarian. But we also feel that in this big divide, the utilitarian, economic intellectual camp is triumphant and much more unified than those – such as “us” assembled in this colloquium – who rather opt for a non- or anti- utilitarian approach to the social sciences.

Underpinning this sense of inferiority of the non-utilitarian camp is the sense, and reasonable fear, of a growing fit between utilitarian conceptions and the contemporary global structures of “capitalism” – a catch all term for the world at large in fact – as commonly described by social scientists themselves: that is, structures that are not only economic and organizational but also cultural. In this all-encompassing hegemonic perspective, utilitarian conceptions are taken to be increasingly widely shared and taken for granted, anchored both in ordinary common sense and more elaborate dominant worldviews and ideologies, now often encapsulated under the label of “neo-liberalism;” as such, utilitarian orientations are believed to permeate not only organizations

¹ A previous version of this article was delivered as a paper at the international colloquium on the *Non Utilitarian Foundations of the Social Sciences*, Cerisy-la-Salle, France, May 17-23, 2015. French translation in Caillé, A., Chaniel Ph., Dufoix S. & Vandenberghe F. (eds.), *Des sciences sociales à la science sociale. Fondements anti-utilitaristes*, La Bibliothèque du MAUSS, Lormont, Le Bord de l'eau, 2018, p. 339-352.

and institutions but also what Tocqueville would have identified as our current “habits of the heart.”¹

This article will start by challenging the self-evidence of this binary structure and entailed diagnosis, however useful it may be as a prop in our own anti-utilitarian self-definition and collaborative effort at consolidating the anti-utilitarian foundations of the social sciences. From a theoretical perspective, moreover, there is much to earn from focusing our energies not only, or at least not so much on battling the flaws of utilitarian approaches, but also and perhaps even rather, on forging badly needed dialogical bridges and theoretical alliances in our own “camp,” that is, between various forms of anti-utilitarian approaches. I shall then move to illustrate this argument by highlighting the many untold affinities between two strong anti-utilitarian currents (incidentally, both originating in France) in particular: the pragmatic sociology of criticism and neo-Maussian theory. Finally, the article discusses the dialogical benefits entailed in making these two trends meet in research on the gift – a topic of quintessential significance to the utilitarian *vs.* anti-utilitarian debate and by implication, to any intent to better understand and perhaps even improve the fabric of social life at large.

RENEGOTIATING THE ASSUMPTION OF UTILITARIAN HEGEMONY

I shall not spend much time contesting the picture of contemporary civilization as dominated by the *ubris* and ills of a form of market fundamentalism, underpinning and underpinned by utilitarian patterns of behavior and thought, themselves disseminated through ever more pervasive technologies of utilitarian ranking, competition and evaluation.

All that is of course quite convincing. But it is only part of the picture. On the ground in fact, there is no dearth of counter forces and trends. Recognizing these does not imply falling into a rosy, naive and harmonious account of the state of things: on the contrary, the counter trends we need keep in mind happen to range the whole spectrum from rather “nice” and benevolent to horribly, fiercely “nasty” and malevolent. On the rather nice and positive side of things, it

¹ Appropriately here, Tocqueville used the term to allude not only to emotions, but also moral orientations and dispositions of the mind, permeating customary practices, or in his own language, “mores” and “manners.”

would be a pity indeed not to take some hope from the growth of the nonprofit, associative sector or solidary economy, the multiplication and expansion of participatory arenas, open sources and “convivialist” endeavours on an international scale, often via the sphere of the internet but not only.

In terms familiar to most of us here, we may well see in these as many and rather positive symptoms of a vast return of the gift, and of the need to “bring the gift back in” when trying to reach for a diagnosis of our times or as Peter Wagner would put it, “interpret the present.” This does not mean closing our eyes to the complex, paradoxical and agonistic potential of gift-relations, the so-called “darker” sides or “perversions” of the gift, nor the combination of utilitarian and non-utilitarian motives and interests possibly combining, in ever fragile configurations in such trends and projects. Still, even if we take these complex dynamics into account, we remain well within the pale of (rather peaceful and beneficial) anti-, non- or certainly not exclusively utilitarian developments.

In a much less pleasant vein, however, we cannot but sense the limitations of a mere “utilitarian” label when trying to make sense of the too many, now near routine explosions of violence and acts of cruelty across the world, sheer “evil” as Jeffrey Alexander reminds us in simple strong terms. If some may be driven by plain material greed and thirst for power, many are not so easy to classify as either brashly utilitarian or anti-utilitarian. Going to one pole of that spectrum, should we just accept the self-definition of those cumulative acts of violence that poise themselves these days as partaking of an ideological, religious fight against current materialistic and utilitarian (usually also deemed “Western”) forces across the globe? At any rate, it would seem mistaken, even foolish, to simply lump them together with more peaceful and convivial expressions of anti-utilitarianism. And while more convincing, is it sufficient to interpret them as just an extreme symptom of the gift’s agonistic, paradoxical potentialities or even perversions? Could we perhaps address these forms of self-labelled ‘anti-utilitarian’ violence as stemming from what Alain Caillé suggestively termed the divisive, “dia-bolic” register of gift dynamics (ignoring-taking-refusing-keeping) taking over the “sym-bolic,” connective gift cycles? (Caillé, 2015)? Or could these diabolic dynamics simply consist of the ugly head of utilitarianism rising again in its very own perverse and exacerbated fashion? These are difficult issues, which need still be thought through more fully in the framework of a comprehensive anti-utilitarian gift paradigm.

Be this as it may, the question remains what trends, from “plain” utilitarian to benevolently or “diabolically” anti-utilitarian, are currently dominant in relative

weight and scope. But judging from the above quick survey at any rate, it is far from obvious that “utilitarian” orientations have a solid upper ground, even if we need admit that our own favored, beneficial expressions of anti-utilitarianisms do not fare well in the battle relatively to utilitarian or anti-utilitarian forces we strongly wish to resist or at least better tame.

MAKING ROOM FOR “SLOW” AND DIALOGICAL THEORY

Moving now away from issues of *diagnosis* of current trends and threats in the “real” world at large, my aim here is rather to address our sense of *theoretical* inferiority. To begin with, there is no reason to believe that basic theory need, should always be “reactive,” *i.e.* shaped in reaction to current trends and diagnostic urgencies of the moment. To the same extent that we talk of “slow” food, slow press, “slow consumption” etc., I dare say that there is a place for slow theory, *i.e.* theory that does not cave in to immediate constraints and influences; and does not cave in, least of all of course, to hyper-utilitarian trends in particular. Moreover, we have seen in fact quite a flourishing of theoretical work, not at all intimidated by any form of utilitarian and/or economic thinking. In fact, “we” anti-utilitarians may even be on the rise intellectually and theoretically at least if not institutionally – as it is all too evident that academic institutions are assailed by market- and “new managerial” methods and aspirations – in many corners of the world.

But we do appear to be quite dispersed and fragmented, less able to rally around a simple, unitary and unifying anti-utilitarian alternative to what appears as a more unified and easily convincing, hegemonic utilitarian paradigm. In that respect, however, I advocate following in the footsteps of sociologist Donald Levine, alas recently deceased, and of those who have embraced his legacy in identifying and promoting a growing “dialogical” turn in the world of sociological theory (Levine, 1995; Camic and Joas, 2003; Schneiderman, 2015). In such perspective, a state of theoretical fragmentation becomes a possible source of strength rather than weakness, one that encourages us to confidently engage in good “slow” and dialogical theorizing. This entails searching for common ground and building bridges between different anti-utilitarian theoretical approaches. It also implies welcoming complex, multidimensional, multilayered theorizing.

For better or for worse, slow and dialogical theory is also complexifying theory indeed, avoiding the temptation of overly simplistic, simplifying snapshots. For a start, many of us I believe would not preach getting rid entirely and radically of the market, nor of a good dose of practical and even valorized, “value-rational” (in Weber’s sense) utilitarian orientations, such as underpin common practices of efficiency and rationality, as well as technological, medical and scientific advances. (Among other things, this is the kind of practical, utilitarian rationality that allowed us to catch our trains and planes to come and convene at the Chateaux of Cerisy-la-Salle in due time to promote an anti-utilitarian intellectual endeavour.)

Neither would we contest that such utilitarian orientations deserve a place when theorizing the organizational and cultural dynamics of human collectivities. The problem rather is where and how to position these relatively to other, alternative, non- or even anti-utilitarian modes of orientations in an overall interpretation of social life, in past and present societies. Restating the question in more empirical and comparative cultural terms: when, where, and under what conditions, do we see emerging specific, variable combinations and configurations of utilitarian and anti-utilitarian orientations?

Phrased as it is, such a question in itself calls for quite a complex, and long-term research program. Indeed, current anti- or as I prefer to call it, non-utilitarian thinking does convey a message that is increasingly, even somewhat dauntingly complex, nuanced and plural. It is striking in fact how many titles of recent books and articles give pride of place to a terminology of plurality and multiplicity. Think for example of Bernard Lahire’s *L’Homme pluriel*, 1998, *Monde pluriel*, 2012; Laurent Thévenot’s *L’Action au pluriel*, 2006, or in a different, macro-or mega “global” vein, the ongoing debates concerning such notions as “multiple modernity,” multiple or “plural democracy” and “multipolar world order” debates (Eisenstadt, 2000; Blokker, 2009; Mouffe, 2008). In a same spirit, however, we need also recognize that there are multiple forms of both utilitarian and anti-utilitarian thinking.

The point becomes then to encourage more dialogue, mutual encounter and fructification across the whole spectrum of approaches giving priority to either utilitarian or anti-utilitarian orientations in the interpretation and explanation of either past or present social experience. Within this very rich spectrum, my focus for present purposes is on the need to forge dialogical bridges in our own “camp,” that is, between various forms of anti-utilitarian approaches.

In such regard, I find it useful to draw attention to a volume that first appeared in German now ten years ago already, Hans Joas and Wolfgang Knoebl's collection of twenty lectures *On Social Theory (OST)*.

The reason this volume deserves discussion here is precisely because of its distinctive, explicit dialogical concern to connect between what might seem very different, even contradictory theoretical currents, and thereby correct for what may seem to be a mere sore state of theoretical fragmentation. In a same vein, I suggest to pay attention to the current expansion of a significant convergence – what these authors term sometimes a theoretical “corridor” – not addressed as such in that volume: namely, a revived interest in theorizing morality, as the latter emerges across a broad spectrum of trends aptly captured by Joas and Knoebl's useful notion of “anti-structuralisms,” themselves intertwined with new expressions of anti-utilitarianism and a plural, multi-dimensional approach to social action. In other words, I wish to highlight here the rise of theoretical currents that are not only intent to counter the rigidity of various holisms and structuralisms but also entail a deep resistance to all form of economicist and utilitarian reductionist thinking; and incidentally or not, also happen to draw systematic, analytical attention to morality, *i.e.* to conceptions of the good, proper action, life or society as a major and distinct (if not necessarily dominant) component of individual experience and public discourse.¹

To some extent, such anti-utilitarian trends of course pursue a grand lineage of “classical” sociological theory. Far from being a novel invention of the last decades, resistance to plainly utilitarian, instrumental and economicist conceptions of human action and social arrangements was thus already a source of affinities not only between Simmel, Weber and Parsons (Levine, 2000), but also Durkheim and Marx. Anti-utilitarian conceptions, moreover, also long accompanied various forms of macro-sociological structuralisms, in the sense of theories giving priority to collective institutions and organizational or symbolic systems, or even those concerned (as already augured by Simmel) with more relational and processual types of structures (*e.g.* Elias).

By now, however, we also see a powerful synergy between a revitalized anti-utilitarian stance and what Joas and Knoebl label as “French anti-structuralist trends,” which include not only those discussed as such in a chapter where they

¹ While the terms moral and morality happen to frequently punctuate Joas and Knoebl's text, the study of moral orientations is not addressed as such in the volume; nor is it reperiortiated in the subject index.

deal with Castoriadis, Touraine and Ricœur, but also new forms of anti-structuralisms. Reflecting my own theoretical interests, I have in mind here the pragmatic “sociology of criticism,” as primarily associated with Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, and the neo-Maussian anti-utilitarian project led by Alain Caillé and a prolific group of collaborators – in part in the context of the interdisciplinary journal *Revue du MAUSS* (Mouvement anti-utilitarier en sciences sociales) – trends which have both kept expanding and making their mark since Joas and Knoebl’s volume was first published.

**A TALE OF UNTOLD AFFINITIES:
THE PRAGMATIC “SOCIOLOGY OF CRITICISM”
AND THE *MOUVEMENT ANTI-UTILITARIEN EN SCIENCES SOCIALES*
(MAUSS)**

However diverging in many ways and very differently positioned institutionally, there are many affinities between these two trends, which have not yet been sufficiently nor explicitly recognized.¹ Both currents share a definite, anti-utilitarian thrust. In neither case does this entail either a naive denial of the pervasive importance of material and other individual and group interests. Rather, what is at stake is a shared rejection of any form of sweeping reductionism or using Paul Ricœur’s terms, any systematic “hermeneutic of suspicion” (Ricœur, 1969) such as often characteristic of so-called “critical sociology” in general and Bourdieu’s “general economy of practices” in particular. Yet they also both powerfully demonstrate that opposition to critical sociology does not imply a lack of critical animus in general, nor a lack of opposition to prevalent forms of market fundamentalism and neoliberal policies in particular.² And significantly here, they both display a sustained, analytical interest

¹ Neither did they yet produced much collaborative work nor explicit expressions of alliance, although authors variously associated with the new pragmatic sociology or the (now defunct *GSPM*) (e.g. Bruno Frère, Paperman, Corcuff, Bruno Karsenti) have been published in the *Revue du MAUSS*.

² Contributing to further correct any unduly non-critical misinterpretations of the sociology of criticism, see recently Boltanski, 2011; Thévenot, 2011. In the case of the MAUSS, this entails a programmatic search for alternative, more solidary forms of economy and associative, participatory democracy – cutting across variegated ideological and political inclinations.

in meaning-making and human signification in general and moral ideas and practices in particular.¹

Further, both currents are engaged in a sustained, systematic effort at conceptualizing social action and cultural structures or “worlds of meaning” in a plural and pluralistic as well as multidimensional fashion. This also means that rather than denying the existence, or even importance of utilitarian orientations, they aim to subsume them within a more nuanced and complex rendering of the many possible coexisting and competing types of human motivations and inclinations with which utilitarian orientations may and do often combine – however irrational or paradoxical it may often seem – rather than granting them any automatic, necessary ontological priority.

This rising interest in moral orientations as part of a complex and multidimensional approach comes best manifest, in the case of the new French pragmatic sociology, in the elaborate conceptualization of a plurality of competing “regimes of justification,” articulating alternative principles of evaluation which individuals are apt to deploy in the process of trying to define the most proper or legitimate standard of action in situations of dispute, and thereby grope for or re-establish social agreements. As well known by now, this resulted in a detailed ideal- typical analysis and comparison of the criteria of equivalence, definitions of the public good (*principes supérieurs communs*), and internal “logic” of regimes of justification, resulting in the methodical outlining of some thirteen parameters of analysis for each regime.² We are thus faced with a form of French anti-structuralism that is very far from leaving its own privileged object of research – namely human competence for criticism and justification – utterly “unstructured.”

¹ Morality or the sociology of morality, however, are concepts which they themselves do not use abundantly. See however, already in the titles, Boltanski and Thévenot, 2000; Thévenot, 2002.

² This entails, for example, outlining a regime’s conception of the state of being associated with “greatness;” common human dignity; relevant subjects; objects; apparatus; tests; economy of resources; natural relations between beings, etc. One may question, of course, whether the specific moral/philosophical contents entailed would be applicable beyond the French context – an issue still left to tackle and of which the authors were themselves aware.

But importantly here, if still lesser known, a similar moral- analytical and pluralizing thrust has manifested itself in recent neo-Maussian efforts at elaborating a refined, flexible “gift-paradigm,” building upon but also reaching beyond Marcel Mauss’s own original dichotomic distinctions (interestedness/disinterestedness; spontaneity/obligation).¹ Rather than confining itself to “mere” practices of giving and gift-exchange as commonly and narrowly understood, the project aspires to gradually develop into a multidimensional form of general theory, mapping out a rich and nuanced eventail of relational-symbolic themes and orientations while also tracing their ongoing and often paradoxical dynamics and combinations (see *e.g.* Caillé, 2009; Chanial, 2008, 2010, 2011).

Both currents, moreover, underscore actors’ flexible capacity to switch orientations or combine between them in a dynamic, processual, often contradictory and yet essentially not entirely free fashion. Be it the “tipping over” from one regime of justification (or action) to another, with a corresponding range of “proofs” and “compromises,” in the context of the new French pragmatic sociology; or rather gift interactions constantly bridging as well as oscillating between a host of pervasive tensions and polarities (interestedness and disinterestedness, spontaneity and obligation, reciprocity and non-reciprocity, equality and hierarchy, solidarity and conflict, individualism and holism, etc.) in the context of a neo-Maussian generalizing gift theory.

In both perspectives, at any rate, human practices are deemed to be shaped by constraining, minutely monitored and monitoring logics, and recurrent patterns of action and implications, at the same time as they remain essentially fluid, fragile and far from fully predictable. Both perspectives also place these fragile and fluid “logics” in the context of an essentially pluralist, far from irenic perception of the fabric of social interaction as ever rife with both potential solidarity and conflict, and a pervasive, constant effort or symbolic “labor” – be it groping for justification and coordination in the case of the new pragmatic sociology, or for the symbolic negotiation and agonistic affirmation of identities in the neo-Maussian gift paradigm. In both cases, there are many interesting affinities with Axel Honneth’s ideas on the struggle for recognition, by now explicitly

¹ Symptomatic of a deep connection between the neo-Maussian gift paradigm and the issue of morality more generally, see also Caillé’s treatment of the gift as an autonomous source of normativity, sort of a moral code immanent in social relationships, possibly independently of religion or any form of ontological transcendence (Caillé, 2002). Also Godbout (1998) in particular, among many other writings of this closely associated author.

discussed (Caillé and Lazzeri, 2009; Basaure, 2011; the text of Alain Caillé and Frédéric Vandenbergue pre-circulated to us here).¹ To that extent, both theoretical currents allow for a pervasive component of flexibility and plural diversity that prevents any undue return to overly consensual, functionalist or holistic conceptions of moral cultural orientations and their relation to society.

The above convergences are all the more striking in contrast to other trends of theory still rather concerning themselves with the material and institutional resources or the social-classificatory and stratificatory operation of culture; or bent on dismissing specific cultural contents (and moral values in particular) as in any case arbitrary, socially irrelevant, helplessly polysemic or ideologically falsifying. Both French pragmatic and neo-Maussian trends thus richly buttress those who call for richer forms of cultural analysis, giving priority to contents and forms of meaning, but also underscoring the need to combine cultural interpretative work with a standing concern (in line with Hans Joas's own long standing ideas) with the creativity of action.² In more conventional sociological language, both schools of thought may be said to try to capture not only the relation between agency and structure, but also between agency, and here especially moral agency, and culture.³

Many more bridges as well as complementaries between these two interesting, dynamic theoretical currents themselves might and need be further explored. Many important issues also remain unsolved in both currents.⁴ Initially at least, both currents might seem to have been stronger on a micro- than macro-sociological level of sociological analysis, to be chiefly concerned at first

¹ For an examination of entailed convergences with Axel Honneth's ideas on the struggle for recognition, see Lazzeri and Caillé (2009).

² American strands of interpretative cultural analysis, however, especially as heavily influenced from the 1970s on by Clifford Geertz's famed writings, receive very little attention in *OST*.

³ The idea of culture, and of a pointedly cultural sociology, is of course crucial here, however obvious, over-extended and overused and abused the idea of culture may seem to be. More than can be detailed here indeed, there are also significant bridges and complementary relations between these two French theoretical currents and diverse strands of (mainly American) cultural sociology which have much preoccupied themselves with moral contents and boundaries while also tackling, however variously, ever-vexing issues in the analysis of cultural repertoires – e.g. works by Jeffrey Alexander, Robert Bellah, Michèle Lamont, Paul Lichterman, Nina Eliasoph, Robert Wuthnow, Ann Swidler. For a fuller analysis of the pragmatic sociology of criticism from a cultural sociological perspective, see Silber (2003) and (2016), forthcoming.

⁴ It is symptomatic of our times, but also of the growing diffusion of French pragmatic sociology, that what I see as an exemplary piece of dialogical theorizing, bridging between French pragmatic sociology and neo-institutional organizational theory (Cloutier and Langley, 2013) appeared of late in a journal of management studies.

with micro-processes at the level of achieved, practical inter-subjectivity. Far from closing themselves to macro-sociological analysis, however, much work has started to emerge in the context of these two perspective that aims to better explore how the processes best targeted in each may (or may not) deploy themselves differently in diverse macro-institutional domains as well as variously affect the public sphere in diverse cultural contexts.¹ But let us see now how both trends might be able to meet and perhaps dialogue around the topic of the gift, a topic of considerable importance not only to a neo-Maussian evolving gift-paradigm, but also any form of anti-utilitarian thinking.

A DIALOGUE AROUND THE GIFT

Research on the gift is a privileged place to start giving a sense of the possible mutual fructification between the two trends, via the application of Boltanski and Thevenot's ideas on "economies of worth" and "regimes of worth and justification". In such perspective, as I have argued more fully somewhere else, the gift, and more precisely, valorized dimensions and configurations of giving, emerge as a major source of criticism and justification (Silber, 2014). Crucial to such critical or justificatory operation of the gift, appears to be its capacity, even tendency to become associated with moral or religious virtues and ideal conceptions of the social world, in ways that may convey adhesion or resistance, buttress or contest structures of wealth and authority in specific institutional settings or society at large. Number of studies have thus worked at bridging between French pragmatic sociology and the study of benevolent and non-reciprocal orientations of the kind associated with the sphere of philanthropic, non-profit action and civic associations, or – using French terminology – *associations bénévoles* and the *économie solidaire* (e.g. Frère, 2009; Silber, 2011). As major components of "civil society" (often conceived of in

¹ With regard to the sociology of criticism, see Boltanski and Chiapello (1999), and various efforts at better incorporating politics and the politique felt to be weakly addressed by French pragmatic sociology (e.g. Blokker and Brighenti, 2011). On the neo-Maussian side even more evidently, there is now a growing field of reflexion on the part of gift-processes in contemporary public spheres (e.g. by Adolff and Mau; Caillé; Chanical; Godbout; Hénaff; Silber) and their importance for an enlarged understanding of the political dimension of social life ("le politique"); as well a systematic reaching out to Max Weber's work as providing the kind of flexible, multidimensional general and macro theorizing compatible with neo-Maussian theory of action (Caillé and Chanical, 2010; Caillé, 2014; Silber, 2010).

opposition to “the market” and “the state”), these forms of action and organizations appear to constitute an important site for the manifold expression of the gift’s critical and justificatory potentialities (Chaniel and Laville, 2004, 2005). Significantly here, these critical and justificatory capacities of the gift, have not yet received sufficient weight, nay even conceptualization, in French pragmatic sociological writings, and are not easily positioned in their extant mappings of regimes of action and justification.

But if the gift deserves attention here, it is not only as a major source of criticism and justification, but also, and even more emphatically, as a dynamic, disputed feature of social life which is itself subject to critique and suspicion and thus in constant, and perhaps increasing, need of justification. The main question arising in this context can be stated as follows: what kind of regimes of worth and justification do actors deploy when engaged (as donors, recipients, mediators, or spectators) in specific gift situations, and what tensions and dilemmas are entailed in these situations? I myself have become increasingly concerned with such dynamics in the context of research on philanthropic giving as an expanding form of public action; but the question could be applied I believe to many other configurations of gift-interactions in contemporary settings.

One beneficial effect stemming from approaching the gift in terms of a *plurality* of “worlds of worth” and “regimes of justification,” at any rate, is that it prevents us from reducing the symbolic dynamics of gift situations to only dichotomous tensions – such as “reciprocity *versus* non-reciprocity,” “spontaneity *versus* obligation,” and “interestedness *versus* disinterestedness,” which have hitherto prevailed in sociological enquiries into the gift. True enough, the problem is not so much the dichotomies as such, if these are adequately moderated and mediated by a crucial attention to the paradoxical intertwining of the entailed contradictory orientations. More problematic, however, this dichotomous approach has often been accompanied by a focus on the “motivations” or “interests” that propel giving. As such, I submit, it has also tended to obscure other possible aspects of the multidimensional world of “meaning-making,” and of particular interest here, the complexity and wealth of meaning associated with various “worlds of worth” and “worlds of justification” – akin to those central to the pragmatic sociology of criticism – in the context of gift relations.

CONCLUSION

Spanning thus diverse styles of work and levels of analysis, I hope to have shared with you my optimistic view of possibly expanding anti-utilitarian “dialogical” bridges and alliances. I hope to have also convincingly argued that “we” are not just the “other” of utilitarianism, but have already done, and can still do much more. What we most need is not so much a new grand unified theory for the social sciences, but rather more of the search for new, less linear and exclusive forms of theoretical thinking, more of a flexible and dialogical theoretical posture and temper, such as able to nurture sensitivity to plurality and diversity as well as to the possibility of alternative, thus perhaps also better, complex human worlds.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BLOKKER, Paul, 2009, *Multiple Democracies in Europe: Political Culture in New Member States*, London, Routledge.
- BLOKKER, Paul & BRIGHENTI, Andrea, 2011, “Politics between Justification and Defiance”, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 14(3), p. 283-300.
- BOLTANSKI, Luc, 2011 [2009], *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation*, transl., Gregory Elliott, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- BOLTANSKI, Luc & CHIAPELLO, Ève, 2005 [1999], *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, transl., Gregory Elliott, London, Verso.
- BOLTANSKI, Luc & THÉVENOT, Laurent, 2000, “The Reality of Moral Expectations: A Sociology of Situated Judgment”, *Philosophical Explorations*, 3(3), p. 208-231.
- BOLTANSKI, Luc & THÉVENOT, Laurent, 1999, “The Sociology of Critical Capacity”, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2(3), p. 359-377.
- BOLTANSKI, Luc & THÉVENOT, Laurent, 2006 [1991], *On Justification: Economies of Worth*, transl., Catherine Porter, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- CAILLÉ, Alain, 2015, *La sociologie malgré tout: autres fragments d'une sociologie générale*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de Paris-Ouest.
- CAILLÉ, Alain, 2009, *Théorie anti utilitariste de l'action: fragments d'une sociologie générale*, Paris, La Découverte/MAUSS.
- CAILLÉ, Alain, 2002, “The Gift as Sufficient Source of Normativity”, *Diogenes*, 49(3), p. 77-88
- CAILLÉ, Alain, 2000, *Anthropologie du don. Le tiers paradigme*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer. 1994 *Don, intérêt, désintéressement: Bourdieu, Mauss, Platon et quelques autres*, Paris, La Découverte.
- CAILLÉ, Alain & CHANIAL, Philippe, 2010, “Préface: Comment (ne pas) être Wébérien?” in S. Kalberg, *Les valeurs, les idées et les intérêts: Introduction à la sociologie de Max Weber*, Paris, La Découverte/Mauss.

- CAMIC, Charles & JOAS, Hans, 2003, *The Dialogical Turn: New Roles for Sociology in the Post-Disciplinary Age*, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield.
- CHANIAL, Philippe, 2008a, « Générosité, réciprocité, pouvoir et violence : Esquisse d'une grammaire des relations humaines en clé de don », *Revue du MAUSS*, 32(2), p. 97-123.
- CHANIAL, Philippe (ed.), 2008b, *La société vue du don*, Paris, La Découverte.
- CHANIAL, Philippe, 2004, "French Civil Society Experiences: Attempts to Bridge the Gap between Political and Economical Dimensions", in Jean-Louis Laville and Adalbert Evers (eds.), *The Third Sector in Europe*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, p. 83-100.
- CLOUTIER, Charlotte & LANGLEY, Ann, 2013, "The Logic of Institutional Logics: Insights from French Pragmatist Sociology", *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 22(4), p. 360-380.
- EISENSTADTED, Shmuel (eds), 2000, "Special Issue on 'Multiple Modernities'", *Daedalus*, 129(1).
- EISENSTADTED, Shmuel, 2003, *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities*, Leiden, Brill.
- GODBOUT, Jacques, 1998 "The Moral of the Gift", *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 27(4), p. 557- 570.
- JOAS, Hans & KNOEBL, Wolfgang, 2009 [2004], *On Social Theory: Twenty Introductory Lectures*. Transl. from the German by A. Skinner. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- LAHIRE, Bernard, 1998, *L'Homme pluriel : les ressorts de l'action*, Paris, Nathan.
- LAHIRE, Bernard, 2012, *Monde pluriel : Penser l'unité des sciences sociales*, Paris, Seuil.
- LAZZERI, Christian & CAILLÉ, Alain, 2007, "Recognition Today: The Theoretical, Political and Ethical Stakes of the Concept", in Jean-Philippe Deranty, Danielle Petherbridge & John Rundell (eds.), *Recognition, Work, Politics: New Directions in French Critical Theory*, Leiden, Brill, p. 89-126.
- LEVINE, Donald N., 2000, "On the Critique of 'Utilitarian' Theories of Action: Newly Identified Convergences among Simmel, Weber and Parsons", *Theory, Culture and Society*, 17(1), p. 63-78.
- LEVINE, Donald N., 1995, "Dialogue as an Anti-Dote to Fragmentation", in *Visions of the Sociological Tradition*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, p. 327- 331
- MOUFFE, Chantal, 2008, "Which World Order?: Cosmopolitan or Multipolar?", *Ethical Perspectives*, 5(4).
- SCHNEIDERMAN, Henry, 2015, "Dialogical Social Theory: Code to Donald Levine's Career", *Society*, 52, p. 481-483.
- SILBER, Ilana F., forthcoming, "The Cultural Worth of Economies of Worth: French Pragmatic Sociology from a Cultural Sociological Perspective", in D. Inglis (ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, London, Sage.
- SILBER, Ilana F., 2014, "Boltanski and the Gift: Beyond Love, Beyond Suspicion...?" in S. Susen and B. Turner (ed.), *Boltanski*, London, New York, Anthem.
- SILBER, Ilana F., 2011, "Emotions as Regime of Justification? The Case of Philanthropic Civic Anger", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 14(2), p. 301-320.
- SILBER, Ilana F., 2010, "Mauss, Weber et les trajectoires historiques du don", *Revue du MAUSS*, 36, p. 539-561.
- SILBER, Ilana F., 2007, "Towards a Non-Unitary Approach to Sociological Theory", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 10(2), p. 220-232.

- SILBER, Ilana F., 2003, “Pragmatic Sociology as Cultural Sociology: Beyond Repertoire Theory?”, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 6(4), p. 425-447.
- THÉVENOT, Laurent, 2011, “Power and Oppression from the Perspective of the Sociology of Engagements: A with Bourdieu’s and Dewey’s Approaches to Practical Activities”, *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 19(1), p. 35-67.
- THÉVENOT, Laurent, 2006, *L’Action au pluriel: Sociologie des Régimes d’Engagement*, Paris, La Découverte.
- THÉVENOT, Laurent, 2002, “Which Road to Follow? The Moral Complexity of an Equipped Humanity”, in J. Law and A. Mol (eds.), *Complexities: Social Studies of Knowledge Practices*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, p. 53-87.

Even today, the claim that women are essentially caregivers would be met with general agreement. The identification between care and women is so deeply engrained in our world view that it involuntarily dominates our thinking, despite the radical transformations that the feminine subject has undergone over the last few decades.

This kind of identification has an ambivalent effect. On the one hand, it evokes the traditional, and fundamentally maternal and self-sacrificing image of women that has confined them to the secondary role of attentive guardians of the needs and expectations of others, relegated them to the private sphere, and excluded them from the public sphere. On the other hand, it is viewed as a precious heritage that deserves to be valued in order to recover dimensions banished from Western thought, restore dignity to women's "difference," and imagine another kind of subjectivity: as we shall see, this is what contemporary feminist theorists are now doing.

This ambivalence requires us to examine the very notion of care in more detail. In other words, what do we mean when we talk about care?

Unexpectedly, this theme emerges several times in both classical and modern thought. Already in Virgil and Seneca there is a reflection on the two aspects of care: as a constraint and a source of anxiety, as well as a form of vigilant attention, in the tradition of the Socratic care of the soul. Kierkegaard sees in it a way of counteracting the excessively abstract nature of philosophy, while Heidegger makes it the fundamental basis of *Dasein* and proposes an ontology of care to take into account the unity and authenticity of the Self while underscoring the two aspects of *care* (as in "care-wom") and *caring* (as in solicitude); and, more recently, Hans Jonas, who sees care as the basis for an ethics of responsibility capable of dealing with the transformations brought about by technological civilization. There is even an original myth of care, although one little-known, whereby it becomes that which preserves and binds together all that is human.

¹ Elena Pulcini, « Donner le care », *Revue du MAUSS*, 2012/1 (n° 39), La Découverte/MAUSS, Paris, p. 49-66. Translated from the French by JPDS.

However, in our tradition, admittedly, we have only rarely paid attention to care, and this has not been significantly developed. Above all, however, it is undeniable that ever since “caring” has come to be seen as an eminently feminine quality – particularly in English, unlike the French “*souci*” – there has been a process of devaluation and marginalization that mirrors the fate reserved for women.¹

Modern feminist thought, starting with Carol Gilligan’s founding text *In a Different Voice* (2008), has shown that this aspect is underestimated within modern Western thought, which has predominantly focused on other themes, such as freedom and rights, equality and justice.

In my view, still the most interesting example of modernity is Rousseau, who places unusual emphasis on care, although giving it a reductive function precisely because he confines it to the private sphere and to women. Starting with the difference between the sexes, Rousseau sees an opposition between the public sphere, which is reserved for men, and the private sphere, which is ruled by women, thereby bestowing on women a status which they previously never had by right. However, he does this by excluding women from worldly affairs and rational action: the identification of the woman as the maternal figure who dedicates herself to intimacy and family relationships becomes a key pillar of modernity. Undoubtedly the private sphere thereby gains a new legitimacy, as Hannah Arendt (1988) points out, but this comes at the cost of a clear separation and hierarchy between the two spheres of activity. By fulfilling her “natural” vocation, woman becomes the caregiver *par excellence*, working within the domestic sphere and managing feelings in a wise and maternal manner, devoting herself body and soul to another so that *he* can perform his public function as a citizen by giving what is best in him.

In fact, Rousseau is theorizing an opposition that pervades the entire course of modernity. On the one hand we have the autonomous and rational (masculine) subject who operates within society and the world, and on the other hand a dependent (feminine) subject who finds herself confined to the private sphere and who defines herself essentially in terms of her relationship to others: they are linked in a supposed complementarity that nonetheless confers on the latter a reproductive and secondary role. Care understood as a synthesis of altruism, dependency, and affectivity becomes a dark counterpart, yet a necessary one for the happiness of a dominant and sovereign subject, constructed around the myth

¹ Paolo Fabbri refers to this myth in his contribution to Preta and Donghi (eds) (1995).

of self-sufficiency and freedom from any kind of dependency; or rather, having the *opportunity* to construct himself around the myth of self-sufficiency precisely because he can count on a welcoming and hospitable space where his needs for affection and happiness can be met.

Now we need to rehabilitate care. A double operation of critique and deconstruction is required here: on the one hand, we need to examine the figure of the sovereign subject, from the Cartesian subject to the *Homo economicus* of liberal tradition, and reveal the unilateral nature of what has been referred to, appropriately, as the “disengaged self” (Taylor, 1998), a masculine and patriarchal Self separated from any relationship; on the other hand, we need to restore dignity to the notions of dependency and relationship by freeing them from the self-sacrifice and abnegation which have always been associated with the feminine. In other words, rehabilitating care implies thinking of the subject in a way that transcends the dichotomy between the priority of the Self and the priority of the Other, since it combines autonomy and dependency, freedom and the capacity to relate.

Despite some ambiguities and certain questionable aspects to which I shall return, it seems to me that Gilligan’s thinking, and the ethics of care she puts forward, can form the basis for this.

Based on empirical studies of representative samples of both sexes who were asked questions concerning various moral dilemmas,¹ Gilligan remarks that the responses of masculine subjects are dictated by criteria of autonomy, respect and equity, whereas those of feminine subjects express a need to preserve the links and “attachment” between the people concerned. However, what developmental psychologists (like Kohlberg) see as a moral deficit on the part of women, making them incapable of attaining the higher stage of a universal and post-conventional morality, also demonstrates that there is another moral voice, different yet highly significant, which gives priority to maintaining relationships and feelings. From this point of view, it is no longer

¹ Gilligan demonstrates the difference in moral orientation between the sexes through the replies given by two children (Amy and Jake) faced with “Heinz’s dilemma,” in which the eponymous Heinz, whose wife is seriously ill, has to decide whether or not to steal the medication he cannot afford to buy. Jake says that Heinz should steal the medication, whereas Amy thinks that Heinz should attempt the impossible to save his wife. but that he should not steal. The comparison between these two answers shows that the first tends to resolve the moral conflict according to an ethics of rights and justice founded on universal principles. whereas the second, anxious to preserve the network of relationships and bonds between the people concerned, resolves it through recourse to an ethics of responsibility and care (Gilligan, 2008, p. 48).

a lack but a resource hitherto underestimated, in keeping with the diminishing and marginalization of women. Briefly, Gilligan aims to emphasize a “different” moral orientation to the model assumed in dominant approaches within developmental psychology (Piaget and Kohlberg); she releases it from the process of depreciation to which it has previously been subjected and reveals its intrinsic and autonomous dignity. As we know, from these premises Gilligan draws up a binary schema for moral orientation, attributing to men a *morality based on rights and justice*, founded on abstract and formal principles of equity, and to women *an ethics of care and responsibility*, founded on concrete and contextual criteria of interdependency and relationality.

We should point out immediately that, despite some misunderstandings, this is not a dichotomous schema. In fact, Gilligan is seeking a complementarity between two moral perspectives corresponding to two different views of the Self, both equally legitimate and necessary: one because it emphasizes separation and autonomy, and the other because it values linkages and connection. By suggesting the metaphors of, respectively “hierarchy” and “web,”¹ she States on several occasions that both perspectives are legitimate, but also that what is needed from a psychological point of view is a reciprocal integration of the sexes that overcomes the intrinsic shortcomings of any unilateral view of moral development.²

However, in Gilligan’s work the renewed suggestion of an immediate link between women and care may seem more problematic, in that there is a danger of falling back into a form of “Rousseauesque” essentialism, which, despite her intentions, is in fact a legitimization of the traditional image that has long confined women to a subordinate role. This objection needs to be taken seriously in that it represents a challenge within the ethics of care, that is, seeing feminine difference as an absolute and, notably, in the notion of “maternal thinking” inspired by Gilligan, defined exclusively in terms of the maternal (Noddings, 1984; Ruddick, 1989); there is certainly a risk of once more reducing women

¹ “Thus the images of hierarchy and web inform different modes of assertion and response : the wish to be alone at the top and the consequent fear that others will get too close ; the wish to be at the center of connection and the consequent fear of being too far out on the edge. These disparate fears of being stranded and being caught give rise to different portrayals of achievement and affiliation, leading to different modes of affiliation, leading to different modes of action and different ways of assessing the consequences of choice” (Gilligan, 2008, p. 62).

² “Development for both sexes would therefore seem to entail an integration of rights and responsibilities through the discovery of the complementarity of these disparate views” (Gilligan, 2008, p. 100).

to a so-called altruistic vocation, inspired by devotion, which has always been ascribed to them in the name of motherhood.

Nevertheless, at least within her own work, I think she avoids this danger by being careful to divest this concept of any self-sacrificing abnegation by introducing a moment of autonomous and conscious choice. In other words, women's moral orientation seems to stem from an evolutionary process in which the notion of care, originally linked to conventional notions of solicitude and altruistic devotion, ends up incorporating a "selfish" awareness of responsibility towards oneself, and the need for a moral obligation towards oneself as well¹; the result is that "care becomes the self-chosen principle of a judgment" (Gilligan, 2008, p. 74 and p. 176). Hence, *care for another* is, as it were, indissociable from *care for oneself*.

Gilligan's limitation, it seems to me, is rather that she puts forward caring as the basis of an exclusively feminine attitude and ethics on the basis of a given, that is, the motivations that impel women towards relationships, a network of connections, and feelings. This might well prevent or paralyze the possibility of universalizing care, extending it to the other sex, and attributing to it the capacity to transcend its status as being purely of the private sphere. Consequently, we should ask some serious questions about the *motivations* underlying caring, which cannot be reduced to women's tendency to build relationships. What are the underlying motivations of the need to care that could be universalized, that is, that could form the basis of a new paradigm of the human subject? If caring indicates and reveals an inclination towards linkages and relationships, what is the source of this inclination?

The ontological perspective derived from Heidegger that I mentioned above certainly provides one answer: seeing care as the foundation of the human being, as being what constitutes its unity and authenticity, comes down to affirming that human beings exist only within relationships. To see "being" as "being-with" means giving ontological priority to *relationships*, and as a consequence lays the groundwork for the critique – or the destitution, as Levinas (1978) would say – of the sovereign subject.

However, we need to move beyond the ontological perspective and return to the problem of *motivation*; specifically, what is it that drives the subject to recognize him/herself as a subject in relation? It seems to me that this is

¹ Gilligan (1982) shows this in both her study of Heinz's dilemma (chap. II) and her discussion of abortion (chap. III; see particularly p. 73-75).

when the *double bind* of the care relationship emerges: in fact, this relationship implies not only that the subject pays attention to another and takes responsibility for their needs and fragilities, but also that it recognizes the *fragility that lies at its own heart*, the condition of lack and dependency that exposes every subject to this need for care. The theme of the fragility and *vulnerability of the subject* has been at the center of contemporary thought for some time, from Paul Ricoeur (1994) to Martha Nussbaum (2006) and Judith Butler (2007) – major contributions that I cannot fully discuss here. Let us just say simply that what they all have in common is the idea that the parable of modern individualism and the sovereign subject ends up by masking and eventually repressing this ontological condition of vulnerability which, once acknowledged, may lead the subject to recognize his/ her own lack of self-sufficiency and his/her dependency on other people, the fact that it is inextricably linked to others, to other lives and other destinies. Returning to Levinas (1978), what is needed is an “awakening” of the subject, which takes place when this repressed dimension is reintegrated.

As I have stated previously (Pulcini, 2009), I consider this point crucial for formulating a concept of care that both reveals and integrates the unilateral nature of the *individualist* paradigm, and at the same time is opposed to the purely *altruistic* perspective that is associated with the feminine. Hans Jonas (1999) has also put forward this later notion of care (albeit in a different context) in his theorizing of an ethics of responsibility. In fact, Jonas founds the principle of responsibility on the parental and maternal model of care and on the archetype of the newborn baby who, by virtue of its precarious existence, demands attention and requires the subject to take responsibility. But this implies an altruistic subject which – especially when the parental model develops beyond the parent-child relationship to encompass future generations – appears to act solely out of duty, once again leaving unresolved the problem of what motivates care-giving.

We therefore need to transcend the opposition between egotism and altruism. To do this, we need to abandon the presupposition of both a sovereign and self-sufficient subject for whom the other plays a purely secondary (and instrumental) role, and an altruistic and self-sacrificing “I” who puts the other first and who responds to the other’s appeal as to a compulsion, in out of duty, as Jonas maintains; what we need to suppose is rather a *vulnerable subject* – because what motivates this “I” to show care for others is precisely this vulnerability, because the “I” is aware of its own dependency. Among feminist writers, Eva Kittay in particular has emphasized this aspect, suggesting that the notion of caring should

be based on an ontology of dependency which, among other things, frees it from any kind of reductive welfarism and any risk of there being a hierarchy between the one who gives and the one who receives care (Kittay, 1999).

It is, however, important to insist on the need to *recognize* dependency. For this, it seems to me that we should form a *different emotive relationship* with the other. The vulnerable subject is the one who is able to give care because she/he recognizes that she/he needs care too, and is motivated by what I propose to term a *passion for the other* (Pulcini, 2003); that is a relationship with someone else that is neither purely instrumental (as in the individualist model), nor completely self-sacrificing (as in the altruistic model) from the moment when she/he recognizes the other person as a reality that forms part of his or her own self, and this other person becomes the object of his or her own emotions. For, as Martha Nussbaum has rightly stated, passions are merely the sign and witness of our inherent incompleteness; they “involve judgments about important things, judgments in which, when appraising an external object as salient for our own well-being, we acknowledge our own incompleteness and neediness when facing aspects of the world that we do not fully control” (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 19). At the same time, I would add that passions possess what I would call an *individualizing power* that compels the Self to recognize its deepest desires and needs. This means that dependency and vulnerability are shorn of the punitive and self-sacrificing aspects that have shaped women’s identity and destiny, becoming the foundations of a *subject in relation* that is capable of giving and receiving attention and empathy, one capable of exposing itself, of letting itself be changed and “contaminated” by another. This recognition of dependency does not imply subjection and passivity, but merely topples the subject from its sovereign position. To return to Arendt’s terminology, as Jean-Luc Nancy has recently done, the *loss of sovereignty* does not mean the *loss of singularity* (Nancy, 1996): there is a caring subject when there is the capacity to recognize the uniqueness and concrete incarnation of both the self and the other, in a way that renders the subject potentially capable of taking into account each person’s unique life history, and the situational context in which we each find ourselves acting.

In short, starting from the positive affirmation of the negative basis of vulnerability, that is, from the very foundation that enables us to conceive of a new paradigm of the subject, we can then begin to speak of a *universality of care* which, as Joan Tronto says, can break down the “moral boundaries” of the place to which it has been relegated up to now (1993, p. 134):

“Caring is by its very nature a challenge to the notion that individuals are entirely autonomous and self-supporting. To be in a situation where one needs care is to be in a position of some vulnerability.”¹

This risk of confining care to the private sphere has been the main target of the critique that has attempted to separate the ethics of care from its exclusive identification with “female morality.” Tronto says of this that we need to breach the “moral boundaries” which, in parallel, have brought about the exclusion of women and the marginalization of care and insist on its social and ethical importance (Tronto, 1993, p. 134). Above all we must dismantle the boundary between the public and private in order to free care from the restrictions and limitations of its association with accessory functions of no public significance² and to restore it to its rightful place in the wider domain of social life.

All of this requires that we act in this way not only within our family and friendship networks but also within the public and political sphere, where attention to the specific context and the web of relationships needs to supplement the often inadequate abstract logic of rights; and also within the world of work, which is often prone to the abuses of indifference and disaffection. To take a concrete example, think of the medical arena where the bioethical debate centers on bridging the gap between “medical care” (the treatment of sickness) and “care” (taking care of the patient as a person); this seems more and more like the solution that would enable a dimension of respect and solidarity to be reintroduced within caring relations and would give back the dignity of being a subject to the person receiving care.

But this is not all. I would stress that moving beyond the traditional boundaries of care should have a global dimension, as suggested by recent writing on care theory (Held, 2006). In fact, globalization processes have brought about significant transformations in the figure of the other. This is an extremely complex issue that I can only mention briefly here and one that needs new interpretative categories, but I will note that the “other” is not just the near and the similar, but also the different other who lives among us, the “stranger within the group,” to borrow

¹ “At a general level, to require care is to have a need; when we conceive of ourselves as autonomous, independent adults, it is very difficult to recognize that we are also needy. Part of the reason is that we prefer to ignore routine forms of care as care is to preserve the image of ourselves as not-needy” (Tronto, 1993, p. 120).

² “Care works devalued; care is also devalued conceptually through a connection with privacy, with emotion, and with the needy. Since our society treats public accomplishment, rationality, and autonomy as worthy qualities, care is devalued insofar as it embodies their opposites” (Tronto, 1993, p. 117).

Georg Simmel's eloquent term (1999, p. 663-668), who crosses our borders. It is also the "distant" other, who lives in a faraway land who demands our solidarity. It is, finally, the "future generations," whose silent appeal requires us to pay attention to our environment and to become aware that our actions today will have a heavy impact on the future of humanity. To summarize, we must think of care not just in personal and political terms, but globally, as *care for the world*.¹

II

A second explosive and radical aspect is that caring is not simply a moral principle, disposition or conviction; it is above all a practice. As Tronto says, care "is not simply a cerebral concern, or a character trait, but the concern of living, active humans engaged in the processes of everyday living. Care is both a practice and a disposition" (Tronto, 2009, p. 104). Consequently it becomes important to consider the double meaning of care in the sense of worry or concern, and care in the sense of solicitude – taking care of – which enriches the concept with a purely practical dimension. In other words, care is not simply a moral principle (unlike the principle of responsibility) but also "work," a *concrete and hair-fine engagement* that requires, over and above subjects' emotional involvement, the ability to take risks in the many situations in which they operate, and the desire to bring about certain effects and to achieve goals. In this respect I should like to recall one of the most interesting definitions of care, which aptly emphasizes that the three moments of cognition, emotion, and action are indissociable (Fabbri, 1995, p. 29):

"Care is that something between cognition and passion, followed by action; it culminates in doing. Taking care of something means to pay attention to it, to care about it, while being ready to act, to take action. This is, as Aristotle and Descartes stressed, the essential link between cognition, passion, and action."

Consequently, care represents a kind of added value in relation to the principle of responsibility on which Hans Jonas (1999) based his interesting suggestion of an ethics for the future in the second half of the twentieth century. It implies

¹ For a more in-depth analysis see Pulcini, *Care of the World* (2009).

initially moving to an action and a *praxis* that removes the risk of remaining at the level of pure moral principle, thereby becoming a practical and active application of the ethics of responsibility.¹

From this point of view, the conceptual distinctions put forward by Joan Tronto can be seen as highly effective. Her concern is to bring out the different phases of care while emphasizing not only the moment of assessing the other person's need (*caring about*) and assuming responsibility (*taking care of*), but also the active moment of providing care (*care-giving*), that is, the moment at which one enters into direct contact with the recipient(s) and intervenes actively in situations which demand it, on a case-by-case basis (Tronto, 2009, p. 147-149). This stresses the fundamental importance of a practical and active dimension that all feminist writing tends to refer to as care work: the subject is thus able to become involved in the experience, to translate knowledge and convictions into action, and to bear witness to moral choices. As Tronto emphasizes, it is no accident that care-giving, more than any other aspect of care, has been devalued: associated with needs and necessities, it has been given over in its entirety to women and other weaker sectors of the population in terms of race, class, etc.² It is therefore necessary to free care from association with the private sphere, but without reducing caring activity to a kind of social welfarism which tends to marginalize those who provide care, nor interpreting it as a form of paternalism, which deprives the recipients of any dignity.³

Liberating care from its reductive and marginal connotations means recognizing that it has both *universal* and *everyday* dimensions. As Laugier (2009) rightly remarks, "Care is everywhere"; it cannot be restricted to specify situations, certain stages of life, or to persons with particular needs.⁴ It is the response to the everyday needs of the other, both in the private sphere and in the public and global arena, because "it draws our attention to the ordinary, to what we are incapable of seeing, but which is in front of our eyes" (Laugier, 2009). It is the manifestation of a sensitivity to details, to the particular, which

¹ For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Pulcini (2003), part III.

² "Let me suggest that the gender, race, and class dimension to care is more subtle than a first glance allows. I think we come closer to the reality when we say: caring about, and taking care of, are the duties of the powerful. Care-giving and care-receiving are left to the less powerful" (Tronto, 2009, p. 114).

³ For a critique of paternalism, see Tronto, 2009, p. 221-222. Cf. especially care from a biopolitical perspective; and also Bazzicalupo 2006, p. 31-32.

⁴ This is, in my view, the limitation of Nussbaum (2006), who sees care as a kind of appendage to justice, however important and desirable it might be. Furthermore, she limits care to extreme cases, e.g., disability, not according it universal value.

enables us to reveal and attach importance to what is normally ignored, that is, to a microcosm of needs, expectations, and bonds that we tend to forget, to relegate to an opaque and invisible zone, even though it forms the daily fabric of everybody's lives.

Hence, the ethics of care emerges as a *concrete, contingent and contextual* ethics (Gilligan, 2008, p. 45 and p. 161-162). It emphasizes attention to the uniqueness of the other, to the specific nature of situations, to relations in which the subject engages on an individual basis; relations which no one can ignore given their importance to the subject's self-realization and even life-project. At the same time, it focuses on the *universality of the need for care* which derives from the human condition of *vulnerability* and on the *value of interdependency*, because this is the source of moral choices and the social coexistence of subjects who are all responsible for each other.

All this requires that we consider the subject differently, as I have tried to suggest: we have to construct a subject that is simultaneously relational and singular, concrete and empathic, attentive to others and aware of its own inherent inadequacy and fragility.

III

Even when this is done, the task of rehabilitating care is not yet over. To say that the vulnerability of the subject is the source of the motivation to care is the first stage in freeing it from any definition based purely on self-sacrifice and abnegation, and in seeing it as a universal value not reserved solely for women. But there is a danger of underestimating the "gift" aspects of care, which to me are basic and inherent. Care, to the extent that it transcends the opposition between egotism and altruism, has much in common with the logic of the gift; it represents the purest expression of the gift because it seeks above all to preserve and recreate the *value of the bond*: that is, the network of relationships, attachment, and belonging within which the subject that recognizes its own ontological vulnerability, or neediness, to use Nussbaum's term, can find whatever enables it to attain self-realization. There is a great affinity here with the gift, which care theorists themselves seem to overlook: this is the capacity for excess, inherent in any freely given act of generosity, which refuses the balanced logic of symmetrical reciprocity in order to open itself up, not just to the

relationship as such but also to the asymmetrical nature of that relationship. We know from the pioneering work of Caillé (2000) and Godbout (1992) that theorists inspired by Mauss's theorization of the gift have well emphasized this crucial feature of the gift, which, in my opinion, lies at the origin of care work, whether remunerated or not.

The person who carries out the work of caring does not simply recognize that he or she inherently has a *debt* to the other, and is part of a cycle of reciprocity in which each renders to the other what they have received, or what they may potentially receive on the basis of their inherent neediness. They also initiate what, following Ricœur (2008), we might call a “logic of over-abundance” which ignores any criteria of symmetry and equivalence; this second criterion, as Ricœur rightly stresses, is the basis of a different logic, of justice and rights, which attempts to re-establish a balance between impartiality and equality.

Thus, we need to look once again at the motivations for care and examine its emotional roots. In fact, rather than reducing it to a generic affective disposition as some feminist writers do, we need to account for its characteristic *surplus* or *excess*. In order to explain it we could, I believe, legitimately invoke the lexicon of love. Not by chance, Ricœur turns to love when he refers to the “logic of over-abundance” that can move beyond the “logic of equivalence” which characterizes justice. Certainly, interpreting care in terms of love introduces more problems than it resolves. We should begin by asking: what kind of love? What is the archetype we can invoke here? I think it is legitimate to refer to the Greek concept of *agape*, as some authors do (e.g. Boltanski, 1990), as long as this does not mean once again proposing a self-sacrificing and charitable idea of love which would again risk inflecting it toward self-abnegation. As I have suggested elsewhere (Pulcini, 2001), in order to avoid this risk we need to rediscover and value the idea of love in terms of *passion* and hence having the attributes of the archetype of *Eros*, defined in Platonic terms as the passion which draws human beings out of their isolation and the partial nature of their existence by reminding them of their own lack of sufficiency and their illusory assumption of self-sufficiency. Once love is understood as a passion, it has the power not only to challenge the utilitarian logic of self-interest and exchange, but also to transcend the symmetrical logic of rights and justice, however legitimate and valuable this may be.

In other words, love is the quintessence of the *passion for the other* that I spoke of at the beginning, in which there is an intimate mingling of the noblest kind of realization of the Self and an opening towards the Other, that is, a coexistence of individualization and relation. Here we might recall Simmel's (1985) reflections

on love's passion as "one of the great categories of experience," as it presupposes a subject ready to put itself on the line, to risk the encounter with the other, while remaining fully aware of its own irreducible autonomy and uniqueness. We might add, a subject not afraid to lose itself or to invest itself because it experiences the gift and the gift relationship not as a sacrifice, but as a means of enriching and expanding the Self.

A care relationship stripped of this particular quality of love can only ever be a pure and simple social welfarism that risks culminating in the "sad passions" of resentment or ill-feeling which will end up turned back on the subject and weakening it.¹ To summarize, what I would like to call *care without Eros* risks degenerating into a poisoned or perverted gift.

Restoring the emotional complexity that is the source of the gift elements in care allows us to grasp the truly radical nature of the deconstructive and subversive power of care and its gift-like quality, not just in terms of the existing order with its watchwords of individualism and utilitarianism, but also in relation to an altruism that requires the Self to be ignored. If it is true that all passion is universal, this means that there is yet another reason not to limit our view of care to women atone, and rather to hope that it might also involve the other sex, becoming a generalized activity capable of transforming our own vision of the world.

Now, if we return to the original question – What do women give? – our answer can be that care is possibly women's gift *par excellence*, without fearing that this will yet again reduce the female subject to a devalued and marginal figure. Caring is not the biological propensity of a subject that finds its natural vocation in forgetting itself and in the dependency of the other; on the contrary, it becomes the free and conscious choice of a subject who is capable of finding a balance between autonomy and dependency, freedom and relating. Because of their familiarity with this aspect of care through the ages, women perhaps have a privileged access to attention and solicitude to the other, as long as they are able to make care their own and to take it on freely in recognition of its universal value. To return to expressions I have used previously (Pulcini, 2005), women can transform their traditional condition of being *enslaved to caring* (and to giving) by acting willingly and voluntarily as *subjects who give care* (and gifts).

¹ On the topic of sad passions, see Benasayag and Schmit (2003) and Pulcini (2011).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ARENDT, Hannah, 1958, *The Human Condition*, London, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- BAZZICALUPO, Laura, 2006, *Il governo delle vite. Biopolitica ed economia*, Roma, Bari, Laterza.
- BENASAYAG, Miguel & SCHMIT, Gérard, 2003, *Les Passions tristes. Souffrance psychique et crise sociale*, Paris, La Découverte.
- BOLTANSKI, Luc, 1990, *L'Amour et la justice comme compétences*, Paris, Métailié.
- BUTLER, Judith, 2005, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, New York, Fordham University Press.
- CAILLÉ, Alain, 2000, *Anthropologie du don. Le tiers paradigme*, Paris, La Découverte.
- FABBRI, Paolo, 1995, "Abbozzi per una finzione della cura", in *In principio era la cura*, edited by L. Preta and P. Doghi, Rome-Bari, Laterza.
- GILLIGAN, Carol, 1982, *In a Different Voice*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- GODBOUT, Jacques (with A. CAILLÉ), 1998, *The World of the Gift*, Montreal-Kingston, McGill-Queen's Press.
- HELD, Virginia, 2006, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political and Global*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- JONAS, Hans, 1984, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of Ethics for the Technological Age*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press (originally published as: *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, Frankfurt-am-Main: Insel, 1979).
- KITTAI, Eva, 1999, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality and Dependency*, New York, Routledge.
- LAUGIER, Sandra, 2009, « Le sujet du *care* : vulnérabilité et expression ordinaire » in *Qu'est-ce que le care?*, édité par S. Laugier, P. Paperman et P. Molinier, Paris, Payot.
- LEVINAS, Emmanuel, 1978, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers B.V.
- MAUSS, Marcel, 1954, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, Glencoe, IL, Free Press.
- NANCY, Jean-Luc, 1996, *Être singulier pluriel*, Paris, Galilée.
- NODDINGS, Nel, 1984, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- NUSSBAUM, Martha, 2006, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- NUSSBAUM, Martha, 2001, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- PRETA, Lorena & DONGHI, Pino (eds.), 1995, *In principio era la cura*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- PULCINI, Elena, 2012, *The Individual without Passions: Modern Individualism and the Loss of the Social Bond*, Lanham, MD, Lexington Books.
- PULCINI, Elena, 2012, *Care of the World: Feat; Responsibility and Justice in the Global Age*, translated by K. Whittle, Dordrecht, The Netherlands, Springer.
- PULCINI, Elena, 2011, *Invidia. La passione triste*, Bologna, Il Mulino. [French translation: 2012, *L'Envie. La passion triste*, Paris, Le Bord de l'eau.]
- PULCINI, Elena, 2005, « Assujetties au don, sujets de don. Réflexions sur le don et le sujet féminin », *Revue du MAUSS*, « Malaise dans la démocratie », p. 325-38.
- PULCINI, Elena, 2003, *Il potere di unire. Femminile, desiderio, cura*, Torino, Bollati

Boringlieri.

- PULCINI, Elena, 1994, “Le sfide e le speranze del nostro comune futuro” in Ricœur, *Persona, comunità e istituzioni*, Florence, Cultura délia Pace.
- RICŒUR, Paul, 2008, *Amour et justice*, Paris, Gallimard Points.
- RUDDICK, Sara, 1989, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*, Boston, Beacon Press.
- SIMMEL, Georg, 1950, “Essay on the stranger” in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, translated by Kurt Wolff, p. 402-408, New York, Free Press.
- SIMMEL, Georg, 1985, “Fragmente einer Philosophie der Liebe”, in *Schriften zur Philosophie und Soziologie der Geschlechter*, edited by H. J. Dalime and K. C. Koehnke, Frankfurt-am-Main, Suhrkamp.
- TAYLOR, Charles, 1989, *Sources of the Self*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- TRONTO, Joan, 1993, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*, New York, Routledge.

HEIDEGGER ON THE GIFT OF BEING: *DENKEN IST DANKEN*¹

Stephan Fuchs

METAPHYSICS IS ONTO-THEO-LOGIC

In the West, the thinking of the thinkers from Plato to Nietzsche is the same metaphysics; namely, Platonism or idealism, and reverse Platonism, or materialism. All thinkers think the same about the same; they all think Being, and they all think metaphysically. To think metaphysically is to draw a distinction, the ontological difference, between the physical realm and the realm above and beyond the physical, the meta/physical. The latter has been called the absolute, the true world, the realm of transcendence, God.

Metaphysics, unlike (a) science, makes no progress and does not advance. The history of metaphysics swings like a pendulum from one pole, idealism, to its opposite one, materialism. Idealism and materialism are the same; they are the two sides of the same distinction, held together by their very conflict. The hook to which the pendulum is fastened is what Hegel calls the Absolute, the dialectics of the unity of the difference between idealism and materialism.

For Heidegger, metaphysics is not the ideological or cultural superstructure determined by, and derived from, a real and material or economic basis. Metaphysics is not a subjective or collective consciousness or belief, either. Metaphysics is neither the effect nor cause of reality, but its meaning, though not as subjective and internal representation. Metaphysics is also not a cultural and social construct, insofar as the very idea of “construct” belongs in a metaphysics, and is itself metaphysical. To see the world as construct is modern, when world first becomes representation and, later, representation driven by interest and will.

Only humans know and forget metaphysics. But it is also not simply a human doing or affair, in that the very question of what and how a human being is but part of (a) metaphysics. To those who live in a metaphysics, or

¹ The following is an interpretation of Heidegger’s “Zeit und Sein” (1969, p. 1-25). Others of his works were considered. All translations are mine.

in a religion, their metaphysics and religion come from above, not below. They are not experienced as mundane and profane fabrications. In this light, Heidegger (1957) sees metaphysics as onto-theo-logic: It combines the search for Being, for what there is, with that for the highest being, from which all there is comes and becomes possible – the *a priori*, absolute, the sacred, the uncaused cause, autopoiesis.

Heidegger's relation to metaphysics is ambivalent, since his thinking is an attempt and struggle to escape metaphysics from within metaphysics. His thinking is neither metaphysics nor any kind of science, including historical science and scientific or analytical philosophy. "Science does not think" (Heidegger, 1954, p. 9). This seemingly derogatory statement does not mean there were no scientists who think. But a science takes itself and its own possibility for granted, works out of a paradigm it keeps in the background, and can make its continuous advances only if it does not question the essence of its particular region of the world. A science does not think in that it does not observe itself. No science can account for itself in its own terms, the terms of that science. Physics, for example, is nothing physical, and does not consist of particles. Biology is nothing biological, and does not consist of cells or molecules. Hence, physics cannot explain itself in physical ways; physics itself does occur in the world, but not in the physical world. Physics has nothing to say about world. For this reason alone, there will and can be no "final" physical theory about everything.

To say that Heidegger's thinking is not science means: Nothing in Heidegger can, or should, be read and understood as empirical assertions about objective facts. Nothing in Heidegger explains anything. There is no causality in any of his thinking, although it does bear on what causality is, and when it enters metaphysics. But Heidegger's thinking is not a critique or refutation of metaphysics, either. It is not concerned with improving and revising metaphysics, but seeks a path out of metaphysics altogether, a path leading out of the metaphysical world and its mode of hierarchical worlding.

The winding out of metaphysics is the much debated *Kehre*, the movement from searching for a foundation for philosophy as fundamental ontology in the existential analytic of *Da-Sein*,¹ to questioning the very project and possibility of foundational certainty and finality. This transition occurs between *Sein und Zeit* (1927/2006) and Heidegger's later writings, those since about 1934. These later

¹ Da-Sein is generally left untranslated. It is the Da of Sein as the Sein of the Da; the disclosure of Being and the being, the existing, of that same disclosure.

writings do not abandon the position or standpoint of *Sein und Zeit*, but cast this position in a light that reveals the core experience of this book. This experience is the oblivion and withdrawal of world and Being in ontological and metaphysical, not biological, death, and in the mood of *Angst*, in which the Nothing of Being announces itself.

Heidegger thinks metaphysics, Western philosophy, not as but one worldview among others, or as a domain in the specialty and discipline of professional intellectual history. Philosophy, in this understanding, is not confined to the expert communities of credentialled and employed academic philosophers. Rather, Heidegger (as well as Hegel and Nietzsche) thinks metaphysics as the truth of an age, the meaning of an historical world, the unity holding different features of an epoch together in a characteristic *Gestalt* and cultural outlook. The history of metaphysics is the history of Being, and the history of Being is the history of the varied and manifold ways in which the truth of Being has been understood from Plato to Nietzsche, the last of the metaphysicians: “Each mode of thinking is a mode of historical existence and the basic relation toward Being and the way Being is understood – truth” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 4). The “basic relation” is the gift.

ONTOLOGY: THE TRUTH OF BEING

The core of metaphysics is ontology, the search for what there is, in its substance and truth. Metaphysics articulates the truth of – not about – Being. The truth of Being is its own truth, medium, or light. The truth of Being is not an *ontic*, empirical, or scientific truth about an object or matter in the world, but the phenomenological and existential truth of the world itself, the how or mode of its worlding and coming into being. This truth belongs not to a science, but to the phenomenon, the world itself. This distinctly phenomenological and philosophical truth is the light and medium in and out of which a world can be, and can let be. The thinkers are the ones who let the world and its truth be, in its manifold modes and ways. The truth of Being is the truth in which an historical world – worlds: “World never is, but worlds” (Heidegger, 1929/2004, p. 164). The history of Being is the epochal history of its many possible modes and understandings. Being and the being of the human being who, in its being, understands Being in some way, belong together. It is the *relation*

between world and Da-Sein, the human being, that matters. It is this relation that is being gifted and given in the gift of Being.

What is “world”? For Heidegger, the world is not an object, collection of such objects, or the sum total of all such objects. The world is not all that which is the empirical and scientific case, but the world can, and the modern world does, world as science and scientific relation to what become “objects” – in and through this relation. But world itself is nothing physical, biological, or psychological. World is that within and out of which physics and science can be. World is that which lets physics and science be, but its own truth is not that of a scientific reality, the reality of an object or thing. The world is not an object, but “object” is a possible way for something in the world to appear. Another is *Zeug*, often translated as “useful things,” but better conceived as “gear.” Still another mode of worlding in this ontological plurality is art.

How does a world work? In many different ways. If Heidegger had a philosophy in the same way this can be said for Kant or Hegel, and if that philosophy had a label, it would be an ontological pluralism, though not relativism. The Greek world worlds in ways different from the medieval or modern world. So does what is then called *physis* and is now called “nature.” Goethe’s understanding of nature is separated by worlds from what a science calls nature. Metaphysics is what sets worlds apart and also holds them together. For, in all these worlds, their mode of worlding is meta-physical; that is, hierarchical. The Greek metaphysical world worlds as the vertical schism between (philosophical) truth and (common life as) error; the medieval world worlds as the rupture between God and all that which distracts and leads away from Him, and the modern world, from Descartes through Kant and up to Hegel, worlds as the difference between Subject and Object, philosophy and science, the transcendental and the empirical.

Being and world never “are.” In their ontological difference, Being is not *a* being, but that which makes encountering beings *as* the beings they are possible in the first place. Without an understanding of Being, of what it is or means for someone or something to be, we could not relate to any being, including our own, at all. The metaphysics of modernity thinks Being as the *a priori*, as that which always must already be secured and in firm place as the ultimate and primary ground, origin, or source from which all knowing and perceiving emanates. The being of this *a priori* is the transcendental Subject as Cogito. The Subject is the transcendental condition for the possibility of all and any empirical knowing, of first-order observing, which is why it cannot itself be known

empirically, only thought. The Subject is a logical Subject, the Subject of logic, the Subject *as* logic or Pure Reason. The Subject is not an empirical person, or community of such persons. German Idealism gives this gift, the understanding of Being as Subject, a home. It becomes homeless in Nietzsche.

Metaphysically, Being is not a being, not an object or thing, and not a Kantian “real predicate.” Likewise, the world itself cannot be found among innerworldly entities. Unlike beings, Being escapes the grid and grip of propositions and definitions. It seems that Being is a mere abstraction and chimera, an empty concept, a concept without experience. Nevertheless, there are no beings without Being, without an understanding of the hows and modes of their being. Being is a how, not a what, and not a who. Insofar as Being is world, there are no innerworldly entities without world, and not even an absolute and final description of such an entity or sum of innerworldly entities could ever amount to a description of world. Being and world are not possible objects or topics for a science, since all sciences are specialist sciences that address but a region of the world, one among many other such regions, but never world itself. All sciences take world itself for granted. All sciences are in the world, but there is no science of the world.

The idea of Being or world evokes what are more commonly known as paradigm, *Gestalt*, and exemplar. The truth of Being is the physiognomy and rhythm of an epoch, its life. The face of an historical world, how it understands itself and articulates this understanding, is not one of its features, but their unity and totality, that which holds the various strands of a culture – its art, religion, philosophy – together, and provides them with their distinctive hermeneutic signature and expression. Likewise, a paradigm is that ontological or metaphysical truth which holds the various researches of a (normal) science together. But paradigm and Being remain in the background as resource and frame, not becoming topical themselves, except in rare revolutions, which bring a world to an abrupt collapse and end. The light of the paradigm en-lightens how and what a normal science approaches and treats as its own, its own objects, but the light itself withdraws and conceals itself. Still, there are no *ontic* or scientific truths without (an) ontological or metaphysical and paradigmatic truth.

BEING AS THE GIFT OF PRESENCE

Western metaphysics understands Being as presence. It understands presence as a special mode of time, as now, whereas the past and future are both lacking in presence, as a *not*, a not anymore (past) or not yet (future). The present time, the now, is thus more real than past and future. But Heidegger thinks time in more than one linear dimension. Time is not, at least not originally, a sequential chain or flow of now-moments and events. The time is not now. The past is not gone, and the future is not that which is not now, but will or might be some time later. Rather, the future is the advent of that which is coming toward us. But what is coming toward us could not do so if it had not already departed some time ago. The present is where the advent, the coming toward us, and that which has been and has been underway for quite some time, meet. This is how Nietzsche thinks the history of nihilism, and Hegel the coming of the Absolute.

The questions, “what is Being?” and “what is time?” are not possible questions in and for a normal science, just as the question, “how common is common sense?” is not a question for common sense. Were such questions being asked in a science or common sense, they would be disrupted and disturbed in their routine mode of operation. Both questions are genuinely philosophical.

Insofar as Being and time are not possible objects for a normal science, one cannot say, “there is Being,” or “there is time,” as one can say, “there is a house over there,” or “DNA is a double helix.” Neither Being nor time are facts or objects readily available to be found in empirical reality. Therefore, Heidegger says, “Es gibt Sein,” “Es gibt Zeit.” The literal translation is, “It gives Being”; “It gives time.” But the impersonal and anonymous “It” or “Es” do not refer to a being, not even to a highest being, a primordial and originary being, power, or force. For nothing is the cause of Being, and no innerworldly cause can be the cause of the world. Rather, the “It” that gives Being and time echoes the “it” in “it rains.” There is no Subject-It separate from the rain, and the rain is only as raining – just as world is but worlding. To understand philosophical or speculative words, we must think of them as verbs, not nouns.

There is no higher power or Giver who gives the gift of Being. There is only the relation itself, the giving of the gift. The gift is, in truth, not a thing, and it is not a symbol for something else. The gift gifts nothing but the relation, the relation that is giving itself. The relation that is giving is the very relation the gift

gives and gifts, provides and allows, but not “causes.” The gift of Being allows, lets be, the possibility of a relation between Being and Time, and between them and the gifted. The gifted are the thinkers. They are not gifted in that they had special DNA, talents or high IQs, but those who cannot but think.

The gift of Being and Time is the possible truth in and out of which an historical world worlds. Heidegger thinks truth not as propositional or logical truth, but as ontological, phenomenological, and existential truth – the truth of Being, not the truth about beings. The ontological truth of Being belongs to Being, while the *ontic* truths (in the plural) about beings belong to their respective sciences. Following the destructuring of occidental metaphysics to the ancient and pre-metaphysical idea of truth as *aletheia*, Heidegger thinks ontological truth not as the fixed and established property of matters of fact, but as a revealing, an unearthing, an opening, a dis-closure.

The disclosure, though, does not disclose itself, and it does not disclose what it discloses *in toto*. That which appears in the opening of a clearing also holds itself back. A disclosure, in fact, is also a closure, since it closes off different modes in which Being might appear, in which world may world. In the history of metaphysics, Being has disclosed itself as idea and energy, as substance and force, as life and will, as Subject and Object, or as the unity of the difference between class-for-itself and class-in-itself. Being has also become society and communication, system. Whenever Being uncovers itself in one of these ways, it seals off different possibilities, and withdraws itself into the background, in favor of the beings it lets be.

A gifting that holds itself back and withdraws in favor of the gift itself is a “sending,” a *schicken*. In this word lies *Geschick* and *Geschichte*. As do Hegel and Nietzsche, Heidegger thinks *Geschichte*, history, not as a science, and not as the object of a science. Rather, history is the coming and arrival of what has begun its own ending a long time ago, ever since the inception of metaphysics and the beginning of metaphysical world. It is this world in whose ongoing and accelerating ending and collapse we live now. Our world worlds as technoscientific cage, instrumental rationality, or *Gestell*. The *Gestell* is a world with but one dimension, with but one reality, with a reality that is exclusively empirical and physical, and no longer meta-physical, or two-dimensional. The *Gestell* and technoscience are not merely empirical occurrences in the world, but the very way and mode in which the late modern world worlds. This is our *Geschick*. The *Geschick* is not some kind of pre-ordained “higher” fate or destiny, least of all what happens to individual persons. Rather, the *Geschick* is the taking on and inheriting of

a gifting as sending and mission, a mission that began with the coming into the world of Platonic dualist metaphysics and Christianity as the “Platonism for the people” (Nietzsche). The history of metaphysics and Christianity is still continuing to end now and will end for some time still. The beginning of this ending of metaphysics and philosophy is the rise of the modern sciences and their cultural rationalization in positivism, naturalism, and physicalism.

The late Heidegger (1989) calls “Ereignis” the releasing of Being and world into historical time. The gift is the worlding of a world. Gifts need receiving, but a receiving that is not like the confirmation and acceptance of a delivery or shipment. Rather, the receiving receives the gift in such a way that it releases and unfolds the gift into its many and varied possibilities, the possibilities that lie dormant in an originary *Ent-wurf*, or paradigmatic projection of Being. The *Ent-wurf* is not a theory about the world, but a fundamental and foundational sketch or outline of how the world worlds. The development of a philosophy is the unfolding of this foundational paradigm and its possibilities. Its development is complete when a philosophy has exhausted its possibilities. In the history of the West, this happens with Hegel, who unfolds metaphysics and its history to the point at which it turns absolute and into a closed recursive system. Hegel is the end of a beginning, the beginning of Western metaphysics, and the beginning of an end, the ending of the modern world, which is still ongoing.

At this, its Hegelian juncture, metaphysics can no longer surpass or transcend itself. But it still can, and does, reverse itself, turning upside-down, as it were. This happens with the philosophical and humanistic anthropology of Feuerbach, the historical materialism of Marx, the reversed Platonism of Nietzsche, and the Freudian attack on the Ego. Through their critiques, metaphysics turns into an interest-driven ideology and infantile fiction.

DENKEN IST DANKEN

“The thinking of the thinkers is the relation toward the Being of beings.

Heidegger, 1954, p. 75

The thinking of the thinkers acknowledges, thanks for, the gift of Being by thinking through and unfolding the ontological and existential possibilities that lie dormant in the productive projection of a paradigm of world and worlding – such as world as idea, force, life, Subject, will. The thinking of the thinkers stands, stands out into, understands the worlding of a world, the meaning or truth of Being. But the thinkers do not make, produce, or construct the world. The world is not their representation. Rather, the thinking of the thinkers articulates the unity of the world, what holds it together, its truth.

Thinkers are human beings, though odd ones. The mode of being of the human being, of *Da-Sein*, is “existence” which, in Heidegger, does not mean the actual or empirical presence of humans in the world among, and on a par with, other beings. Humans, rocks, and slugs can all be found in the world, but they are not *there* in the same way. To say that *Da-Sein* exists is to say, with Heidegger, *only* *Da-Sein* exists, insofar as existing is a mode of being unique to the human being. Existing means to be in such a way that being this existence requires assuming it. As all philosophical terms, *Da-Sein* is better understood as verb than noun, since it does not simply occur, but must be accomplished. Existing is an *ek-stare*, a standing, withstanding, and holding out in and into the horizontal openness and onslaught of the world. The being of the human being is positioned in the clearing or crossing, where the light and gift of Being en-lightens an understanding of Being. The being of the human being is such that, in its being, the human being understands and relates to its own being, as well as the world in and towards which this being lives. Insofar as this understanding does not understand itself, it is an *ontic* or pre-ontological understanding. This vague and unelaborated understanding of itself and the world is the gift with which the human being, and only the human being, is gifted. The thinking of the thinkers unfolds this gift into the abundance of its philosophical and metaphysical possibilities. The thinking of the thinkers unlocks the *ontic* understanding into an ontological one.

Da-Sein exists in a possible understanding of the meaning or truth of Being. *Da-Sein* is not the Subject, but “Subject” is one possible way for the human being to understand itself, and this is the understanding that comes into being together with the metaphysics of modernity as a philosophy of the Subject. The understanding in which *Da-Sein* exists is constitutive of it, and thus not an internal cognitive or mental operation. *Da-Sein* is neither an inner nor an outer reality; it is a being in-between inner and outer, a being in the crossing and clearing. The understanding in which *Da-Sein* exists is not a knowing, not a knowing the facts. It is a non-propositional understanding that cannot be correct or false, which makes it a pro-ductive or paradigmatic understanding. A productive understanding brings something forth, but it does not make or create (produce) what it understands. Neither do we make or create this understanding itself; rather, we are thrown into it, much like into mood.

How is the understanding in and as which *Da-Sein* exists itself to be understood? This is a task for thinking, for the thinking of the thinkers, through which the gift of thinking is allowed to follow its course. It is not that we have, on one side, the understanding and, on the other side, the understood, so that we could then examine whether or not the understanding “corresponds” to what is understood. A pro-ductive understanding *lets* what it understands *be* in a certain way. This understanding understands something *as* something, where the “as” indicates the light in which something is being understood. This understanding is neither theoretical nor practical, but existential. It is not that *Da-Sein* sometimes understands, and sometimes does not. Rather, *Da-Sein* is the being of this understanding, the being of its mode of disclosure, the being of and in the clearing or crossing in which it is situated. Understanding something in this existential way is not opposed to sensing or perceiving something. It is an understanding in and out of which we exist. It is an (*ontic*, first-order) understanding not itself understood (ontologically). One such *ontic* understanding is common sense, which produces the world as it is in the natural attitude, the real world, the lifeworld, the world in which we all live for the most part and most of the time. Common sense is not in us; we are in it.

All human beings understand and think. But very few of us are thinkers. Thinkers are very rare; unlike scientists, scholars, or researchers who appear in large numbers. The thinking of the thinkers moves through the crossing between Being and beings, between an *ontic* and an ontological understanding of Being. Ontological understanding articulates and unfolds *ontic* understanding.

This unfolding is how the gift given to the thinkers is being received – through the becoming of their philosophy.

The becoming of Heidegger's philosophy, while not a straight path and twisted by turns and dead ends, is but a continuous question for the Truth of Being, for what there really is, in truth. At the same time, Truth is no longer, cannot be anymore, absolute. This is a possibility no longer available, as the modern world as *Gestell* flattens all existence into functions and probabilities, into statistical averages and aggregate impact or outcome measures. While there is still a *Zeit*, it no longer has any *Geist*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- HEIDEGGER, Martin, 1954, *Was Heißt Denken?*, Tübingen, Niemeyer.
- HEIDEGGER, Martin, 1957, "Die Onto-Theo-Logische Verfassung der Metaphysik", in his *Identität und Differenz*, p. 31-67, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta.
- HEIDEGGER, Martin, 1962, *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, Tübingen, Niemeyer.
- HEIDEGGER, Martin, 1969, "Zeit und Sein" in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 1-25, Tübingen, Niemeyer.
- HEIDEGGER, Martin, 1989, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, Frankfurt, Klostermann (=GA 65).
- HEIDEGGER, Martin, 2004 [1929], "Vom Wesen des Grundes" in his *Wegmarken*, p. 123-175, Frankfurt, Klostermann.
- HEIDEGGER, Martin, 2006 [1927], *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen, Niemeyer.

ARE YOU READY TO EXTRACT YOURSELF
FROM THE ECONOMY?¹

Bruno Latour

“The [French] President is putting in place a commission of international experts to prepare for the great challenges ahead,” reports Le Monde in its edition of 29th May. Its journalists then add: “The choice was made to privilege a commission that is homogenous in terms of its profile and expertise, in such a way as to have the response of academics to these great challenges. But their contribution will be merely one among others and will not exhaust its subjects, the Elysée reassures us.” Why do I not feel at all “reassured” by that? My thoughts turned to the Restoration, which the easing of lockdown is more and more seeming to resemble: just as was the case for the Bourbon regime of 1814, it is possible that this committee, even if it is composed of excellent minds, has “forgotten nothing and learned nothing.”²

It would certainly be a shame to lose too quickly all the benefit of what Covid-19 has revealed to be essential. In the midst of the chaos, of the world crisis that is to come, of the grief and suffering, there is at least one thing that everyone has been able to grasp: something is wrong with the economy. First of all, of course, because it seems that it can be suspended in one fell swoop; it no longer has the appearance of an irreversible movement that can neither slow down, nor by any means stop, without risk of catastrophe. Next, because all those in lockdown have noticed that class relations, which were sol-

¹ First published in *AOC*, 2nd of June 2020, kindly translated from French by Timothy Howles. URL: <https://aoc.media/opinion/2020/06/01/etes-vous-prets-a-vous-deseconomiser/>

² [Transl.] This quote, thought to have originated in a 1796 letter by the French naval officer Charles Louis Etienne and subsequently used by Talleyrand, refers to the restored Bourbon dynasty after the abdication of Napoleon.

emly declared to have been abrogated, have become as visible as they were in the time of Dickens or Proudhon: the revaluation of values has taken a serious hit, adding a new spin to the famous Gospel injunction: “The first (those at the top) will be last and the last (those at the bottom) will be first” (*Matthew*, 19:30).¹

We knew already that something is wrong with the economy, you might say; that has not started with the virus. Yes, yes, but what is more insidious is that we are now saying that something is wrong in the way the economy *defines* the world. When we say that “the economy has to start up again,” we ask ourselves, *in petto*, “but actually, why? Is that really such a good idea?”

Well, we shouldn't have been given the time to reflect at such length! Carried along by development, dazzled by the promise of abundance, we were probably destined never to view things other than through the prism of the economy. Then, for just two months, we found ourselves extracted from this self-evident situation, like a fish out of water who realizes that its living environment is not the only one. Paradoxically, the lockdown has “opened doors” by liberating us from our accustomed patterns.

And so the release from lockdown seems like the much more painful thing; like a prisoner who, having been granted temporary leave, finds it all the more unbearable to have to return to the cell to which he had become so habituated. We were expecting a great wind of liberation, but are being enclosed all over again in the ineluctable “forward march of the economy” – in spite of the fact that for the last two months our explorations of the “world to come” have never been more intense. So will everything go back to how it was before? It's probable, but not inevitable.

The doubt that has been introduced during this hiatus is too profound; it has insinuated itself too widely; it has taken a stranglehold on too many people. Even in January, perhaps, the idea of the President surrounding himself with a commission of economic experts would have felt like a reassuring sign; but after Covid-19, it does nothing but fill us with dread:

“What, they're going to start up again by grasping the entirety of the current situation as *part* of the economy? And entrust the whole thing to a

¹ [Transl.] Latour uses two phrases, *de cordée* and *de corvée*, that have recently been popularized in the rhetoric of opposition to President Macron, for which see, URL: <https://www.lefigaro.fr/langue-francaise/actu-des-mots/2018/04/18/37002-20180418ARTFIG00088-premier-de-cordee-d-o-vient-l-expression-favorite-d-emmanuel-macron.php>

‘commission that is homogenous in terms of its profile and expertise’. Are they really competent to grasp the situation as it now appears to us in light of this unexpected suspension?’”

That the economy can seem detached from normal human experience has been understood by many researchers and activists, of course, but the painful experience of the pandemic has made this rupture widely-known. Millions of people have had the same experience as Jim Carrey, the hero of *The Truman Show*: they have finally punctured a hole in the set and have realized that the stage-décor can be separated from the metal framework that holds it up. From this experience, from this rupture, from this doubt, there is no coming back.

You will never make Carrey return for *a second time* onto the film set – in the hope that it will “work” this time!

Until now, the specialized term for speaking of this rupture was “economization.” Material existence is not, by itself, made of economic relations. Humans have a multitude of relations between themselves and with the things amongst which they live that mobilize an extraordinarily large range of passions, affects, know-how, techniques and inventions. Moreover, the majority of human societies do not have a unified term to account for this multitude of relations: they are coextensive with life itself. Marcel Mauss a hundred years ago, Marshall Sahlins fifty years ago, Philippe Descola or Nastassja Martin today, in short, a large part of anthropology has never stopped exploring this trail.¹

It just so happens that, in certain recent societies, a concerted work of formatting has tried (without ever completely succeeding) to reduce and simplify these relations, to extract from them certain types of passion, affect, know-how, technique and invention, and to ignore all the others. To use the term “economization” is to highlight this work of formatting so as to avoid confusing it with the multitude of relations necessary for the continuation of life. It is also to introduce a distinction between the economic disciplines and the object that is properly theirs (the word “discipline” is preferable to the word “science” in order to properly highlight the distance between the two). These activities carry out

¹ There is a huge literature, but roughly: Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2017 [1972]); Philippe Descola, *The Ecology of Others: Anthropology and the Question of Nature* (translated by Geneviève Godbout & Benjamin P. Luley, Chicago, Prickly Paradigm Press, 2013); Nastassja Martin, *Les âmes sauvages. Face à l'Occident, la résistance d'un peuple d'Alaska* (Paris, La Découverte, 2016); and for industrial societies, Michel Callon, ed. *Sociologie des agencements marchands. Textes choisis* (Paris, Presses de l'École Nationale des Mines de Paris, 2013); Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London, Verso, 2013).

formatting, what we call “investments of form,” but they cannot take the place of experience, which they simplify or reduce. The distinction is the same as that between constructing the film-set on which Jim Carrey will “appear” and broadcasting the production in which he features.

There is a tendency to say that the economic disciplines *perform* the thing they study – the expression “performativity” is borrowed from linguistics to designate expressions that enact what they say by the very act of saying it – whether promises, threats or legal acts.¹ Nothing strange in that, and nothing to criticize either. It is a general principle that one cannot grasp any object without first formatting it.

For example, there is no phenomenon more objective and better assured today than asepsis. And yet, when I want to prove to my ten-year old grandson the existence of asepsis, I must help him understand all the gestures that will preserve the chicken broth he has sealed in a jam-jar safe from contamination (and this is not so easy to explain via Zoom during the lockdown!). It is not enough to show him flasks from the hands of Pasteur’s glassmaker where the liquid is still perfectly pure after one hundred and fifty years. My grandson Ulysse must *obtain* an understanding of this objective fact by learning a whole set of practices that make possible the emergence of an entirely new phenomenon: asepsis becomes possible thanks to these practices and did not exist before (this creates, moreover, for the microbes an entirely new selection pressure too). The permanence of asepsis as a well-established fact thus depends on the permanence of an institution – and of carefully-maintained procedures in laboratories, clean-rooms, pharmaceutical factories, experimental teaching rooms, etc.

Pursuing the analogy, economization is as objective but also as carefully and obstinately constructed a phenomenon as asepsis. All it takes is for Ulysse to make the slightest error in scalding the glass flask, or in applying its lid, and a few days later the chicken broth will be cloudy with contamination. The same pertains to economization: two months in lockdown, away from our usual framework, and look how the “bad habits” return, how innumerable relations whose presence had been forgotten or denied start to proliferate.

Keeping ourselves from contamination is just as difficult as remaining submitted to economization [*économisable*]. The lesson is as valid for Covid-19 as

¹ Donald MacKenzie, Fabian Muniesa & Lucia Siu, eds., *Do Economists Make Markets? On the Performativity of Economics* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2007).

it is for the economic disciplines. It always takes an institution in good working order to maintain the continuity of a fact or of a proof.

Just as microbes were not prepared to find themselves confronted by the protective measures of asepsis invented by the Pasteurians, so human beings immersed in material relations with things all around them were not prepared for the dressage that economization would impose upon them from the 18th century onwards. By himself, nobody becomes a *detached* individual, able to *calculate* a *self-serving* agenda and to enter into *competition* with everyone else in search of *profit*. These highlighted words identify properties that truly exist in the world, but only because they were first extracted, maintained, connected and assured by the immense assistance of accounting tools, title deeds, business schools and scholarly algorithms. *Homo oeconomicus* is just like a strain of bacteria cultivated in a petri-dish: it exists, but there is nothing natural, native or spontaneous about him. Alleviate the conditions, and see how it is emancipated, like a virus suddenly abandoned in a laboratory from which funding has suddenly been pulled – ready to go around the world.

We can go even further. In a book that is full of humor (and in a recent article in *Libération*), David Graeber suggests that the more difficult the formatting and the more agents “resist” its discipline, the more violent the “economization” [*mise en économie*].¹ The less realistic economization seems, the more there is need of operators, officials, consultants, accountants and auditors of all kinds to enforce its operation. While it is relatively easy to count the number of steel plates produced by a rolling mill (a digital sensor and spreadsheet will suffice), if you want to calculate the productivity of a care-assistant, teacher or fire officer you will have to multiply the number of intermediaries to render their activity compatible with an Excel spreadsheet. Hence, according to Graeber, the multiplication of “bullshit jobs.”

If the experience of the pandemic has any meaning, it’s to reveal the speed with which the notion of productivity has come to depend on accounting tools. Yes, it’s true, you can’t calculate the productivity of teachers, nurses, housewives very accurately. What conclusion do we draw from this? That they are unproductive? That they deserve to be paid less and kept at the bottom of the ladder? Or that it doesn’t matter, because this is not the issue? Whatever name you give

¹ David Graeber, *Bullshit Jobs: The Rise of Pointless Work, and What We Can Do About It* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2018). In French, see also his opinion piece in *Libération* entitled *David Graeber: vers une « bullshit economy »*, for which see, URL: https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2020/05/27/vers-une-bullshit-economy_1789579

to their “production,” it is both indispensable and incalculable; well, let others grapple with this contradiction; it simply means that these activities belong to a type of action that is *non-economizable*. The realization by everybody that this resistance to countability is of “no importance” casts doubt on all other operations of economization. This is where the economic grip on the conditions of life breaks away from what it describes, like a cracked wall panel detaches itself from its surroundings.

“But surely, readers will say, by dint of the economic disciplines that institute the economy as an extraction of the relationships that make life possible, we, at least, we the producers and consumers of industrialized countries, *we have certainly become*, after so much formatting, people who can be economized wholesale and with almost no remainder. There may well have been other ways of relating to the world in other times and places, and in the moving accounts of ethnologists, but that’s gone forever, at least for us. We have truly become those selfish individuals in competition with one another, capable of calculating our interests to the nearest decimal point.”

This is where the shock of Covid-19 compels us to reflect: believing in its irreversibility is like believing that progress in hygiene, in vaccination, or in anti-septic methods have rid us forever of microbes... what was true in January 2020 is perhaps no longer true in June 2020.

A hiatus of just two months is all it took to achieve what numerous studies by sociologists of markets and anthropologists of finance would never have achieved: a widely-shared realization that the economy holds in place only as long as the institution that performs it – *and not a day longer*. The proliferating ways of relating necessary for life continue, spilling over and invading the narrow format of economization, just as teaming viruses, bacteriophages and bacteria continue to connect, in countless different ways, beings as distant as bats, hungry Chinese people and gastronomes, not to mention Bill Gates and Dr Fauci. This is the contamination: from about fifty colleagues in science studies to tens of millions of people peacefully signing up to the numerous movements, unions, parties and diverse traditions that have good reason to distrust the economy and economists (however “expert,” “homogenous” and qualified they might be). The hapless Jim Carrey has now turned into a crowd.

What the pandemic makes more intense, then, is not merely doubt about the usefulness and productivity of various trades, goods, products and companies

– but doubt about how concepts and formats provided by the economy have grasped the forms of life which we all need to subsist.

Productivity – its calculation, its measure, its intensification – is gradually being replaced, thanks to the virus, by a totally different question: a question of subsistence. This is the turning-point; this is the doubt; this is the point of no return: not *what* and *how* to produce, but is “producing” a good way of connecting to the world? Just as we cannot continue to “wage war” on the virus without understanding the multitude of relations of co-existence with them, neither can we continue to “produce” without understanding the relations of subsistence that make all production possible. That is the enduring lesson of the pandemic.

And not merely because, at the beginning, for two months, we saw so many coffins on TV and heard ambulances going down empty streets, but also because, one thing leading to another, from questions about missing PPE to hospital beds, we have ended up questioning the value and politics *of life* – what makes it possible, what sustains it, what makes it livable and just.

At the beginning, of course, it was about stopping the spread, by means of the paradoxical invention of preventative measures that required all of us, as an act of solidarity, to remain locked in our homes. Then, in a second stage, we began to see proliferate in full view the work of these “forgotten people” [*petites gens*], who we noticed, more and more every day, were indispensable – here was a return to the question of class relations, clearly racialized. There was also the return of hard geopolitical relations and of inequalities between countries, made visible (this has also been one of the enduring lessons) product by product, value chain by value chain, migration route by migration route. As a third stage, employment hierarchies have been shaken up: we began to notice a thousand qualities in less well-paid, less well-regarded jobs, the ones demanding care, attention and multiple precautions. Those who had been most indifferent took to applauding these “careers” from their balcony; where previously they had made do with mowing the lawn, senior executives put their hand to permaculture; even fathers working remotely noticed that to teach arithmetic to their children required a thousand qualities of patience and obstinacy, the importance of which they had never suspected.

Will all that come to an end? No, because misgivings about production have a funny way of proliferating and of gradually contaminating everything they touch: as soon as we start talking about subsistence or generative practices, the list of beings, affects, passions and relations that make it possible for us to live

keeps growing longer. The formatting provided by economization, just as was the case for asepsis, had precisely as its goal to multiply preventative measures in order to limit the number of beings to be *taken into account*, in every sense of the word. It sought to prevent proliferation, to obtain pure cultures, to simplify the grounds for action, which was the only way to make microbes or humans knowable, calculable and manageable.

These are the barriers, the roadblocks, the dykes that have begun to crack during the pandemic. Which would not have been possible without the persistence of another crisis that exceeds it on every side. By a coincidence that is not completely fortuitous, coronavirus has quickly spread amongst people who were *already aware* of the nature of a multiform threat that a generalized crisis of subsistence had been posing to them. Without this other crisis, the pandemic would probably have been addressed as a serious public health challenge, but not as an existential question: people in lockdown would have been cautious about infection, but would not have set about discussing whether it was really useful to produce airplanes, to continue cruising on giant ships that look like container vessels, or to expect Argentina to provide the soya required for Breton pigs. The new climactic regime, when superimposed upon the health crisis, casts such fundamental doubt upon the whole question of production that it took only two months of lockdown for the issue to be reinvigorated. Hence the prodigious extension of questions of subsistence.

If the health crisis has reminded us of the role of these forgotten jobs [*petits métiers*], if it has given new significance to the caring professions, if it made class relations more visible, it has also gradually reminded us of the importance of those *other participants* in our ways of life, first microbes, and then, one thing leading to another, all that is needed to maintain in good condition an economy we had hitherto supposed constituted the totality of experience and that would recover. Even the most obtuse reporter, who continues to contrast those who care about the climate with those who simply wish to “restock the fridge,” can no longer ignore the fact that there is nothing in the fridge that does not depend on the climate – not to mention the countless microorganisms associated with the fermentation of cheese, yoghurt and beer.

A citation from Graeber’s book on the origin of value (a classic debate between economists) sums up the novel situation. He reminds us that the idea of the labor theory of value was self-evident in the nineteenth-century, before disappearing under the neoliberal barrage of the twentieth, a century that was

so forgetful of the conditions of life. So an injustice is inflicted upon creators of value, which he sums up in this quotation:

“Nowadays, if one speaks of ‘wealth producers’, people will automatically assume one is referring not to workers, but to capitalists.”¹

But when the importance of work and of care is seen in the light of day, we soon notice that other values, and other “workers,” must act if humans are to subsist. To capture this new injustice, we would have to re-write Graeber’s words as follows:

“Nowadays, if one speaks of ‘wealth producers’, people will automatically assume one is referring *not to living things*, but to capitalists or workers.”

Underneath the capitalists are the workers, and underneath the workers are living things! The *Old Mole* is still functioning.² Attention has ratcheted up not one notch, but *two*. The center of gravity has also shifted. Other sources of value have manifested themselves. This is the world that is now appearing in the full light of day, absolutely refusing to accept the status of “mere resource” granted to it condescendingly by the standard definition of the economy and breaking through all the preventative measures that should have kept it distanced. It’s all very well to produce, but we still have to subsist. The pandemic provides this surprising lesson: where we thought we could wage war on the virus, instead we have to learn to live with it with the least detriment to ourselves; where we thought we should have an Economic Recovery, instead we will probably have to learn to exit from the Economy, that simplified summary of forms of life.

Translated by Timothy Howles

¹ David Graeber, *Bullshit Jobs*, p. 233.

² [Transl.] *La Vieille Taupe* was an ultra-left publishing house and bookshop in Paris, its name deriving from a communist conception of the maturation of social forces beneath the surface of society which (it was thought) would eventually erupt in revolutionary movements.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE RAT'S? INTEREST, RATIONALITY AND CULTURE IN AMERICAN SOCIOLOGY¹

Loïc J. D. Wacquant and Craig Jackson Calhoun

The exchange in the *American Journal of Sociology*² between the neoclassical economics-inspired sociologist James S. Coleman on the one hand, and the historian-sociologist William H. Sewell, Jr., influenced by Geertz's cultural anthropology, on the other, is an opportunity to take note of the rise, or the return to prominence, of two influential currents in the American sociological field: the theory of "rational action" (Rational Action Theory, or RAT) and historical and cultural sociology. Beyond the men, two epistemological poles and two conceptions of social action and science are, in fact, in conflict.

COLEMAN AND THE OFFENSIVE OF *HOMO ECONOMICUS*

The RAT that Coleman calls for in his manifesto article does not, strictly speaking, constitute an original theoretical movement in the American social sciences, but rather an enlarged and modernized application of the "economic approach" to social phenomena, whose historical roots go back to the

¹ First published in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* (March, 1989) as « Intérêt, rationalité et culture : à propos d'un récent débat sur la théorie de l'action ».

For a recent debate on action theory, see J. S. Coleman, "Social Theory, Social Research, and a Theory of Action", *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(6), 1986, p. 1309-1335; W. H. Sewell, Jr, "Theory of Action, Dialectic, and History: Comment on Coleman", *American Journal of Sociology*, 93(1), 1987, p. 166-172; and J. S. Coleman, "Actors and Action in Social History and Social Theory: Reply to Sewell", *American Journal of Sociology*, 93(1), 1987, p. 172-175. Full bibliographical references are given at the end of the article.

² In addition to Coleman's text, the May 1986 issue of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* included two other articles on the "State of Sociology Today" (*i.e.* American sociology): Immanuel Wallerstein (1986), "Marxisms as Utopias: Evolving Ideologies", and Randall Collins (1986a), "Is 1980s Sociology in the Doldrums?" Collins' text has also provoked a lively exchange, cf. Norman K. Denzin (1987a), "The Death of Sociology in the 1980s: Comment on Collins", and Collins (1987), "Looking Forward or Looking Back? Reply to Denzin."

individualistic philosophy of Anglo-Saxon utilitarianism,¹ and whose founding postulate was stated by Gary Becker (1976, p. 14) as follows:

“All human behavior can be conceived as involving participants who maximize their utility from a stable set of preferences and who accumulate the optimal amount of information and other inputs in a variety of markets.”

Under the various names of rational choice,² the problem of collective action,³ the search for “microfoundations”⁴ or methodological individualism, this approach is currently enjoying an unprecedented popularity in the United States, which can be explained by the conjunction of several factors.

The first factor is the “microsociological” or “constructivist” revolt that put an end to the functionalist hegemony in the 1960s. The paradigmatic breakdown of American sociology that followed authorized a return to the actor, which, if it was mainly carried out in the “interpretative” or cognitive mode, with the symbolic interactionism of Blumer and Goffman, the ethnomethodology of Garfinkel and Cicourel, phenomenological sociology inspired by Schutz and conversation analysis of Sacks and Schegloff,⁵ also includes an “instrumentalist” or rational variant represented by the behaviorism of George Caspar Homans and the exchange theory of Peter Blau. This shift in the center of gravity of the

1 Or, more precisely, the truncated and resolutely presentist representation that American sociology has formed of the utilitarians (Hume, Mill, Bentham and Adam Smith), largely under the impetus of Parsons, as Charles Camic (1979) shows. This philosophical filiation is actively claimed by Coleman (1986a, p. 1329), who sees in the “compatibility [of RAT] with the conceptual foundations that have underpinned much social thought since the political philosophers of natural law in the 17th century” one of the main merits of this paradigm and the instrument of a rapprochement that he deems necessary and beneficial between sociological theory, legal theory, and moral philosophy (cf. Coleman, 1974a).

2 Cf. Heath (1976) and the texts collected in Elster (1986).

3 Hardin (1982), Oliver (1980) and the classic of the genre by Mancur Olson (1965).

4 For example Hechter (1983, 1987).

5 See Knorr-Cetina (1981) and Wiley (1985, p. 189-195). The development of this “micro-interactionist tradition” specific to American social science is summarized by Randall Collins (1985, part 3). An overview of the main recent works in microsociology can be found in Adler, Adler and Fontana (1987) and Atkinson (1988). In addition to conversation analysis (e.g., Psathas, 1979; Heritage, 1985), it is in the sociology of emotions that the most vigorous developments are recorded (as witnessed by the creation in 1987 of a section of the American Sociological Association devoted to this specialty): for example, Kemper (1978), Shott (1979), Hochschild (1979, 1983), Denzin (1984), Lofland (1985) and the issue of the journal *Symbolic Interaction* edited by David D. Franks in the fall of 1985 (vol. 8, n° 2) devoted entirely to the “Sociology of Emotion”; in an anthropological vein, Lutz (1988).

sociological field towards the subjectivity pole is combined today with a clear revival of interest in theory – even in “Grand Theory” – so as to create particularly favorable conditions for the propagation of RAT, in which it is not forbidden to discern a sort of return of the repressed utilitarian sociology that had gradually dissipated over the course of the 1970s.¹

The second factor is a full-scale attack on the sociological citadel by economists and their allies from within. Adam Przeworski observes that :

“The social sciences are today being attacked by an offensive without precedent since the 1890s: a deliberate push to impose the monopoly of the economic method on any study of society. [...] And this offensive has been largely victorious.”²

Without going so far as to share this self-interested and somewhat hasty diagnosis of the outcome of the battle, one can only agree in noting the rapid proliferation of economic models in American social science³. This is the case in particular in the sociology of organizations, where the work of economists has been at the origin of important developments, such as the transaction cost approach or the theory of “principal-agent” relationships,⁴ but also in the study of social movements, the family and the school, as in the scattered body of research and analytical techniques gathered under the label of network theory.⁵ Admittedly, there are relatively few avowed disci-

¹ It had been officially disowned by one of its founders, Peter Blau (1977a, 1977b), who turns to “all-macro” with *Inequality and Heterogeneity*. See also his “Preface” in the form of a volte-face to the re-edition of *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (Blau, 1986). This link between Coleman’s RAT and exchange theory is explicitly established by Homans (1987, 1988), who sees it as a special case of the behaviorism he has tirelessly promoted over the last three decades.

² Przeworski (1985a, p. 379). This is also the view of Anthony Oberschall and Eric M. Leifer (1986, p. 233). On the economist side, see Hirschleifer (1985).

³ See Radnitzky and Bernholz (1987). The latest supplement to the *American Journal of Sociology* edited by Christopher Winship (a quantitative sociologist) and Sherwin Rosen (a Chicago School economist) entitled *Organizations and Institutions: Sociological and Economic Approaches to the Analysis of Social Structures* (1988) acknowledges this growing interpenetration of orthodox economics and sociology in the United States.

⁴ Williamson (1975, 1981), Moe (1984), Fama (1980), Pratt and Zeckhauser (1985). For an excellent critical synthesis of these currents, see Perrow (1986, chapter 7) and Francis, Turk and Willman (1983). In political sociology, rationalist positivism is led by William H. Riker and Peter C. Ordeshook (1973); see also Plott (1976), Barry (1978), and the still influential earlier works of Anthony Downs, James Buchanan, Gordon Tullock and Kenneth Arrow.

⁵ On the rationalist approach to social movement analysis, Oberschall (1973), Fireman and

ples of RAT among sociologists – in contrast to political scientists – and the intrusion of the economic method into the field of sociology has not happened without triggering a vigorous counter-attack. Thus the neo-classical concept of the market is today, if not discredited, at least strongly contested by the work of Granovetter, Powell and White, and the rapid rise of economic sociology in recent years suggests that the sociological questioning of the notions of orthodox economics is only just beginning.¹

The fact remains that, reinforced by the social philosophy of “voluntaristic individualism” which, since the beginning, has permeated American sociology, and by the instrumental positivism which makes the successes – social if not scientific – of neo-classical economics the model of scientificity,² the scheme of rational action now underlies, even if implicitly, a good number of apparently atheoretical research sectors. In any case, the economist offensive is sufficiently threatening for some sociologists to be moved by it and to warn their colleagues of the dangers of giving in too easily to a fusion of sister disciplines under the aegis of the reductive concept of rational choice: sociology would have nothing to gain by trading its sense of the variety and complexity of reality for the “unrealistic neatness” of economic models.³

Gamson (1979), Olson (1982), Jenkins (1983), Tilly (1978, especially p. 24-37), and Popkin (1979). An analytical synopsis of current controversies in this area of investigation emphasizing the opposition between rational and historical-cultural or “identity” models can be found in Jean L. Cohen (1985). An interesting attempt to overcome this antinomy is made by James W. White (1988). The “monument” of rational family theory is without doubt Gary S. Becker’s *A Treatise on the Family* (1981), which has done more than any other work to legitimize “economic imperialism”, in the words of Kenneth Boulding (1969), in this field. See also the tellingly titled article by Ben-Porath (1980), “The F-Connection: Families, Friends, and Firms and the Organization of Exchange.” Diego Gambetta’s book, *Did they jump or were they pushed?* (1987) contains a synthesis of the claims of RAT in the sociology of education. For a sample of recent works in network theory which takes as its object the structures of observable relations between social or organizational positions and more or less explicitly implements a rational or utilitarian conception of action, see Burt (1982), Laumann and Knoke (1987), Wellman and Berkowitz (1988).

1 Cf. Granovetter (1973, 1974) and the seminal article “Economy Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness” (Granovetter, 1985); the work of Harrison White (1970, 1981), Leifer (1985), Powell (1985), Sabel (198, p. 4), Stark (1986), Berg (1981), as well as the articles collected by Zukin and DiMaggio (1986); also Tilly (1984b, on Mancur Olson) and Zald (1987, on Oliver Williamson). On the emergence of economic sociology as an autonomous problematic, see Swedberg, Himmelstrand and Brulin (1987) and, in a more idiosyncratic vein, Stinchcombe (1983).

2 On “voluntarist nominalism,” see Hinckle and Hinckle (1980); on “instrumental positivism” in American sociology, Bryant (1985, chapter 5).

3 See Hirsch, Michaels and Friedman (1987), and the more ambivalent view of Oberschall and Leifer (1985, p. 251).

Two examples of this epistemological arrogance of economists: At a symposium on Paradigms in the Social Sciences held in 1986 on the campus of the University of Chicago – a stronghold of RAT if ever there was one¹ – the Nobel Prize-winning economist James Buchanan did not hesitate to proclaim that (quoted by Hirsch *et al.*, 1987, p. 317):

“Those who prefer to conduct research on class relations, states and organizations as such without taking the trouble to reduce the analysis to the behavior of the individuals who participate in them do not, in my opinion, deserve the title of social scientist, if the term is to have any meaning at all.”

In a conference on sociological theory at the University of Chicago in 1983, his colleague Mancur Olson responded to Joseph Gusfield, who had just defended interpretive sociology (“humanistic science”) at the end of a paper on the social construction of the notion of a public problem such as drinking and driving, with these words (Olson, in Lindenberg, Coleman and Nowak, 1986, p. 202):

“I liked the talk and even found it enjoyable. When it was over, I wondered why I liked it so much [...]. I finally realized why: it was like a beautiful sermon. Shouldn't you then call it a theological approach to social science rather than a humanistic one?”

On the side of sociologists, Michael Hechter's book *Principles of Group Solidarity* offers an archetypal example of this creeping economism that dares not say its name. Having, after a summary trial, condemned without appeal

¹ The University of Chicago can legitimately claim to be the Mecca of Rational Action Theory: it has several of the most prominent representatives of RAT on its campus (James Coleman, Gary S. Becker, George Stigler, Jon Elster, and Adam Przeworski, among others). Its sociology department is the only one in the country to offer doctoral training in RAT, which includes a battery of courses specifically designed to systematize and disseminate its teaching. James Coleman and Gary Becker conduct an annual closed seminar on “Rational Models in the Social Sciences” that is nationally renowned and brings together, two evenings a month, the Rats of the Sociology, Political Science, and Economics departments. Jon Elster is the director of the newly established Center for the Study of Ethics, Rationality, and Society, where the best representatives of utilitarian subjectivism from all continents come together. A journal dedicated to the promotion of methodological individualism and deductivist rationalism has been created under the direction of James Coleman, entitled *Rationality and Society*, the first issue of which was published in June 1989.

the “normativist, structuralist and functionalist” approaches (1987, p. 20-29), simplified at will for the occasion, this former follower of neo-Marxist theory (he was, at other times, one of the most prominent disciples of Immanuel Wallerstein at the University of Columbia), freshly converted to the RAT, proposes to replace them with a rational theory of group cohesion. This theory is articulated around three basic elements which immediately give an idea of the conceptual impoverishment produced by such a conversion: individuals “bearers of a set of discrete, unambiguous, and transitive preferences”; institutions, *i.e.* “sets of rules which effectively constrain individual behavior in various ways”; and “collective products” resulting from the combination of individual behaviors (p. 30-31). Question: why do individuals believe in or join groups? Answer: in order to be able to consume the exclusive and immanent goods that these alone are able to produce. At the end of a close examination of several cases, parliamentary groups, credit associations, internal labor markets of firms and communes (a very particular sample since it contains only formal elective groups. What about all the collectives where membership does not come from the logic of deliberate and conscious individual choice, families, clans, classes, nations, racial or ethnic communities, sexual groups or age groups?), the author arrives at this remarkable discovery full of utilitarian common sense: a group is all the more solidary the more its members depend on it and the more its capacities of formal control and sanction are extended.

In conclusion, Hechter agrees that RAT suffers from some alarming shortcomings: it is unable to explain why one type of group emerges rather than another in order to quench the same unquenchable thirst for ‘immanent collective goods’ that endlessly torments maximizing individuals; it denies any role to collective identities and feelings; it proves incapable of shedding light on the dynamics of institutional development and the outbursts of collective action that occur in the apparent absence of any formal mechanism of control or retribution; and lastly, and above all, it remains totally silent on the causal variable which, supposedly, controls the whole model, namely the formation of individual preferences (p. 183-184). This does not, however, prevent him from asserting without further formality that “far from being immiscible, sociology and rational choice are mutually complementary... Together, [they] offer today the best hope of merging the individual and structural levels of analysis into a coherent whole capable of producing falsifiable empirical propositions” (p. 8 and p. 186).

Finally, although rooted in a fundamentally conservative individualistic social philosophy, and even organically linked to a form of libertarian capitalism which would seem, at first sight, to make it antithetical to a critical social science, the theoretical claims of sociological RAT have been considerably reinforced on the left by the parallel emergence of Analytical Marxism (also known as game-theoretic Marxism or rational choice Marxism). This new school of thought, whose hard core consists of the philosophers Gerald Cohen and Jon Elster, the political scientists Adam Przeworski and Robert Van Parijs, the economist John Roemer and the (only) sociologist Erik Olin Wright (and to the periphery of which one can attach the philosophers Andrew Levine and Allen Wood, historian Robert Brenner and Norman Geras) aims to take up the problems of Marxism using the methodology of neo-classical economics. He does it on the basis of a philosophy of action – in fact a real social ontology related to that which founds Sartrean subjectivism¹ – which makes the structure of social relations the product of the composite and unintentional aggregation of the deliberate choices of individuals maximizing their interests during strategic interactions aiming for the efficient distribution of limited resources.²

This heterogeneous and small (but extraordinarily active and cohesive, and therefore very visible) network that claims to be a hybrid between Marx and John Stuart Mill has forged the project of finally giving Marxism the logical and rational (to say the least: scientific in a sense that the Vienna Circle would not deny) foundations that, a century after the death of the author of *Capital*, it still lacks.³ Its members distinguish themselves from their predecessors, notably

¹ See Bourdieu (1980, p. 71-83), for a critique of the ‘imaginary anthropology’ that is at the root of Sartrean phenomenology and Elster’s version of RAT.

² The best overall introduction to this current is the collection of texts presented by John E. Roemer (1986) under the title *Analytical Marxism*. Also published in this series are Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx* (1985); Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (1985b); and Michael Taylor (ed.), *Rationality and Revolution* (1988). Other important books of Analytical Marxism are G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx’s Theory of History: A Defence* (1978); the ultra-mathematical technical tracts of John E. Roemer, *Analytical Foundations of Marxian Economic Theory* (1981) and *A General Theory of Exploitation and Class* (1982a), and the popular textbook for the undergraduate market, *Free To Lose: An Introduction to Marxist Economic Philosophy* (Roemer, 1988); Philippe Van Parijs, *Evolutionary Explanation in the Social Sciences* (1981a); and Erik Olin Wright, *Classes* (1985). Two debates around the theses of the Analytical Marxists can be found in issue 4, volume 11, 1982, (on Marxism, functionalism and game theory) and issue 5, volume 15, 1986, (on the transition to socialism) of *Theory and Society* and in issue 3, volume 11, 1982, of *Politics and Society* (on Roemer’s exploitation theory).

³ The series “Studies in Marxism and Social Theory” edited by G. A. Cohen, Jon Elster and John Roemer at Cambridge University Press and Éditions de la Maison des Sciences et de l’Homme is presented in these terms: “The books in this series are intended to exemplify a new paradigm in the study of

the structuralists, of whom some are repentant defectors, by the fact that they apply without any qualms “the most advanced methods of analytic philosophy and ‘positivist’ social science”¹ to the traditional problems of Marxism – theory of history, exploitation, class conflicts, transition to socialism. That is essentially the theory of games, mathematical modeling and the concepts of equilibrium and market of neo-classical economics. One of its principal spokesmen does not hesitate to go so far as to set up analytical philosophy as a *sine qua non* of the scientific method.²

This “marginalist historical materialism”, if we may be allowed to use an expression that borders on conceptual barbarism, thus agrees with the sociological RAT in making the rational choice of the individual the Archimedean point of social theory. Indeed, Analytical Marxism is in every respect the counterpart, in the sub-field of “professorial Marxism,”³ of Coleman’s rational choice theory in the sub-field of orthodox sociology. Just as Colemanian RAT cannot be understood outside of its oppositional relationship to functionalism and its hypersocialized conception of action which, in the Parsonian scheme, makes the agent the passive servant of all-powerful consensual cultural norms (Wrong, 1961), so in the same way the rationalist and intentionalist hypersubjectivism of

Marxist social theory. Rather than adopting a dogmatic or purely exegetical approach, they will examine and develop the theory inaugurated by Marx in the light of historical experience since then, using the tools of non-Marxist social science and philosophy. It is hoped that this will free Marxist thought from the increasingly discredited methods and presuppositions which are still widely regarded as essential to it, and that what is true and important in Marxism will thus be more firmly established.”

1 Roemer (1986, p. 2-3). Further on: “In seeking to give behavior the micro-foundations that Marxists regard as characteristic of capitalism, I believe that the instruments par excellence are the models based on rational choice: general equilibrium theory, game theory, and the arsenal of modeling techniques developed by neo-classical economics” (*ibid.*, p. 192).

2 “To understand scientific explanation or the notion of causality, the structure of intentional action or that of social interaction, knowledge of analytical philosophy is now indispensable” (Elster, *An English Marxism: About a New Interpretation of Historical Materialism*, 1981, p. 746). The following passage, which closes Elster’s “Critical Note on G.A. Cohen’s analytical reading of Marx,” gives an idea of the hyperbole and rhetorical effects aimed at creating an impression of radical innovation that characterize many of the mutual comments that practitioners of Analytical Marxism grace each other with regularly – and whose metaphorical schemes (pure/stagnant air, life/death, rare/common, high/low, etc.) suffice to express the intellectual height that they assign to their collective enterprise: “With his rigorous book, each page of which deserves to be commented on passionately, [Cohen] has brought us into a landscape that we did not know. The air we breathe is no longer the stagnant atmosphere of the endless scholastic discussions that nearly ruined Marxism. It is the air of the mountains; it is scarce, but we can see clearly and far” (*ibid.*, p. 756). For another example, see Van Parijs’ (1986-87) celebration of Roemer and Wright’s class theory in an article squarely entitled “A Revolution in Class Theory.”

3 We borrow this term from Frank Parkin (1979, p. 10).

Analytical Marxism is defined in a reaction to the exacerbated anti-humanism of Althusserian Marxism for which the agent is reduced to the rank of support of reified and quasi-anthropomorphized structures, continuously interpellated by ideological apparatuses with infinite mystifying capacities.

The RAT current is not yet sufficiently widespread, nor sufficiently homogeneous, to claim a large audience among sociologists as a theory,¹ and it is too early to predict whether it will continue to spread or, on the contrary, enter a phase of decline – as certain precursory signs lead us to suppose.²

It is in this triple context – resurgence of microsociology and theory (including the micro-macro debate), invasion of economic models and invention of Analytical Marxism – that Coleman's article is set. A true proclamation of a “theoretical state of emergency” in favor of utilitarian individualism,³ it illustrates in a paradigmatic way this forceful introduction of the *homo economicus* in the heart of the American sociological field. However, the Chicago sociologist is not content with simply repeating the postulates of economic analysis: he strives to give the RAT a noble theoretical filiation by linking it to the Parsonsian work, even if it means a dubious reinterpretation of the history of sociological thought in the United States; he makes an original diagnosis of the origins of the growing divorce between theory and empiricism; finally, he suggests several ways of enriching and making the economic model more complex by introducing the missing notion of social structure in various forms.

¹ Partly as a result of a hysteresis effect, RAT has not yet entered the recognized scholarly taxonomies of the universe of sociological theories in America and Britain (*e.g.*, it is absent as such from the collection assembled by Giddens and Turner, 1987, *Social Theory Today*).

² In addition to the collection edited by Cohen, Roemer, and Elster mentioned above, note the series “Studies in Rationality and Social Change” edited by Jon Elster and Gudmund Hernes at Cambridge University Press and the “California Series on Social Choice and Political Economy” published by University of California Press under the editorship of political scientists Brian Barry, Robert H. Bates and Samuel L. Popkin.

³ This article represents both the culmination of his earlier work (as evidenced by the series of public papers from 1964 to 1983 – more than a third of which were published in economics books and journals – collected in J.S. Coleman, *Individual Interests and Collective Action* (1986c, in Jon Elster's “Studies in Rationality and Social Change” series) and the programmatic introduction to *Foundations of Social Theory*. No introduction is needed here to James Coleman, author of a considerable body of work, including nearly 150 articles and some twenty books, including *The Adolescent Society* (1961); the famous “Coleman Report” on equal opportunity in American schools, which was the basis for the federal policy of racial desegregation of schools (Coleman *et al.*, 1966); *The Mathematics of Collective Action* (1973); *Power and the Structure of Society* (1974b); *The Asymmetric Society* (1982); and, most recently, *Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities* (Coleman and Hoffer 1986).

Coleman's first objective is to give utilitarian individualism the titles of sociological nobility which, since Durkheim, it has sorely lacked by recreating an intellectual genealogy that links it to that totemic figure of theory that is, inevitably, Talcott Parsons.¹ His plea for RAT thus opens with a historical reminder of the disappointed promises of American sociological theory: if the scientific program announced in 1937 by Parsons in *The Structure of Social Action* did contain the premises of a "voluntarist" theory of action,² neither he, nor his epigones, nor his rivals were able to bring them to fruition. Unable to link the subjective aims of the individual and institutions, Parsons himself very quickly took refuge in the study of the social system and its preconditions. George Homans, for his part, went in the opposite direction and, completely losing sight of social structure and intentionality, came to reduce the sociology of action to a behaviorist analysis of exchange à la Skinner; Merton, finally, if he partially absolved functionalism of the original sin of teleology, did not succeed in giving social action those rational "microfoundations" which it lacked.

From this theoretical deficiency was born a growing schism between theory and empiricism. For at the moment when the individual – or more precisely the notion of deliberate choice as a *modus operandi* of individual practices, which Coleman holds, as we shall see, to be consubstantial to a theory of action – disappears, more or less, from theory, empirical research makes

¹ Because of the institutional and intellectual gap between theory and practice in the United States, and in particular the representation of the former as an autonomous "specialty" essentially of pure conceptual exegesis (as reflected in the indigenous term *theorizing*). Parsons remains, against all odds, the cardinal reference in the American sociological field for whoever wants to ensure the status of theoretical discourse to his subject. It is not surprising, therefore, that the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of his first book, *The Structure of Social Action*, in 1937, was celebrated with great pomp and circumstance at the annual conference of the American Sociological Association in 1987. The session was reminiscent of a totemic ritual in many ways and included Bernard Barber, Harold Garfinkel (both of whom were trained by Parsons at Harvard), Jeffrey Alexander (who is now trying to rekindle the flame, cf. Alexander 1988c) and Jonathan Turner.

² It may seem paradoxical that Coleman should look to Parsons for the "promising beginnings" of the utilitarian theory of action that he intends to develop, since we know that the voluntarism that the Harvard master placed at the epicenter of his sociology is defined precisely by an irreducible opposition to utilitarianism. The fact that Coleman does not note this antinomy, or rather, gives it as a continuity by confusing Parsons' voluntarism with Benthamian purposiveness, strongly suggests the tactical character of the discursive reference to Parsons (even if unconsciously so). This paradox, while only apparent, is reminiscent of the strategy of legitimization employed by Parsons himself half a century earlier in his interpretation of Durkheim and Weber, which, we recall, consisted, by means of a fictitious retro-projection, in presenting his own theory as the systematization that makes explicit an "involuntary and unnoticed" convergence between them and advances towards a normative conception of action, which resolves the eternal Hobbesian problem of social order.

it its new unit of observation. The revolution in techniques of observation and statistical analysis which took place in the immediate post-war period, and which saw sample surveys based on individuals abstracted from their social and cultural contexts supplant community studies (in the style of Lynds' Middletown), led research in a direction diametrically opposed to that taken at the theoretical level by both the functionalists and their rivals of the so-called "conflict school." This type of research has two shortcomings from the point of view of the sociological theory that Coleman advocates: although individualistic, surveying research uses a causal and behaviorist mode of explanation and not a strategic and intentional one; it is therefore incapable of tracing the individual to the "behavior" of the social system. In addition to this accelerated development of statistical techniques, reinforced by the whole demographic tradition which reduces the analysis of social causality to a simple manipulation of mathematical indices, an objective change in the social structure has aggravated this divergence between theory and empiricism. Under the effect of the exponential growth of markets, mass media, large companies and bureaucracies, the principle of structuring the social has shifted from the local community to the national society. This transformation of social relations has itself determined a mutation of the social demand for social science, hence the rise of market studies and policy research (cf. Coleman, 1978) which have accentuated the individualistic and causal bias (in the sense of statistical causality) of research and hindered the elaboration of the rational foundations of sociological theory.

In order to remedy this growing divorce between an empiricism centred on an abstract individual devoid of intentions and a theory which operates exclusively at the level of a system artificially endowed with its own ends, Coleman proposes to restore the telos to the individual and to import into sociology the anthropological principles which underlie neo-classical microeconomics.¹ Once the ends that functionalists wrongly attribute to the social system have been repatriated to the level of the rational actor, sociological theory can be reduced to the elucidation of two puzzles: first, how do the intentional behaviors of actors combine to produce systemic consequences? Second, how do these economically goal-oriented actions in turn become shaped by the constraints resulting from the functioning of this system?² But by focusing the theoretical gaze on

¹ Amartya K. Sen (1977) offers a succinct exposition and stimulating critique of these anthropological presuppositions in his article "Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economics."

² Coleman (1986a, p. 1312; 1986b, p. 347 and p. 360-363). French readers will easily recognize the

the combination of autonomous individual behaviors into collective outcomes, Coleman presupposes that the question of the nature and immanent logic of social behaviors has been resolved. In other words, and this is a major paradox, the unthinking adoption of the philosophy of utilitarian subjectivism prevents Coleman's theory of action from posing as a problem the very thing that is supposed to constitute its object.

It is striking to what extent Coleman takes the subjectivist philosophy of rational action, conceived as a reflexive sequence of conscious decisions by an economic actor who is economically and socially unconditioned, as a self-evident *datum brutum* that does not require the slightest proof. Thus, he opens his collection of articles *Individual Interests and Collective Action* (1986c, p. 1) with this statement held to be established *sub specie aeternitatis*:

“The rational action of individuals has a unique attraction for sociological theory. One can say that one has ‘explained’ a social institution or process if and only if one has accounted for it on the basis of the rational action of individuals. The very concept of rational action is a conception of action that is ‘understandable’ [...], an action about which no further questions arise. Thus social theory can take the purposive goal-oriented individual as its starting point, although psychology may wish to explore this system in order to discover what makes his action coherent or ‘purposeful’.”¹

This statement can be compared with that of John Roemer, for whom the assumption of individual rationality is also in the realm of self-evidence:

problematic of ‘methodological individualism’, e.g. Boudon (1979, see postscript) and Padioleau (1986), even if the latter struggles to distinguish the French version of the RAT from its American by shamelessly – and somewhat ungraciously – calling the latter ‘rustic utilitarianism’ (p. 210).

¹ In a paper presented at an economics and management conference on the inadequacies of the utilitarian model of action (and published in the *Journal of Business* under the title “Psychological Structure and Social Structure in Economic Models”, 1986d), Coleman urges participants to focus on the micro-macro step rather than wasting their time complexifying the “micro-foundations of purposive action”: “It is the defects in the apparatus which effects the transition from the level of the individual actor to that of the system’s behavior which lays the most hope for progress” for economic theory, not the revision of the scheme of rational action which underlies it. See also his plenary lecture at the Annual Conference of the American Economic Association, “Introducing Social Structure into Economic Analysis” (Coleman, 1984): “It is not by abandoning the conception of rational action of individuals” that social science will be advanced “but by modifying the organizational assumptions that translate individual action into collective or systemic action.”

“Methodological individualism is a deductive method which attempts to derive historical observations from basic assumptions about individual behavior which are sufficiently fundamental to be taken as self-evident” (Roemer 1982b, p. 253). Or the philosophic anthropology underlying Jon Elster’s *Making Sense of Marx*, which Barry Hindess (1986, p. 442) noted in a recent review as “effectively introducing methodological individualism as a premise that requires no defense.”

And it is only because he has accepted as fully proven (taken for granted) the utilitarian and individualistic philosophy that constitutes the anthropological unconscious of liberal economics, and assumes the question of the logic of social action to be resolved, that Coleman (1986b, p. 362-363) can assert that:

“The main theoretical challenge [faced by sociology] is to show how individual actions combine to produce a social product... There must be social institutions in reality (such as the market or electoral systems) which translate individual tastes and endowments into a set of prices and a distribution of goods or into a collective decision. What is needed in social theory is a conceptual apparatus to describe this translation.”

“The central intellectual problem of the social sciences [...] is this: we understand and can model individual behavior, but we are rarely able to make an appropriate transition from that level to the behavior of the system formed by those same individuals.”

Coleman 1984, p. 88

Elsewhere he continues: “The most successful example of modeling this transition is the pure and perfect market model of neo-classical economic theory” (Coleman, 1987b, p. 157-58). Or (Coleman, 1986b, p. 364):

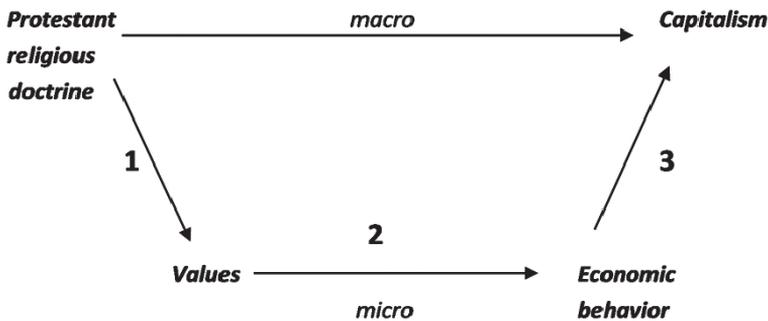
“I believe that the appropriate paradigm for sociology is one derived from Walrasian equilibrium theory, although it differs in part in that not all social goods are divisible, without external effects, and do not all obey the conservation principle; and in part because of the social structure that a Walrasian system ignores.”

As a result (Coleman in Lindenberg *et al.*, 1986, p. 124):

“It seems to me that sociology could take one aspect of microeconomic theory, namely the behavioral model of rational choice, and add to the market a variety of other structures through which social products are generated.”

According to Coleman, the transition from the micro to the macro can take place, not through the market alone, as postulated in Gary Becker’s relatively crude economic models, but through three main types of mechanisms: markets, hierarchies or systems of authority relations or contractual relationships, and normative systems. He also mentioned the role of trust and communication networks.¹ All of them, however, are indebted to the same analysis in terms of individual interest. There is not a single norm that the Chicago sociologist does not try to explain as the result of the rational action of agents seeking to effectively regulate the behaviour of third parties whose ‘negative side effects’ they have to suffer.² The figure opposite illustrates the structure that any sociological theory must therefore adopt, the heart of the latter being formed, in Coleman’s eyes, by the type 3 relation, going back from the micro to the macro, the type 4 relations (macro-macro) being the epitome of fallacious reasoning in sociology.³

Basic structure of sociological theory according to Coleman



¹ In an earlier paper (“Microfoundations and Macrosocial Theory”), Coleman (1986b) proposes a slightly different typology of aggregation mechanisms that includes, in addition to markets, authoritarian organizations, and norms, social choice rules (e.g. electoral systems) and collective behaviors (e.g. panics or rumors).

² See his articles “Social Structure and the Emergence of Norms Among Rational Actors”, and “Norms as Social Capital” (Coleman, 1986e; 1987c).

³ For various graphical variants of this basic scheme, see Coleman (1987b). The example reproduced here is meant to model Weber’s thesis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

James Coleman's merit here is to go beyond the ultra-simplistic hypotheses of a Becker by recognizing the existence of micro-macro "translation" mechanisms other than the simple market. By clearly stating the need to link the "theory of action", even if it is rational, to a theory of social structure,¹ Coleman also avoids some of the *aporias* that undermine Elster's approach, for whom structure is reduced to a set of games (the prisoner's dilemma, the battle of the sexes, the insurance game, the loan for a loan, etc.), that is to say, in the final analysis, a series of individual interactions planned under *ex ante* specified constraints. Finally, his diagnosis of the yawning chasm between theory and empirical research contains an implicit critique of the methodological fetishism of orthodox American sociology, which seems salutary to us.² But these contributions are only possible against a background of unanalyzed premises and a truncated anthropology whose prohibitive costs Sewell will hasten to expose.

SEWELL AND THE "GOLDEN AGE" OF HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY IN AMERICA

That it is a trained historian and not a "pure" sociologist³ answering Coleman's question is not surprising if we know that historical and

¹ Cf. his reinvention of the concept of social capital in *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital* (Coleman, 1988a), and the article "Free Riders and Zealots: The Role of Social Networks" (Coleman, 1988b).

² To extend it, one can read with great profit the work of Stanley Lieberson (1985), in which one of the major practitioners of the canonical methods of multivariate analysis subjects it to a piercing methodological critique, which was the subject of a very instructive debate in the 1987 volume of *Sociological Methodology*.

³ William H. Sewell Jr. (not to be confused with his father William H. Sewell, an ultra-quantitative sociologist of the Wisconsin School who was one of the initiators of *status attainment research*, and whose influence continues to be felt long after his retirement, since his protégé and heir, Aage Soerensen, was recently entrusted with the direction of the sociology department of Harvard University in desperate search of hard legitimacy: On Sewell Sr's career, read Sewell, 1988) is first and foremost an excellent specialist in French social history. His doctoral dissertation in history at the University of California at Berkeley in 1971 was on "The Structure of the Working Class in Marseilles in the Mid-19th Century" and was published as *The Men and Women of Marseilles. 1820-1870* (Sewell, 1985a). William H. Sewell Jr. now holds the prestigious joint chair of sociology and history vacated by Charles Tilly at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Among his most important publications are *Social Change* and the *Rise of Working-Class Politics in Nineteenth-Century Marseilles* (Sewell, 1974a); *Etat, Corps, and Ordre: Some Notes on the Social Vocabulary of the French Old Regime* (1974b); *Corporations Republicanes: The Revolutionary Idiom of Parisian Workers in 1848* (1979); *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Régime to 1848* (1980); *La confraternité des prolétaires :*

comparative sociology has been expanding in the United States for the last fifteen years. Observers as different as the behaviorist George Caspar Homans (1986) and the Weberian Randall Collins agree in seeing in it one of the most promising recent advances in social science on the other side of the Atlantic, the latter not hesitating, in his assessment of current trends in American sociology, to call it a veritable “golden age.”¹

This resurgence of historical sociology has its origins in the discredit, both scientific and political, that the societal transformations of the post-war period and the socio-political conflicts of the 1960s have inflicted on the theories of modernization (the psychology of Inkeles, McLelland, and Lerner, or the structuralism of Marion Levy and Walt W. Rostow) and to the functionalist evolutionism of Parsons and Eisenstadt, which until then had reigned unchallenged in Anglo-American macrosociology.² Encouraged by the rehabilitation of the classical tradition of Marx, Weber and Tocqueville, a new generation of young researchers found in the historical and comparative method the means not only to neutralize, by making them visible, the ideological and ethnocentric biases of the discipline, but also to escape from the sterile opposition of the historical and comparative method.

It also avoided the sterile opposition of “Grand Theory” and “abstract empiricism” denounced by C. Wright Mills (1977), and followed in the wake of the pioneering work of Barrington Moore, Reinhard Bendix, Charles Tilly, Gerhard Lenski and Immanuel Wallerstein.

Since then, historical sociology has extended to an ever larger and more varied universe of objects: From ethnic relations to the emergence of welfare states and

conscience de classe sous la monarchie de Juillet (1981); *Artisans, Factory Workers, and the Formation of the French Working Class, 1789-1848* (1986); and *Uneven Development, the Autonomy of Politics, and the Dockworkers of Nineteenth-Century Marseilles* (1988).

¹ Collins (1986a, p. 1346). See Calhoun (1987) for a comparison with England, where there is a similar flowering of historical sociology (evidenced by the recent launch of the journal *Historical Sociology*), but mainly under the leadership of historians, and Sztompka's (1986) remarks in “The Renaissance of Historical Orientation in Sociology.”

² Portes (1976) provides an excellent overview of the subfield of macro developmental sociology around this time.

their social policies,¹ through the formation of the working classes,² revolutions and popular insurrections,³ the professions,⁴ the history of power or the world capitalist system,⁵ and more recently, to culture,⁶ there is no longer any part of social reality that is foreign to it, to the point that it is now asserting itself as one of the most intellectually dynamic sectors of American sociology (even if it remains socially less powerful than the RAT).

[...]

The popularity of the cultural approach in historical sociology is a function of the recent expansion of cultural sociology (marked by the creation in 1987 of a section of Sociology of Culture within the ASA), among others under the impulse of Foucault, Elias, Bourdieu, Habermas, and the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies of the University of Birmingham,⁷ and where one finds a connection similar to that between RAT and historical sociology, between institutionalist approaches which tend towards an instrumental view of action on the one hand and the sociology of culture on the other.

¹ Among others, W. J. Wilson (1980), Lieberman (1980), and Morawska (1985) on ethnic and racial relations; on the state, the book edited by Rueschemeyer, Evans, and Skocpol (1985) marks the ascendancy of the neoinstitutionalist approach (or “state-centered theories” as opposed to “society-centered theories”); also Poggi (1978), Quadagno (1988), Weir, Orloff and Skocpol (1988). Progress in this area of research can be followed via the quarterly *States and Social Structures Newsletter* published by the Social Science Research Council in New York.

² On Anglo-American work in the historical sociology of class, see Roy's (1984) useful synopsis. Some of the more prominent recent works include Sabel (1984), Burawoy (1985), Katznelson (1981), Katznelson and Zolberg (1986), Moore (1978), Aminzade (1981), Calhoun (1982), Wilentz (1984), Levine (1984), McNall (1988), and Haydu (1988).

³ Tilly, Tilly and Tilly (1975), Paige (1975), Trimberger (1978), Skocpol (1979), Bonnell (1983), Hunt (1984), Traugott (1985), Tilly (1985), and Burke (1988).

⁴ Notably Sarfatti-Larson (1977), Starr (1982), Geison (1984), Rueschemeyer (1973; 1986).

⁵ Wallerstein (1974; 1979; 1984), Hechter (1975), Chirot (1976), Block (1977), Evans (1978), Mann (1986), Hall (1985), see Wallerstein (1987) and Chirot and Hall (1982), respectively, for a synthetic presentation and a review of the so-called “world-system” theory, as well as the annual “Political Economy of the World System” series published by Sage under Wallerstein's direction.

⁶ In cultural-historical sociology, we may mention, to limit ourselves to the principal works of the recent period, Zelizer (1985), Zaret (1986), Griswold (1986), Laitin (1986), Hunt (1984), Patterson (1984), Corrigan and Sayer (1985), Abercrombie *et al.*, (1980), Sennett (1977), and historian Herbert G. Gutman's remarkable posthumous collection of essays, *Power and Culture* (1987).

⁷ Notably Hall and Jefferson (1976), Hebdige (1979), and Willis (1977), widely cited and used, especially in teaching.

This series of homothetic oppositions between rationality and norms, institution and agent, system and actor, structure and culture, impersonal cause and subjective meaning, is reproduced within historical macrosociology itself, within which, from this point of view, one can roughly distinguish two tendencies: one is structural and is partly linked to the current of American structuralism (associated with the names of Blau, Mayhew, Harrison White, Ron Burt, etc.), while the other is rather “culturalist,” and betrays the impact of Geertz¹ and of the symbolic anthropology born in Chicago in the 1960s, as well as the persistent influence of the hermeneutic and interactionist tradition.

[...]

It is this culturalist interpretation of the historical method that informs Sewell’s criticisms and counter-proposals in his response to Coleman. Against the abstractions of the individualist scheme of rational choice, Sewell outlines a theory of action attentive to the concrete spatial and temporal localization of the processes studied, centered on the dialectical interplay of meaningful actions and their structural contexts, and imbued with a concern for historical variation and specificity. Sewell underlines the simplifying and unilateral character of Coleman’s model and questions the distinction between the micro and macro levels of analysis that is at its core. His critique focuses on each of the three main types of relationships identified by Coleman, and especially on the exorbitant importance that Coleman gives to the micro-macro relation.

Sewell argues first of all that the micro-micro relation (type 1 on the diagram above), which Coleman tends to present as self-evident, can neither be grasped nor even conceptualized without first giving oneself the macro-sociological framework which alone defines and determines it, and that therefore, in all rigor, it only makes sense as a direct and inescapable function of the totality of the type 2 and 3 relations from which Coleman extracts it by means of a theoretical coup de force. In other words, the relations between individual behaviors pass

¹ The influence of Geertz’s semiological conception of culture (e.g. 1974) on Sewell dates from their common stay at the University of Chicago in the early 1970s. Later, Sewell spent several years at the Center for Advanced Studies in Princeton at the invitation of the latter. On the impact of Geertz’s symbolic anthropology on historical research in America, see Walters (1980); also Darnton (1984, p. 9-13 and p. 296-303), and Bourdieu, Chartier and Darnton (1985). A critical discussion of the thorny methodological and theoretical problems posed by Geertzian thick description can be found in Roseberry (1982), Shankman (1984), Crapanzano (1986), and in Schneider’s (1987) insightful article, “Culture-as-Text in the Work of Clifford Geertz.” On the interpretive current more generally, Rabinow and Sullivan (1979).

through the complete system of relevant social relations and are not amenable to an individualistic analysis.¹ In the same vein, Sewell notes that Coleman's RAT is based on a Hobbesian conception of the individual as an autonomous entity outside of history and society, and assumes that "the interests, preferences, or goals of individuals can be deduced without difficulty from their social or economic position."² Drawing on the work of Geertz, Therborn, Foucault, Bourdieu and Hochschild, he suggests, on the contrary, that it is not enough to posit *ex cathedra* the existence of individual interests, preferences and goals in order to elucidate the effects of the so-called "macro" level on the behavior of agents (a type 2 relation). For the individual and their values cannot be hypostatized and reduced to exogenous variables in this relationship. The social person is indeed constituted in and by the totality of the social and cultural links where the biological individual who is the "support" is inserted. Individuality is not ahistorical but results from precise sociohistorical processes.³ And it is the history of these fields, such as it is specified through the filter of the individual and collective trajectory of the agents who invest in them, which defines the *habitus* as a generating system of preferences, that RAT declares, by methodological decree, to be exogenous to social action and structure. By omitting to ask the question of the social conditions of formation of these interests, preferences and goals, Coleman refrains from seeing the individual as a social and historical construction that is also subject to sociological analysis. From then on, he has no choice but to regress to the limited (and in many ways, it seems to us, narrowly Americano-centric) model of a *homo economicus* endlessly pursuing an abstract and unchanging interest.

Finally, Sewell reminds us that the micro-macro transition (type 3 relationship), which according to Coleman constitutes what Lakatos would call the "hard core" of sociological theory, cannot be limited to the aggregation, whether

¹ This is one of the theses that Goffman (1974) develops in his critique of interactionism and ethnomethodology with the notion of "framework-analysis".

² Sewell (1987, p. 168). For Albert Hirschman (1982, p. 79), "a more general criticism that can be levelled at Olson's analysis – and at much of economic decision theory in general – is that the subjects, while effective and often ingenious and tortuous, are devoid of history." Timothy Luke (1985, p. 70), a reasoned proponent of RAT, agrees that it logically presupposes "uneducated, unhistoricized, depoliticized and unsocialized" individuals. Adam Przeworski (1985a, p. 381) himself recognizes that "the ontological assumptions of the rational choice model – and especially the assumption of undifferentiated, unchanging and unrelated 'individuals' – are untenable."

³ As demonstrated, among others, by Elias (1973), Abercrombie *et al.*, Foucault (1975; 1976), Rosaldo (1980), Carrithers, Collins and Lukes (1985).

by means of exchanges, hierarchies or normative constraints, of individual actions all uniformly oriented towards the maximization of an interest already constituted outside any historical and social context. In reality, agents never create a social system *ex nihilo*, and all theoretical edifices based on such Robinsonades, to speak as Marx, are doomed to produce conclusions as fictitious and unreal as their hypotheses. And Sewell aptly notes that the celebrated “Hobbesian problem of social order,” formulated by Parsons and by which American sociological theory has since bought itself a (false) philosophical conscience, is only a “pre-sociological or non-sociological” problem.¹

It is clear that, for Sewell, it is the very starting point of Coleman’s model that is problematic here: by postulating a presocial state of nature, the latter “reduces the problem of action in its dialectical reality – how structurally constituted actors act so that the combined effect of their actions transforms the very structures that constitute them – to the simpler, narrower, and far less interesting linear question of how, under varying conditions, the actions of individuals pursuing their own self-interest cumulate to produce various social consequences” (Sewell, 1987, p. 169). In place of this neo-Hobbesian problematic, Sewell outlines a sociological research program inspired by history and interpretive anthropology, anchored by the following assumptions:

- 1) The dispositions, practices and representations of agents are the product of specific cultural and historical conditions, not transhistorical data.
- 2) Every society contains within it conflicts and tensions leading to structural changes that generally differ from those deliberately pursued by the agents.
- 3) These systemic consequences, whether intentional or not, depend not only on the constellation of goals and resources of the parties involved, but also on their own temporal articulation.
- 4) Social agents are capable of reflexivity in that they tend to adjust their habits, desires, and worldviews to objective transformations.

Sewell (1987, p. 171) closes his critique with a brief plea for a resolutely historical sociology:

¹ Sewell (1987, p. 169, note 2). Anthony Giddens (1977) has established that, in any case, the Hobbesian problem never occupied the central place in the thought of the founding fathers that it does in orthodox American theory. We know, moreover, since C. B. Macpherson’s classic study, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (1962) that the political and social presuppositions of the Hobbesian vision of the social order are more related to the economic and social organization of English mercantilism of the 17th century than to a hypothetical “state of nature.”

“Instead of abandoning history for ‘as if’ stories, sociology would do better to strive for a more theoretically and empirically rigorous specification of the complex dialectical processes by which real social systems are transformed by historically dated and situated actors.”

In his response to Sewell, Coleman (1987a) stands firm.¹ He does not want to see in Sewell’s criticisms anything more than the expression of a difference of “interest in knowledge,” as Habermas would say, between the sociologist, who would aim at establishing general relationships between variables, and the historian, who would seek to grasp phenomena or chains of particular events in a narrative mode. Taking refuge behind this perennial dichotomy between nomothetic and ideographic research Coleman merely reiterates what for him constitutes the two cardinal faults of all sociological theory: failing to descend to the level of individual actors and their (rational) conduct, and concentrating on the macro-micro articulation to the detriment of the opposite movement. It is true that to tackle the objections and questions raised by Sewell head-on would require him to question the implicit ontological and even metaphysical postulates of the rational choice scheme – in other words, to take the trouble to elaborate a real theory of social action instead of confining himself to a theory of the combination of rationally reconstructed individual behaviors.

BEYOND THE RATIONALIST ILLUSION OF “MYTHOLOGICAL INDIVIDUALISM”

As we can see, the interest of this Coleman-Sewell debate goes far beyond the simple exchange between two authors, since it offers a paradigmatic confrontation between two epistemological poles whose force of attraction is growing today in the field of American social sciences and which can be quickly and simply characterized as follows: on the one hand, the individualist and rationalist pole, which conceives of the social order as the aggregation, simple or composite, of individual actions involving agents deliberately seeking to maximize their utility by the instrumental adjustment of available means to clearly given and ordered ends; and on the other hand, the historical and cul-

¹ His reaction is to be compared with the harsh criticisms he formulates elsewhere against the interactionist approach of Gusfield and the comparative method employed by Skocpol and Orloff (Coleman, 1986b).

turalist pole which endeavors to understand the logic of these same actions by piercing their subjective and contextual meaning, by discovering the logic of the constitution of the agents and their ends, and by tracing their reciprocal effects in time. On the one hand, there are formal models, most often mathematical, based on deliberately simplifying – sometimes grossly and unrealistically – postulates which form the basis of deductions of a predictive nature; on the other hand, there is an interpretative “reading” of reality as a ‘text’ which privileges induction and the comprehension of the meaning which the agent gives to their conduct. These are indeed two opposed conceptions of social action: *homo rationalis vs. homo culturalis*, or, in the language of Martin Hollis (1977), the Autonomous Man against the Plastic Man; hard science against soft science, *Erklären* against *Verstehen*, quantitative methods against qualitative procedures. And these two poles pull in opposite directions: while Coleman invites sociology to a rapprochement with economics, Sewell calls sociology to the side of anthropology and, in some ways, “anti-scientific” history.

But did Sewell go far enough in his critique of the rationalist utilitarianism defended by Coleman? One is entitled to think not. Coleman appeals without further justification to the notion of rationality, a concept which is nowadays much debated within the camp of methodological rationalism. What kind of rationality does Coleman claim: Perfect or imperfect? Total (maximization) or selective (satisfaction)? Bayesian or non-Bayesian? Parametric or strategic?¹ So many questions to which he provides no answer. Nor does he answer the proven inability of RAT to explain the beliefs, preferences and cultural conventions that govern practices,² or the difficulty it has in not confusing preferences with reasons.³

In order to circumscribe more precisely the field of validity of RAT, it is necessary and sufficient to recall the very thing that it must constantly repress in order to maintain its claims to paradigmatic hegemony, that is to say its social and economic conditions of possibility. The usefulness of the theory of rational choice

¹ See Van Parijs (1981b) for a summary of these distinctions.

² Van Parijs (1981b, p. 312). Here Russell Hardin goes so far as to conclude, in his article “Difficulties with the Notion of Economic Rationality” (1983, p. 465), that “The individual rationality supposedly at the root of economic explanations at the societal level is essentially a chimera.” Similarly, Douglas (1986, p. 102) concedes that while individuals make decisions, it is institutions that define the classifications between which they choose.

³ Hollis (1987). And one could quote Wittgenstein (1965), for whom “At the end of reasons comes persuasion.”

depends on the degree to which its starting hypotheses are actually realized in practice. The most important of these assumptions is that the relevant forces are individuals with pre-existing interests or preferences that are coherent, hierarchical, transitive, unambiguous and not subject to intersubjective variation. From this postulate follows a second one, according to which individual behaviors are rational, *i.e.* efficiently oriented towards the satisfaction of the agent's interests, which supposes that the agent has enough information to proceed to an intelligent choice (this premise of rationality can of course be diluted at will by resorting to the notion of "revealed preference," which has the considerable advantage of rendering the demonstrations of the RAT entirely tautological). These postulates make the scheme of rational action particularly applicable in social contexts where agents are both highly individualized and clearly culturally defined, and where comparisons between alternatives are immediate because of inexpensive, complete information that can be confronted with univocal decision criteria. As noted by the anthropologist Jerome Davis (1973) in his critique of the economist theory of exchange, the situation that best corresponds to RAT is that of the consumer shopping in a supermarket. The question is whether it is acceptable to generalize the store paradigm into a "cafeteria conception of society" (Worsley, 1984, p. 246) or into a gigantic game of Monopoly.

It is not enough, however, to inject a bit of culture or symbolism in order to escape the illusions of the RAT. We know that an analysis which proceeds, according to the Parsonsian model, by making culture the table of values and norms which fix the action's objectives and which can be invoked to account, most often circularly, for almost any type of observed behavior, is just as unenlightening. To avoid this normativist trap, Ann Swidler (1986, p. 273) suggests infusing the analysis of culture with a strategic dimension by reconceptualizing it as "an array of symbols, stories, rituals, and worldviews that people can use in various configurations to solve different kinds of problems." The causal analysis of behaviors then consists in showing how culture provides actors with the "prefabricated elements" from which they elaborate their strategies. Notwithstanding its intentions, such an approach does not get us out of the dead ends of the instrumentalist individualism of RAT, since it tends to reduce culture to a simple object, a means of action, rather than making it a constitutive or structuring element of practices. Although she recommends Bourdieu's work, Swidler does not seem to perceive that the notion of cultural strategy that Bourdieu implements supposes neither conscious intentionality and calculating reason (Bourdieu, 1988), nor the deployment of individual strategies.

There remains the thorny debate concerning the cross-cultural validity of the notion of rationality, very conveniently evaded by the Rats of all sides, but which also constitutes a major stumbling block for a historical sociology of culturalist inspiration. Pushed to their limit, the universalism of the RAT and cultural and historical particularism converge to make any social science impracticable, as revealed by the controversy provoked by the neo-Wittgensteinian thesis of Peter Winch in *The Idea of a Social Science*.¹ On the one hand, there is no doubt that the naive universalism of RAT is based on an ethnocentric projection of the analyst's cultural presuppositions that denies them access to an adequate understanding of foreign cultures. On the other hand, the particularist argument pushed to its logical limits leads to a relativism that makes the notion of social knowledge highly problematic: if all knowledge is entirely dependent on its immediate context ("indexical" as ethnomethodologists say) and inseparable from the original "language game" in which it is formulated, then the very possibility of any cross-cultural understanding disappears. Some people, surfing on the post-modernist wave that has recently brought the nihilist critique of science back into fashion, have been quick to embrace this hyper-relativism and to deduce from its allegedly inescapable character the need to abandon the very project of a science of society. But as Charles Taylor (1985, chap. 4) has clearly seen, far from proceeding by static correspondence between concepts and linguistic references, inter-cultural understanding takes place through a process of mutual learning that transforms the two original conceptual registers.

This opens the way for a reflexive social science capable of taking seriously the specificity of cultures and actors – including that of the analyst – without getting lost in it. In a similar way, recent advances in feminist theory have swept away the presupposition of sexual undifferentiation embedded in the ethnocentric universalism of RAT by exploding the idea of an actor without gender.² There are so many problems that it makes us wonder if there exists a methodological individualism that does not take as its starting point those "men in a state of fantastic isolation and rigidity" that Marx mocks (1967, p. 47-48); in short, that is,

¹ Winch (1958). The main moments of this long controversy which continues to this day are gathered in the two volumes edited by Wilson (1970) and Hollis and Lukes (1982). On *Rationalitätstreit* in the philosophy of science, one can read with profit the original work of Paul A. Roth, *Meaning and Method in the Social Sciences: A Case for Methodological Pluralism* (1987).

² Gilligan (1982) and Benhabib and Cornell (1987) and the immense literature that has developed at an exponential rate in recent years at the intersection of critical theory, feminism, and historiography, from which Joan Scott's recent book *Gender and the Politics of History* (1988) stands out.

in the recent words of Michael Burawoy, something other than a “mythological individualism.”¹

But that is not all, because it would not be enough to historicize and sex up the notion of the individual and to release univocal and universal criteria of rationality to make up for the theoretical deficiencies of RAT. It is the model of science that it proposes that must be questioned in its turn. If we accept the utilitarian and individualistic premises of Coleman's conception of action, we may ask ourselves whether economics offers the means to bridge the gap between theory and empiricism that he rightly deplores, given his disregard for empirical research.² The idea that economic science would progress, step by step, by dint of empirical tests of hypotheses logically deduced from the RAT, which underlies its representation as an ‘advanced’ science likely to serve as a model for sociology, a backward and immature science, is nothing more than a positivist illusion (Hollis and Nell, 1975). Moreover, it is paradoxical, to say the least, to invite sociologists to adopt neo-classical economic models at the very moment when their simplicity and unrealism make them the target of a radical challenge from within their mother discipline.³ As Collins (1986a, p. 1352) notes:

“The rational choice model is an imperialist intrusion into sociology by economics which comes from the most classical and ‘backwards’ area of contemporary economics.”

1 M. Burawoy, “Mythological Individualism”, lecture delivered at Harvard University in May 1988 on the occasion of a Symposium in honor of Parsons.

2 According to a study by Nobel Prize winner Wassily Leontief (reported by Hirsch *et al.*, 1987, p. 330-31), more than half of the articles published in the *American Economic Review* between 1977 and 1981 relied on pure mathematical models without containing any observational data, while less than 0,5% of the authors had made the effort to produce new data. To Coleman's credit, however, there is no such disproportion between theoretical effort and empirical observation, in contrast to the Analytical Marxists (except Przeworski and Wright), who, to say the least, do not bother with observational data. This is in violation of the principles laid down by Marx who recommended, in *The German Ideology*: “Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out *empirically and without any mystification and speculation*, the connection of the social and political structure with production. The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life-process of definite individuals, but of *individuals, not as they appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are: i.e.*, as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will” (Marx and Engels, 1970, p. 46-47, emphasis added).

3 See Hirschman (1986, chapter 4), Sen (1977), Lieberstein (1976; 1979, especially p. 493-496 on the problems posed by the maximization postulate), Sen and Williams (1982), and Miller and Williams (1982). According to Spiro Latsis (1972), the “research program” of neoclassical microeconomics has been in a phase of degeneration for quite some time.

Universalizing the particular case of liberal economies with a high degree of objective rationalization, RAT, both in its sociological version and in its Marxist variant, projects the image of the capitalist market economy formed by neo-classical theory onto the whole of society.¹ In so doing, it refrains from discerning the multiple rationalities – and often irrationalities from the point of view of economics *stricto sensu* – that govern the various social fields. For (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 125; 1988):

“Far from being a sort of natural anthropological given, interest, in its historical specification, is an arbitrary institution. There is not one interest, but many interests, varying according to time and place, almost to infinity... The interest thus defined is the product of a determined category of social conditions: a historical construction, it can only be known by historical knowledge, *ex post*, empirically, and not deduced *a priori* from a transhistorical nature.”

Thus, the notion of intentional strategy oriented only by the research of the interest of the “economic economy,” with all that it carries of deliberate decision, conscious calculation, rational reasoning, planned and reflected choice, and of “reasoning reason” (as opposed to practical reason), leads to projecting into reality the model which is supposed to give a reason for it and to attribute to the agents themselves the posture and the “rational” look of the analyst, transforming practice into an “imaginary activity of imaginary subjects” as Marx says in *The German Ideology*. RAT would not be so harmful to the development of a sociology of action if, under the guise of heuristics or theory, it did not carry in the background an atomistic ontology of the social which is at the same time a real scholarly denial of the social, of action and collective claims, of social movements and of the threatening political possibilities of which they are bearers.² By

¹ “Rational choice theory may well be nothing more than an ‘ideology’ that merely transcribes into the more acceptable theoretical language of the individual market decision the harsh reality of managerially imposed decisions” (Luke, 1985, p. 77).

² Lash and Urry (1984) make it clear that Elster’s postulate of individualism and game theory are an ontology of the social, not simply a methodology. The function of political denial of the RAT has been brilliantly noted by Albert Hirschman (1982, p. 78-79): “Now it must be recalled that Mancur Olson proclaimed the impossibility of collective action (just as Daniel Bell proclaimed the ‘end of ideology’) at the precise moment when the Western world was about to be all but engulfed by an unprecedented wave of public movements. [...] It seems to me paradoxically conceivable that the success of Olson’s book *owes* something to its having been contradicted by the subsequently evolving events. Once the latter had safely run their course, the many people who found them deeply upsetting could go back to *The Logic of Collective Action* and find in it good and reassuring reasons

playing simultaneously on the registers of the model and of a derealized reality, by sliding insensitively from the analytical to the anthropological, the RAT lends to the agents the intellectualist relationship to practice which, as Pierre Bourdieu (1980, book I) underlines, owes its contemplative point of view on practice to the fact that it has to withdraw from it in order to take it as an object, and comes to confuse those decisive abstractions that are the rational reconstructions with reality itself.

With so many presuppositions and blind spots the theory of rational action is not a solid or rigorous basis for a general theory of society, nor of the economy. This was clearly seen by Weber – whom certain Rats, notably in France, do not hesitate to call regularly and almost ritually to the aid of their cause¹ – when he insisted on the unbridgeable chasm that separates the practical logic of action from that of the model that the scientist builds for the purposes of analysis:

“For the purposes of a typological scientific analysis it is convenient to treat all irrational, affectually determined elements of behavior as factors of deviation from a conceptually pure type of rational action. [...] Only in these respects and for these reasons of methodological convenience is the method of sociology ‘rationalistic’. It is naturally not legitimate to interpret this procedure as involving a rationalistic bias in sociology, but only as a methodological device. It certainly does not involve a belief in the actual predominance of rational elements in human life, for on the question of how far this predominance does or does not exist, nothing whatever has been said.”²

why those collective actions of the sixties should never have happened in the first place, were perhaps less real than they seemed and would be most unlikely to recur. Thus the book did not suffer from being contradicted by subsequent events; rather, it gained by actively contradicting them and became a great success among those who found these events intolerable and totally aberrant.” It is to this function of *derealization of the social* that the normative, even prescriptive dimension of the RAT responds, noted or claimed by many authors, like Luke (1985, p. 98), Downs (for whom the political RAT “occupies a twilight zone between normative models and prescriptive models,” 1957, p. 31) and Van Parijs (1981a, p. 305). Gibson (1977) goes so far as to argue that no non-normative conception of rationality is philosophically tenable.

¹ For example, Boudon (1984), but also Jon Elster (1979), who sees Morgenstern and Weber as the two masters of rational theory.

² Weber (1978, p. 6-7). On the multiple meanings of the concepts of rationality and rationalization in Weber, see Brubaker (1984) and Sica (1988), who has recently subjected Weber’s bias in favor of rationality to close scrutiny. This Weberian distinction between model and reality finds a fruitful extension in Alfred Schutz’s (1953; 1970, p. 125-159) opposition between “scientific rationality” and “common sense rationality,” an opposition taken up and elaborated empirically by Garfinkel and the ethnomethodolo-

And Weber (*ibid.*, p. 7) warns us, with an astonishing sense of anticipation: “That there is, however, a danger of rationalistic interpretations where they are out of place cannot be denied.” It is to this theoretical sleight of hand, which consists in giving a theoretical model (which is, by the way, very simplistic) for a practical scheme, in formulating a generalized practice of the economy where there should be a generalized economy of practices, as much as to its obvious affinity with the dominant vision of the social order as a simple aggregation of freely consented individual choices and to its ability to exorcise the specter of collective action, that the theory of rational action owes its social success within the American academy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ABERCROMBIE, Nicholas, HILL, Stephen & TURNER, Bryan, 1980, *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*, London, George Allen and Unwin.
- ABERCROMBIE, Nicholas, HILL, Stephen & TURNER, Bryan, 1986, *Sovereign Individuals of Capitalism*, London, George Allen and Unwin.
- ABRAMS, Philip, 1982, *Historical Sociology*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.
- ADLER, Patricia, ADLER, Peter & FONTANA, Andrea, 1987, “Everyday Life Sociology”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 13, p. 217-235.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C., 1982-1983, *Theoretical Logic in Sociology*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 4 vols.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C., 1987, *Twenty Lectures: Sociological Theory Since World War II*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C., 1988a, *Action and its Environments: Toward a New Synthesis*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C., 1988b, “Parsons’ ‘Structure’ in American Sociology”, *Sociological Theory*, 6(1), p. 96-102.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C., 1988c, “The New Theoretical Movement”, in N. J. Smelser (ed.), *Handbook of Modern Sociology*, Beverly Hills, Sage.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C. (ed.), 1985, *Neo-Functionalism*, Beverly Hills, Sage.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C., GIESEN, Bernhard, MUNCH, Richard & SMELSER, Neil J. (eds.), 1987, *The Micro-Macro Link*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- AMINZADE, Ron, 1981, *Class, Politics and Early Industrial Capitalism*, Albany, State University of New York Press.
- ATKINSON, Paul, 1988, “Ethnomethodology: A Critical Review”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 14, p. 441-465.
- BARRY, Brian, 1978, *Sociologists, Economists and Democracy*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- BECKER, Gary S., 1976, *The Economics Approach to Human Behavior*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

gists, whose *breaching experiments* (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 35-75) demonstrate better than all the speeches that social life would simply be intolerable and impossible if social agents actually behaved in the manner of rational actors of the RAT.

- BECKER, Gary S., 1981, *A Treatise on the Family*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- BECKER, Howard S., 1982, *Art Worlds*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- BELLAH, Robert N. et al., 1985, *Habits of the Heart*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- BENHABIB, Seyla, & CORNELL, Drucilla, 1987, *Feminism as Critique*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- BEN-PORATH, Yoram, 1980, "The F-Connection: Families, Friends, and Firms and the Organization of Exchange", *Population Development Review*, vol. 6, p. 1-29.
- BERG, Ivar (ed.), 1981, *Sociological Perspectives on Labor Markets*, New York, Academic Press.
- BERGER, Bennett, 1981, *The Survival of a Counter Culture*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- BLAU, Judith R., 1988, *The Shape of Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- BLAU, Peter M., 1977a, *Inequality and Heterogeneity*, New York, The Free Press.
- BLAU, Peter M., 1977b, "A Macrosociological Theory of Social Structure", *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(1), p. 26-54.
- BLAU, Peter M., 1986, "Preface" in: *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, New Brunswick, Transaction Books.
- BLOCK, Fred, 1977, *The Origins of International Economy Disorder*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- BONNELL, Victoria, 1983, *The Russian Worker*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- BOUDON, Raymond, 1979, *La logique du social*, Paris, Hachette.
- BOUDON, Raymond, 1984, *La place du désordre*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
- BOUDON, Raymond, 1986, *L'idéologie. L'origine des idées reçues*, Paris, Fayard.
- BOULDING, Kenneth, 1969, "Economies as a Moral Science", *American Economics Review*, 59(1), p. 1-12.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre, 1980, *Le sens pratique*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre, 1987, « L'intérêt du sociologue », in *Choses dites*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, p. 124-131.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre, 1988, *On Interest and the Relative Autonomy of Symbolic Power, Working Papers and Proceedings of the Center for Psychosocial Studies*, n° 20, Chicago, Center for Psychosocial Studies.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre, CHARTIER, Roger & DARNTON, Robert, 1985, « Dialogues à propos de l'histoire culturelle », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 59, p. 86-93.
- BREWER, John, 1987, "Exploitation in the New Marxism of Collective Action", *The Sociological Review*, 35(1), p. 84-93.
- BRUBAKER, Rogers, 1984, *The Limits of Rationality*, London, George Allen and Unwin.
- BRYANT, Christopher G. A., 1985, *Positivism in Social Theory and Research*, New York, Saint Martin's Press.
- BURAWOY, Michael, 1985, *The Politics of Production*, London, Verso.
- BURAWOY, Michael, 1987, "The Limits of Wright's Analytical Marxism and an Alternative", *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, vol. 32, p. 51-72.
- BURAWOY, Michael, 1986-1989, "Making Nonsense of Marx", *Contemporary Sociology*, 15(5), p. 704-707, (in press) *Marxism Without Micro-Foundations*, Przeworski's Critique of Social Democracy, Socialist Review.
- BURKE EDINUND, III (ed.), 1988, *Global Crises and Social Movements*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- BURT, Ronald S., 1982, *Toward a Structural Theory of Action: Network Models of Social Structure, Perception and Action*, New York, Academic Press.
- CALHOUN, Craig J., 1982, *The Question of Class Struggle*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

- CALHOUN, Craig J., 1987, "History and Sociology in Britain: A Review Article", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 29(3), p. 615-625.
- CAMIC, Charles, 1979, "The Utilitarians Revisited", *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(3), p. 516-550.
- CAMIC, Charles, 1986, "The Return of the Functionalists", *Contemporary Sociology*, 15(5), p. 692-695.
- CARLING, Alan, 1986, "Rational Choice Marxism", *New Left Review*, vol. 160, p. 24-62.
- CARRITHERS, Michael, COLLINS, Steven & LUKES, Steven (eds.), 1985, *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- CHIROT, Daniel, 1976, *Social Change in the Modern World*, New York, Harcourt-Brace-Jovanovitch.
- CHIROT, Daniel & HALL, Thomas, 1982, "World-System Theory", *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 8, p. 81-106.
- CLARK, Samuel D., 1976, *Canadian Society in Historical Perspective*, Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
- COHEN, Gerald A., 1978, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, Princeton, Princeton University Princeton Press.
- COHEN, Jean L., 1985, "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements", *Social Research*, 52(4), p. 663-716.
- COLIN, Bernard S., 1980, "History and Anthropology: The State of Play", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22(2), p. 198-221.
- COLIN, Bernard S., 1988, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1961, *The Adolescent Society*, New York, The Free Press.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1973, *The Mathematics of Collective Action*, London, Heinemann.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1974a, "Inequality, Sociology, and Moral Philosophy", *American Journal of Sociology*, 80(3), p. 739-764.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1974b, *Power and the Structure of Society*, New York, W. W. Norton and Co.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1978, "Sociological Analysis and Social Policy", in Tom B. Bottomore and Robert A. Nisbet (eds.), *A History of Sociological Analysis*, New York, Basic Books, p. 677-703.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1979, "Rational Choice Theory and Macrosociological Analysis", in Ross Harrison (ed.), *Rational Action: Philosophy and Social Science*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1982, *The Asymmetric Society*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1984, "Introducing Social Structure into Economic Analysis", *The American Economic Review*, 74(2), p. 84-88.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1986a, Social Theory, Social Research, and a Theory of Action, *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(6), p. 1309-1335.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1986b, "Micro Foundations and Macrosocial Theory", in Siegwart Lindenberg, James S. Coleman and Stephan Nowak (eds.), *Approaches to Social Theory*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, p. 344-363.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1986c, *Individual Interests and Collective Action*, Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1986d, "Psychological Structure and Social Structure in Economic Models", *Journal of Business*, 59(4), supplement, p. S365-S369.

- COLEMAN, James S., 1986e, "Social Structure and the Emergence of Norms Among Rational Actors", in A. Dickmann and P. Mitter (eds.), *Paradoxical Effects of Social Behavior: Essays in Honor of Anatol Rapoport*, Vienna, Physica Verlag.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1987a, "Actors and Action in Social History and Social Theory: Reply to Sewell", *American Journal of Sociology*, 93(1), July, p. 172-175.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1987b, "Microfoundations and Macrosocial Behavior", in Alexander et al., (eds.), *The Micro-Macro Link*, Berkeley, University of California Press, p. 153-173.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1987c, "Norms as Social Capital", in Gérard Radnitzky and Peter Bernholz (eds.), *Economic Imperialism*, New York, Paragon, p. 133-155.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1988a, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", in Christopher Winship and Sherwood Rosen (eds.), *Organizations and Institutions*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, p. 95-120.
- COLEMAN, James S., 1988b, "Free Riders and Zealots: The Role of Social Networks", *Sociological Theory*, 6(1), p. 52-57.
- COLEMAN, James S., (forthcoming), *Foundations of Social Theory*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- COLEMAN, James S. et al., 1966, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, Washington, D. C., Government Printing Office.
- COLEMAN, James S. & HOFFER, Thomas B., 1986, *Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities*, New York, Basic Books.
- COLLINS, Randall, 1981, "On the Microfoundations of Macrosociology", *American Journal of Sociology*, 86(5), p. 984-1014.
- COLLINS, Randall, 1983, "Micro-Methods as a Basis for Macro-Sociology", *Urban Life*, vol. 12, p. 184-202.
- COLLINS, Randall, 1985, *Three Sociological Traditions*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- COLLINS, Randall, 1986a, "Is 1980s Sociology in the Doldrums?", *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(6), p. 1336-1355.
- COLLINS, Randall, 1986b, *Weberian Sociological Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- COLLINS, Randall, 1987, "Looking Forward or Looking Back? Reply to Denzin", *American Journal of Sociology*, 93(1), p. 180-184.
- COLLINS, Randall, 1988, *Theoretical Sociology*, New York, Harcourt-Brace-Jovanovitch.
- COMAROFF, Jean, 1985, *Body of Power. Stories of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- COMAROFF, Jean & COMAROFF, John L., 1986, "Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa", *The American Ethnologist*, 13(1), p. 1-22.
- COMAROFF, Jean, 1982, "Dialectical Systems, History, and Anthropology: Units of Analysis and Questions of Theory", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 8(2), p. 143-172.
- CORRIGAN, Paul & SAYER, David, 1985, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as a Cultural Revolution*, London, Basil Blackwell.
- CRAPANZANO, Vincent, 1986, "Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description", in James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds.), *Writing Culture: Ethnography as Poetics and Politics*, Berkeley, University of California Press, p. 51-76.
- DARNTON, Robert, 1984, *The Great Cat Slaughter*, Paris, Robert Laffont.
- DAVIS, Jerome, 1973, "Forms and Norms: The Economy of Social Relations", *Man*, 8(2), new series, p. 159-176.
- DENZIN, Norman K., 1984, *On Understanding Emotions*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.
- DENZIN, Norman K., 1987a, "The Death of Sociology in the 1980s: Comment on Collins", *American Journal of Sociology*, 93(1), p. 175-180.

- DENZIN, Norman K., 1987b, *The Recovering Alcoholic*, Newberry Park, Sage.
- DESAN, Philippe, PARKHURST FERGUSON, Priscilla & GRISWOLD, Wendy (eds.), 1989, *Literature and Social Practice*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- DIMAGGIO, Paul (ed.), 1986, *Nonprofit Enterprise in the Arts*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- DOUGLAS, Mary, 1986, *How Institutions Think*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press.
- DOWNS, Anthony, 1957, *An Economy Theory of Democracy*, New York, Harper and Row.
- ELIAS, Norbert, 1973, *The Civilization of Manners*, Paris, Calmann-Levy.
- ELIAS, Norbert, 1985, "Remarks on gossip", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 60, p. 23-30.
- ELSTER, Jon, 1979, "Anomalies and Rationality: Some Unresolved Problems in the Theory of Rational Behavior", in L. Levy-Garboua (ed.), *Sociological Economies*, London, Sage, p. 68-85.
- ELSTER, Jon, 1981, "An English Marxism: About a new interpretation of historical materialism historical materialism", *Annals: economies, societies, civilizations*, n° 5, p. 745-757.
- ELSTER, Jon, 1985, *Making Sense of Marx*, Cambridge and Paris, Cambridge University Press and Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- ELSTER, Jon (ed.), 1986, *Rational Choice*, London, Basil Blackwell.
- EVANS, Peter B., 1978, *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational. State and Local Capital in Brazil*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- FAINA, Eugene F., 1980, "Agency Problems and the Theory of the Firm", *Journal of Political Economy*, 88(2), p. 288-307.
- FINE, Gary Allan, 1987, *With the Boys: Little League Baseball and Preadolescent Culture*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- FIREMAN, Bruce & GAMSON, William A., 1979, "Utilitarian Logic in the Resource Mobilization Perspective", in Mayer Zald and J.D. McCarthy (eds.), *The Dynamics of Social Movements*, Cambridge, Winthrop.
- FOUCAULT, Michel, 1975, *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*, Paris, Gallimard.
- FOUCAULT, Michel, 1976, *Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. 1 : *La volonté de savoir*, Paris, Gallimard.
- FRANCIS, Arthur, TURK, Jeremy & WILLMAN, Paul (eds.), 1983, *Power, Efficiency and Institutions: A Critical Appraisal of the "Markets and Hierarchies" Paradigm*, London, Heinemann.
- GAMBETTA, Diego, 1987, *Did they jump or were they pushed? Individual Decision Mechanisms in Education*, Cambridge and Paris, Cambridge University Press and Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- GARFINKEL, Harold, 1967, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall.
- GEERTZ, Clifford, 1974, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books.
- GEISON, Gerald L. (ed.), 1984, *Professions and the French State, 1700-1900*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- GIBSON, Mary, 1977, *Rationality, Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 6(3), p. 193-225.
- GIDDENS, Anthony, 1977, "Four Myths in the History of Social Thought", in *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, New York, Basic Books, p. 208-234.
- GIDDENS, Anthony, 1979, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action. Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- GIDDENS, Anthony, 1984, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- GIDDENS, Anthony, 1987, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- GIDDENS, Anthony & TURNER, Jonathan H. (eds.), 1987, *Social Theory Today*, Cambridge, Polity Press and Stanford, Stanford University Press.

- GILLIGAN, Carol, 1982, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- GOFFMAN, Erving, 1974, *Frame Analysis*, New York, Basic Book.
- GRANOVETTER, Mark S., 1973, "The Strength of Weak Ties", *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), p. 1360-1380.
- GRANOVETTER, Mark S., 1974, *Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- GRANOVETTER, Mark S., 1985, "Economy Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness", *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(3), p. 481-510.
- GRISWOLD, Wendy, 1986, *Renaissance Revivals: City Comedy and Revenge Tragedy in the London Theatre. 1576-1980*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- GUSFIELD, Joseph R., 1981, *The Culture of Public Problems*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- GUTMAN, Herbert G., 1987, *Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class*, New York, Pantheon. Edited by Ira Berlin.
- HALL, John, 1985, *Powers and Liberties*, London, Basil Blackwell.
- HALL, Stuart & JEFFERSON, Tony (eds.), 1976, *Resistance Through Rituals*, London, Hutchinson.
- HARDIN, Russell, 1982, *Collective Action*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- HARDIN, Russell, 1983, "Difficulties with the Notion of Economic Rationality", *Social Science News*, 23(3), p. 453-468.
- HAYDU, Jeffrey, 1988, *Between Craft and Class: Skilled Workers and Factory Politics in the United States and Great Britain. 1890-1922*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- HEATH, Anthony, 1976, *Rational Choice and Social Exchange*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- HEBDIGE, Dick, 1979, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London, Methuen.
- HECHTER, Michael, 1975, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development. 1536-1966*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- HECHTER, Michael, 1987, *Principles of Group Solidarity*, Berkeley. University of California Press.
- HECHTER, Michael (ed.), 1983, *The Microfoundations of Macrosociology*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- HERITAGE, John C., 1985, "Recent Developments in Conversational Analysis", *Sociolinguistics*, vol. 15, p. 1- 18.
- HINCKLE, Roscoe C. & HINCKLE, Gisela J., 1980, *Founding Theory of American Sociology, 1881-1915*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- HINDESS, Barry, 1984, "Rational Choice Theory and the Analysis of Political Action", *Economy and Society*, 13(3), p. 255-277.
- HINDESS, Barry, 1986, note Jon Elster, "Making Sense of Marx", *The Sociological Review*, 34(2), p. 440-442.
- HIRSCH, Paul, MICHAELS, Stuart & FRIEDMAN, Ray, 1987, "'Dirty Hands' versus 'Clean Models': Is Sociology in Danger of Being Seduced By Economics?," *Theory and Society*, 16(3), p. 317-336.
- HIRSHLEIFER, Jack, 1985, "The Expanding Domain of Economics", *The American Economy Review*, 75(1), March, p. 53-68.
- HIRSCHMAN, Albert O., 1982, *Shifting Involvements: Private Interests and Public Action*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- HIRSCHMAN, Albert O., 1986, *Vers une économie politique élargie*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit.

- HOCHSCHILD, Arlie Russell, 1979, "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure", *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(3), p. 551-575.
- HOCHSCHILD, Arlie Russell, 1983, *The Managed Heart*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- HOLLIS, Martin, 1977, *Models of Man*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- HOLLIS, Martin, 1987, *The Cunning of Reason*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- HOLLIS, Martin & LUKES, Steven (eds.), 1982, *Rationality and Relativism*, Cambridge, MIT Press.
- HOLLIS, Martin & NELL, Edward, 1975, *Rational Economic Man*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- HOMANS, George Caspar, 1986, "Fifty Years of Sociology", *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 12, p. 12-30.
- HOMANS, George Caspar, 1987, "Collective Choice", *Contemporary Sociology*, 16(6), p. 769-770.
- HOMANS, George Caspar, 1989, "Rational Choice Theory and Behaviorism", in Craig J. Calhoun, Marshall Meyer and W. Richard Scott (eds.), *Structures of Power and Constraint: Papers in Honor of Peter M. Blau*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (in press).
- HUNT, Lynn, 1984, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- JENKINS, Craig J., 1983, "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements", *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 9, p. 527-533.
- KEMPER, Theodore K., 1978, *A Social Interactional Theory or Emotions*, New York, Wiley.
- KATZNELSON, Ira, 1981, *City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Pattern of Class in the United States*, New York, Pantheon Books.
- KATZNELSON, Ira J. & ZOLBERG, Aristide R. (eds.), 1986, *Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- KIEVE, Ronald A., 1986, *From Necessary Illusion to Rational Choice? A Critique of Neo-Marxist Rational-Choice Theory*, *Theory and Society*, 15(4), p. 557-582.
- KNORR-CETINA, Karen, 1981, "The Micro-Sociological Challenge of Macro-Sociology in: Karen Knorr-Cetina and Aaron V. Cicourel" (eds.), *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology*, Boston and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 1-47.
- KNORR-CETINA, Karen & CICOUREL, Aaron V. (eds.), 1981, *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Toward an Integration of Micro- and Macro-Sociologies*, Boston and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- LAITIN, David, 1986, *Hegemony and Culture: The Politics of Religious Change Among the Yoruba*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- LASH, Scott & URRY, John, 1984, "The New Marxism of Collective Action", *Sociology*, 18(1), p. 33-50.
- LATSIS, Spiro, 1972, "Situational Determinism in Economics", *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, vol. 23, p. 207-225.
- LAUMANN, Edward O. & KNOKE, David, 1987, *The Organizational State*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press.
- LEIFER, Eric M., 1985, "Markets as Mechanisms: Using a Role Structure", *Social Forces*, 64(2), p. 442-472.
- LEVINE, Andrew, SOBER, Elliot & WRIGHT, Erik Olin, 1987, "Marxism and Methodological Individualism", *New Left Review*, vol. 162, p. 67-84.
- LEVINE, David (ed.), 1984, *Proletarianization and Family History*, Orlando, Academic Press.
- LEVINE, Donald N., 1985, *The Flight from Ambiguity: Essays in Social and Cultural Theory*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

- LEWIS, J. David & SMITH, Richard L., 1980, *American Sociology and Pragmatism*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- LIEBERSON, Stanley, 1980, *A Piece of the Pie*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- LIEBERSON, Stanley, 1984, *Making it Count: The Improvement of Social Theory and Social Research*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- LIEBERSTEIN, Harvey, 1976, *Beyond Economics Man: A New Foundation for Microeconomics*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- LIEBERSTEIN, Harvey, 1979, "A Branch of Economics is Missing: The Micro-Macro Link", *Journal of Economic Literature*, 17(2), p. 477-502.
- LINDENBERG, Siegwart, COLEMAN, James S. & NOWAK, Stephan (eds.), 1986, *Approaches to Social Theory*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation.
- LOFLAND, Lynn H., 1985, "The Social Shaping of Emotions: The Case of Grief", *Symbolic Interaction*, 8(2), p. 171-190.
- LUKE, Timothy, 1985, "Reason and Rationality in Rational Choice Theory", *Social Research*, 52(1), p. 65-98.
- LUTZ, Catherine A., 1988, *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and their Challenge to Western Theory*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- MCNALL, Scott G., 1988, *The Road to Rebellion: Class Formation and Kansas Populism. 1865-1900*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- MACPHERSON, C. B., 1962, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- MANN, Michael, 1986, *The Sources of Social Power. Vol. 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to A. D. 1760*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- MARX, Karl & ENGELS, Friedrich, 1967, *The German Ideology*, New York, International Publishers.
- MILLER, Harlan B. & WILLIAMS, William H. (eds.), 1982, *The Limits of Utilitarianism. Minneapolis*, University of Minnesota Press.
- MILLS, C. Wright, 1959, *The Sociological Imagination*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- MOE, Terry M., 1984, "The New Economies of Organization", *American Journal of Political Science*, 28(4), p. 739-777.
- MOORE, Barrington, Jr., 1978, *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt, White Plains*, New York, M.E. Sharp.
- MORAWSKA, Eva, 1985, *For Bread and Butter: Lifeworlds of East-Central Europeans in Jonestown. Pennsylvania. 1890-1940*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- MUNCH, Richard, 1987, "Parsonian Theory Today: In Search of a New Synthesis", in Anthony Giddens and Jonathan H. Turner (eds.), *Social Theory Today*, Cambridge, Polity Press, p. 116-145.
- OBERSHALL, Anthony, 1973, *Social Movements and Social Conflict*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall.
- OBERSCHALL, Anthony & LEIFER, Eric M., 1986, "Efficiency and Social Institutions: Uses and Misuses of Economic Reasoning in Sociology", *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 12, p. 233-253.
- OLIVER, Pamela, 1980, "Rewards and Punishments as Selective Incentives for Collective Action: Theoretical Investigations", *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(6), p. 1356-1375.
- OLSON, Mancur, 1965, *The Logic of Collective Action*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- PADIOLEAU, Jean, 1986, *L'ordre social. Principes d'analyse sociologique*, Paris, L'Harmattan.
- PAIGE, Jeffrey, 1975, *Agrarian Revolution*, New York, The Free Press.
- PARKIN, Frank, 1979, *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*, New York, Columbia University Press.

- PARSONS, Talcott, 1937, *The Structure of Social Action*, Glencoe, The Free Press.
- PATTERSON, Orlando, 1984, *Slavery as Social Death*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- PETERSON, Richard A., 1979, "Revitalizing the Culture Concept", *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 5, p. 137-166.
- PERROW, Charles, 1986, "Economics Theories of Organization", in *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay*, New York, Random House, 3rd ed. p. 219-257.
- PLOTT, Charles R., 1976, "Axiomatic Social Choice Theory: An Overview and Interpretation", *American Journal of Political Science*, 20(3), p. 511-596.
- POGGI, Gianfranco, 1978, *The Development of the Modern State: A Sociological Introduction*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- POPKIN, Samuel, 1979, *The Rational Peasant*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- PORTES, Alejandro, 1976, "The Sociology of National Development: Theories and Issues", *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(1), p. 55-85.
- POWELL, Walter W., 1985, *Getting Into Print: The Decision-Making Process in Scholarly Publishing*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- PRATT, John W. & Zeckhauser, Richard J. (eds.), 1985, *Principals and Agents: The Structure of Business*, Boston, Harvard Business School Press.
- PRZEWORSKI, Adam, 1985a, *Marxism and Rational Choice, Politics and Society*, 14(4), p. 379-409.
- PRZEWORSKI, Adam, 1985b, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, Cambridge and Paris, Cambridge University Press and Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- PSATHAS, George (ed.), 1979, *Everyday Language: Studies in Ethnomethodology*, New York, Irvington Press.
- QUADAGNO, Jill, 1988, *The Transformation of Old Age Security: Class and Politics in the American Welfare State*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- RABINOW, Paul & Sullivan, William M. (eds.), 1979 [1988], *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- RADNITZKY, Gerard & Bernholz, Peter (eds.), 1987, *Economics Imperialism*, New York, Paragon.
- RAGIN, Charles, 1987, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- RIKER, William H. & Ordeshook, Peter C., 1973, *An Introduction to Positive Political Theory*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall.
- ROCHBERG-HALTON, Eugene, 1986, *Meaning and Modernity: Social Theory in the Pragmatic Attitude*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- ROEMER, John E., 1981, *Analytical Foundations of Marxian Economic Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- ROEMER, John E., 1982a, *A General Theory of Exploitation and Class*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- ROEMER, John E., 1982b, "Methodological Individualism and Deductive Marxism", *Theory and Society*, 11(4), p. 253-287.
- ROEMER, John E., 1988, *Free To Lose. An Introduction to Marxist Economics Philosophy*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- ROEMER, John E. (ed.), 1986, *Analytical Marxism*, Cambridge and Paris, Cambridge University Press and Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- ROSALDO, Michèle, 1980, *Knowledge and Passion. Ilongot Notions of Self and Social Life*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- ROSALDO, Renato, 1980, *Ilongot Headhunting. 1883-1974: A Study in Society and History*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

- ROSEBERRY, William, 1982, "Balinese Cockfight and the Seduction of Anthropology", *Social Research*, 49(4), p. 1013-1028.
- ROTH, Paul A., 1987, *Meaning and Method in the Social Sciences: A Case for Methodological Pluralism Ithaca and London*, Cornell University Press.
- ROY, William G., 1984, "Class Conflict and Social Change in Historical Perspective", *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 10, p. 483-506.
- RUESCHEMEYER, Dietrich, 1973, *Lawyers and their Society*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- RUESCHEMEYER, Dietrich, 1986, *Power and the Division of Labor*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- RUESCHEMEYER, Dietrich, EVANS, Peter B. & SKOCPOL, Theda R. (eds.), 1985, *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- RULE, James B., 1988, *Theories of Civil Violence*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- SAHEL, Charles F., 1984, *Work and Politics: The Division of Labor in Industry*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- SAHLINS, Marshall, 1981, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.
- SAHLINS, Marshall, 1985, *Islands of History*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- SARFATTI-LARSON, Margaret, 1977, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- SCHUTZ, Alfred, 1943, "The Problem of Rationality in the Social World", *Economica*, vol. 10 (new series), p. 130-149.
- SCHUTZ, Alfred, 1970, *On Phenomenology and Social Relations*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, edited by Helmut R. Wagner.
- SCHWARTZ, Mildred, 1987, "Historical Sociology in the History of American Sociology", *Social Science History*, 11(1), p. 1-16.
- SCHNEIDER, Mark A., 1987, "Culture-as-Text in the Work of Clifford Geertz", *Theory and Society*, 16(6), p. 809-839.
- SCIULLI, David & GERSTEIN, Dean, 1985, "Social Theory and Talcott Parsons in the 1980s", *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 11, p. 369-387.
- SCOTT, Joan Wallach, 1988, *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- SEN, Amartya K., 1977, "Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economics", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 6(4), p. 317-344.
- SEN, Amartya K. & WILLIAMS, Bernard (eds.), 1982, *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- SENNETT, Richard, 1977, *The Fall of Public Man*, New York, Knopf.
- SEWELL, William H. Jr., 1974a, "Social Change and the Rise of Working-Class Politics in Nineteenth-Century Marseilles", *Past and Present*, vol. 65, p. 75-109.
- SEWELL, William H. Jr., 1974b, "Etats, Corps and Ordre: Some Notes on the Social Vocabulary of the French Old Regime", in H.-U. Wehler (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte Heute: Festschrift für Hans Rosenberg zum 70 Geburtstag*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht.
- SEWELL, William H. Jr., 1979, "Corporations Républicaines: The Revolutionary Idiom of Parisian Workers in 1848", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 21(2), p. 195-203.
- SEWELL, William H. Jr., 1980, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- SEWELL, William H. Jr., 1981, « La confraternité des prolétaires : conscience de classe sous la Monarchie de Juillet », *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, n° 4, p. 650- 671.

- SEWELL, William H. Jr., 1985a, *The Men and Women of Marseilles. 1820-1870*, Cambridge and Paris, Cambridge University Press and Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- SEWELL, William H. Jr., 1985b, "Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case", *Journal of Modern History*, 57(1), p. 57-85.
- SEWELL, William H. Jr., 1986, "Artisans, Factory Workers, and the Formation of the French Working Class, 1789-1848", in Ira J. Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg (eds.), *Working-Class Formation*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, p. 45-70.
- SEWELL, William H. Jr., 1987, "Theory of Action, Dialectic and History: Comment on Coleman", *American Journal of Sociology*, 93(1), p. 166-172.
- SEWELL, William H. Jr., 1988, "Uneven Development, the Autonomy of Politics, and the Dockworkers of Nineteenth-Century Marseilles", *American Historical Review*, vol. 93.
- SEWELL, William H. Sr., 1988, "The Changing Institutional Structure of Sociology and My Career", in Mathilda White Riley (ed.), *Sociological Lives*, Beverly Hills, Sage.
- SHANKMAN, Paul, 1984, "The Thick and the Thin: On the Interpretive Theoretical Program of Clifford Geertz", *Current Anthropology*, 25(3), p. 261-70.
- SHOTT, Susan, 1979, "Emotion and Social Life: A Symbolic Interactionist Analysis", *American Journal of Sociology*, 84(6), p. 1317-1334.
- SICA, Alan, 1988, *Weber, Irrationality and Social Order*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- SKOCPOL, Theda R., 1979, *States and Social Revolution*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- SKOCPOL, Theda R., 1982, "Rentier State and Shi'a Islam in the Iranian Revolution", *Theory and Society*, 11(2), p. 265-284.
- SKOCPOL, Theda R., 1985, "Cultural Idioms and Political Ideologies in the Revolutionary Reconstruction of State Power: A Rejoinder to Sewell", *Journal of Modern History*, 57(1), p. 86-96.
- SKOCPOL, Theda R., 1987, "Social History and Historical Sociology: Contrasts and Complementarities", *Social Science History*, 11(1), p. 17-30.
- SKOCPOL, Theda R. (ed.), 1984, *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- STARK, David, 1986, "Rethinking Internal Labor Markets: New Insights from a Comparative Perspective", *American Sociological Review*, 51(4), p. 492-504.
- STARR, Paul, 1982, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*, New York, Basic Books.
- STINCHCOMBE, Arthur L., 1978, *Theoretical Methods in Social History*, New York, Academic Press.
- STINCHCOMBE, Arthur L., 1983, *Economics Sociology*, New York, Academic Press.
- SWEDBERG, Richard, HIMMELSTRAND, Ulf & BRULIN, Göran, 1987, "The Paradigm of Economic Sociology: Premises and Promises", *Theory and Society*, 16(2), p. 169-214.
- SWIDLER, Ann, 1986, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies", *American Sociological Review*, 51(2), p. 273-286.
- SZTOMPKA, PIOTR, 1986, "The Renaissance of Historical Orientation in Sociology", *International Sociology*, vol. 1, p. 321-337.
- TAYLOR, Charles, 1980, "Formal Theory in Social Science", *Inquiry*, 23(2), p. 139-144.
- TAYLOR, Charles, 1985, *Philosophical Papers II: Philosophy and the Human Mind*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- TAYLOR, Michael (ed.), 1988, *Rationality and Revolution. Cambridge and Paris*, Cambridge University Press and Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- TILLY, Charles, 1978, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Reading (Massachusetts), Addison-Wesley.

- TILLY, Charles, 1981, *As Sociology Meets History*, New York, Academic Press.
- TILLY, Charles, 1984a, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*, New York, Russel Sage Foundation.
- TILLY, Charles, 1984b, "Review Essay: Sludge in the Growth Machine", *American Journal of Sociology*, 89(5), p. 1214-1218.
- TILLY, Charles, 1985, *The Contentious French*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- TILLY, Charles, TILLY Louise & TILLY, Richard, 1975, *The Rebellious Century*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- TRAUGOTT, Mark, 1985, *Armies of the Poor*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- TRIMBERGER, Ellen K., 1978, *Revolution From Above: Military Bureaucrats and Development in Japan, Turkey, Egypt and Peru*, New Brunswick, Transaction Books.
- TURNER, Jonathan H., 1988, *The Structure of Social Interaction*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- TURNER, Jonathan H. & Maryanski, A.R., 1988, "Is 'Neofunctionalism' Really Functional", *Sociological Theory*, 6(1), p. 1 10-121.
- VAN PARIJS, Philippe, 1981a, *Evolutionary Explanation in the Social Sciences*, Totowa, Rowman and Littlefield.
- VAN PARIJS, Philippe, 1981b, "Sociology as General Economics", *European Archives of Sociology*, 22(2), p. 299-324.
- VAN PARIJS, Philippe, 1986-1987, "A Revolution in Class Theory", *Politics and Society*, 15(4), p. 453-482.
- WALLACE, Anthony F. C., 1978, *Rockdale: The Growth of An American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution*, New York, Knopf.
- WALLACE, Anthony F. C., 1987, *St. Clair: A Nineteenth-Century Coal Town's Experience with a Disaster-Prone Industry*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel, 1974, *The Modern World System I*, New York, Academic Press.
- WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel, 1979, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, Cambridge and Paris, Cambridge University Press and Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel, 1984, *The Politics of the World-Economy*, Cambridge and Paris, Cambridge University Press and Éditions de la Maison de Sciences de l'Homme.
- WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel, 1986, "Marxisms as Utopias: Evolving Ideologies", *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(6), p. 1295-1308.
- WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel, 1987, "World-Systems Analysis", in Anthony Giddens and Jonathan H. Turner (eds.), *Social Theory Today*, Cambridge, Polity Press, p. 309-324.
- WALTERS, Ronald G., 1980, "Signs of the Times: Clifford Geertz and Historians", *Social Research*, 47(3), p. 537-56.
- WARDELL, Mark Li & TURNER, Stephen P. (eds.), 1986, *Sociological Theory in Transition*, London, George Allen and Unwin.
- WEBER, Max, 1978, *Economy and Society*, Berkeley, University of California Press, vol. 1.
- WEIR, Margaret, SHOLA ORLOFF, Ann & SKOCPOL, Theda R. (eds.), 1988, *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- WELDES, John & DUVALL, Robert D., 1987, "Marxism Without Marx", *Contemporary Sociology*, 16(6), p. 797-799.
- WELLMAN, Barry & Berkowitz, S. D. (eds.), 1988, *Social Structures: A Network Approach*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- WHITE, Harrison C., 1970, *Chains of Opportunity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- WHITE, Harrison C., 1981, "Where Do Markets Come From?", *American Journal of Sociology*, 87(3), p. 517-547.

Opening Gift

- WHITE, James W., 1988, "Rational Rioters: Leaders, Followers, and Popular Protest in Early Modern Japan", *Politics and Society*, 16(1), p. 35-70.
- WILENTZ, Sean, 1984, *Songs of Democracy: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class. 1790-1850*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- WILEY, Norbert, 1985, "The Current Interregnum in American Sociology", *Social Research*, 52(1), p. 180-207.
- WILLIAMSON, Oliver, 1975, *Markets and Hierarchies*, New York, The Free Press.
- WILLIAMSON, Oliver, 1981, "The Economies of Organization: The Transaction Cost Approach", *American Journal of Sociology*, 87(3), p. 548-577.
- WILLIS, Paul, 1977, *Learning to Labor: How Working-Class Kids Get Working-Class Jobs*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- WILSON, Bryan R. (ed.), 1970, *Rationality*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- WILSON, William Julius, 1980, *The Declining Significance of Race*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2nd ed. [French translation to be published by Éditions de Minuit.]
- WINCH, Peter, 1958, *The Idea of a Social Science*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- WINSHIP, Christopher & Rosen, Sherwin (eds.), 1988, *Organizations and Institutions: Sociological and Economic Approaches to the Analysis of Social Structures*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig, 1965, *On Certainty*, Paris, Gallimard.
- WOLF, Eric R., 1982, *Europe and the People Without History*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- WORSLEY, Peter, 1984, *The Three Worlds: Culture and World Development*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson.
- WRIGHT, Erik Olin, 1985, *Classes*, London, Verso.
- WRONG, Dennis, 1961, "The Oversocialized Conception of Man", *American Sociological Review*, 26(2), p. 183-193.
- WUTHNOW, Robert, 1987, *Meaning and Moral Order*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- WUTHNOW, Robert, HUNTER, James Davidson, BERGESEN, Albert & KURZWEIL, Edith, 1984, *Cultural Analysis: The Work of Peter Berger, Mary Douglas, Michel Foucault and Jürgen Habermas*, Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- ZALD, Mayer N., 1987, "The New Institutional Economies", *American Journal of Sociology*, 93(3), p. 701-708.
- ZARET, David, 1986, *The Heavenly Contract*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- ZELIZER, Viviana, 1985, *Pricing the Priceless Child*, New York, Basic Books.
- ZUKIN, Sharon & DiMAGGIO, Paul (eds.), 1986, "Structures of Capital", double issue of *Theory and Society*, 15(1/2).
- ZUNZ, Olivier (ed.), 1985, *Reliving the Past: The Worlds of Social History*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina.

ANTI-UTILITARIAN THEORIZING FROM PARSONS TO DURKHEIM AND CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY TODAY¹

Jeffrey C. Alexander

A conference devoted to anti-utilitarian theory would not be complete without considering Talcott Parsons, especially his 1937 masterpiece *The Structure of Social Action*. The present essay commences by revisiting *Structure*. I do so as a theorist whose intellectual life has been devoted to developing an alternative to utilitarian theory – in the 1970s and 1980s as a student of Parsons’ own work; in the 1980s and 1990s an interpreter of Durkheim’s later “religious” sociology; in the 1990s until today as one of the creators of cultural sociology in the United States. From discussing Parsons, I go back to the late Durkheim and forward to cultural sociology today.

In 1937, Parsons published what remains the most analytically precise and theoretically ambitious anti-utilitarian work in the history of sociological thought. Utilitarianism, Parsons argued, should not be considered only as a philosophical movement, inaugurated by Bentham and Mill father and *fiils*, but as a generalized mode of thinking, one that has permeated, not only Anglo-American theorizing, but modernity itself. Broadly defining utilitarianism as an instrumental view of action, Parsons argued that such a theory emphasizes the external, objective situation at the expense of subjective, normative interpretation. From an instrumental perspective, all that matters, theoretically, is the external situation, *vis-à-vis* which actors calculate costs and benefits. As long as instrumental action is considered at the individual level, the implications of such a normless view of action are invisible; indeed, in modernity purely calculative action seems commonsensical. From a market perspective, moreover, ordering individual actions seems no problem at all. An invisible hand, Smith and other *laissez-faire* economists believed, coordinates the economic relations of individuals.

¹ First published in CAILLÉ, Alain, CHANIAL, Philippe, DUFOIX, Stéphane & VANDENBERGHE, Frédéric (dir.), 2018, *Des sciences sociales à la science sociale. Fondements anti-utilitaristes*, coll. « La bibliothèque du Mauss », Lormont, Le Bord de l’eau.

Elie Halévy's great early work *La Formation du Radicalisme Philosophique* (1901-1904) was critical for Parsons' understanding. Halévy dismissed the invisible hand as a just-so story that posited a "natural identity of interests," a misleading impression that utilitarian individualism could easily resolve the problem of social order. When utilitarianism explicitly addressed the collective level, Parsons' argued, its latent anti-humanism was revealed. As an individualistic utilitarian, for example, Locke assumed the natural identity of interests. When Hobbes refused such illusory solace, recognizing the possibility of a war of all against all, he was led ineluctably to the conclusion that collective order could be achieved only if a Leviathan ruled. Parsons called the Hobbesian solution "anti-individualistic positivism," suggesting that the coercive, anti-normative qualities of such collective theorizing made the dangers of utilitarianism clear for all to see. As an alternative to utilitarian theory, Parsons argued for a "voluntaristic" theory of action, emphasizing the connection between individual autonomy and the theoretical acknowledgment of values and norms. Only if such binding but non-rational elements are maintained, Parsons reasoned, is it clear that external, objective conditions do not determine action by themselves. Only if the normative is referenced can it be theoretically acknowledged that external conditions are always interpreted, a subjectivity that is required for an autonomous, moral self to be sustained.

Parsons' voluntaristic "solution" to the problem of order had an extraordinary influence on American sociology in the optimistic and relatively consensual decades after World War II. What gradually became evident, however, was that, while *Structure* provided a devastating critique of utilitarianism, a debilitating slippage marred in the logic of Parsons' alternative. Retaining normativity does allow subjectivity to be maintained presuppositionally – in epistemological terms – but it does not provide an alternative to the Hobbesian understanding of order in an empirical sense. Volunteerism can reign, but society may also be deeply fragmented and conflicted; economic interests may not align; social values may be antithetical. Interpretation can lead to polarization rather than coordination, and values can fuel such agonizing social conflicts that coercive dictatorship often results.

Parsons conflated presuppositional and empirical normativity, identifying the theoretical evocation of values and norms with the empirical condition of cooperation and reciprocity. What followed from such conflation was the argument that, if conflict were present, then norms and values were absent. Challengers to structural-functionalism drew precisely this conclusion in the 1960s, creating an

alternative that came to be known as “conflict theory.” Social conflicts, radical movements for reform, and backlash movements against it had riven American society. A new generation of theorists suggested that none of this could be explained by reference to norms and values. Conflict followed upon the absence of normativity. As Parsonianism gave way to conflict theory, sociological reference to social meanings disappeared; theorists turned their attention to external, material conditions. Utilitarianism was back in the saddle.

This theoretical revolution had significant repercussions not only for functionalism but for the contemporary understanding of classical theory as well. Parsons had legitimated his voluntaristic theory with complementary readings of Durkheim and Weber. Durkheim’s early and middle writings were held up as paradigms of value-sociology, as arguments for the centrality of normatively ordered social consensus. Weber’s theory of modernity was similarly bowdlerized, with the religious origins of capitalism identified as providing a model for the role of values inside modernity itself. With such tendentious readings, Parsons yoked the religious theorizing of Durkheim and Weber to the functionalist project. So when conflict sociology prevailed, it seemed necessary to reject normative elements in classical theory. Charles Tilly wrote about “useless Durkheim,” and Theda Skocpol and Michael Mann read Weber as an instrumental theorist of state power.

What then ensued was an unexpected paradox, one demonstrating the cunning of history. At the very height of the new utilitarianism, new anti-utilitarian theoretical movements emerged that placed social meanings, interpretive action, collective consciousness, and solidarity back on the table. In the 1980s, a new generation of American sociologists began creating what came eventually to be called “cultural sociology.” What’s in a name? The very definition of sociology itself!

Cultural sociology depended on finding and creating resources for conceptualizing thickly interpretive action and meaningful, but not necessarily consensual, social order. This involved rereading the classics, on the one hand, and systematic theory building, on the other. *Vis-à-vis* Weber, the rereading meant going back to the *Geisteswissenschaft* strain of his work, exploring the nature and social effects of religious meanings without the *fin de siècle*, Nietzsche-influenced fillip that industrialization eliminated meaning and replaced it with debilitating rationalization. Dilthey’s hermeneutic philosophy was recovered along with the narrative theory of deep language structures that Paul Ricoeur built on top of it. Taylor’s early hermeneutic method was incorporated along with Walzer’s idea of

justice as interpretation. Wittgenstein's language theory was critical, especially as the linguistic turn was "pragmatized" with Austin's performative turn. These rivulets all fed into the mighty river of semiotics and post-structuralism, the movement from Saussure and Jakobson to Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes that demonstrated how, in Ricœur's telling phrase, meaningful social action might be considered – for the purposes of interpretation – as a text.

For this whole cultural-theoretical stream to become sociologized, however, it was necessary to find a post-hoc sociological home for it inside the discipline's classics. In the 1980s, I discovered the existence of a "late Durkheim," who had turned against his more instrumental, binary, post-traditional texts of the 1890s and moved toward a symbolic social world referenced by the religious sociology of post-1898. Following Durkheim's own injunctions, I suggested that *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1911), far from merely an anthropological study of ancient societies, should be treated as a systematic treatise about symbolic classification, ritual, collective effervescence, and ritual in the life of contemporary societies, a book written for the "religious man of today."

Still, all this new thinking would have remained hortatory and merely "pointing to" – rather than "showing" – but for the explosion of the new cultural anthropology in the two decades preceding cultural sociology's creation. Victor Turner showed how ritual could be conflictual and developed procreative, if nascent, theorizing about social dramas. Mary Douglas generalized Durkheim's religious ideas about sacred/profane into secular, broadly moral ideas about purity and danger. But it was above all Clifford Geertz whose exemplary cultural theorizing about social life spurred cultural sociology into being. Drawing on aesthetic theorizing about how meanings are made, Geertz not only conceptualized symbolic action and social performance but provided exemplary empirical essays that showed how a cultural social science might be done.

Refashioning these classical and contemporary resources over the last three decades, cultural sociology has turned the tables on conflict theory, pushing it into a backward looking corner, and becoming one of the most influential theoretical and empirical streams of contemporary sociology. At first primarily an American development, cultural sociology has become a new reference in the broader Anglophone world of the UK and Australia and an increasing reference for discussions in Scandinavia and central, eastern, and southern Europe as well. While resolutely anti-utilitarian, it provides a thoroughly non-Parsonian understanding of individual interpretation and collective normativity. Meaning

is achieved through the construction of difference. Solidarity is central to on modernity, but it is a collective consciousness that excludes and not only includes, fragments and not only unites. Collective representations remain crucial for modernity, but they may be symbols of darkness and not only light. Culture remains powerful, but by no means necessarily consensus-making. Cultural codes and narratives can generate resistance and civil repair. If the discourse of civil society and its institutions lay the foundations for a global civil sphere, they function today more as a resource for imminent critique, as a trigger for justice-seeking social conflict, than as a source for empirical equilibrium.

A VERY SHORT GUIDE TO CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY

- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C., 2003, *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C., 2006, *The Civil Sphere*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C., 2010, *The Performance of Politics: Obama's Victory and the Democratic Struggle for Power*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C., 2011, *Performative Revolution in Egypt*, London, Bloomsbury.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C., 2013, *The Dark Side of Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- VIVIANA ZELIZER, *Pricing the priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (1985)
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C., JACOBS, Ronald N. & SMITH, Philip (eds), 2012, *The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- BARTMANSKI, Alexander D. & GIESEN, Bernhard (eds), 2012, *Iconic Power: Materiality and Meaning in Social Life*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.
- EYERMAN, Ron, 2011, *The Cultural Sociology of Political Assassination: From MLK and RFK to Furtyn and van Gogh*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.
- JACOBS, Ron, 2000, *Race, Media, and the Crisis of Civil Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- LAMONT, Michele, 2000, *The Dignity of working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation.
- MAST, Jason, 2012, *The Performative Presidency: Crisis and Resurrection during the Clinton Years*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- REED, Isaac, 2011, *Interpretation and Social Knowledge: On the Use of Theory in the Human Sciences*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- SMITH, Philip, 2005, *Why War? The Cultural Logic of Iraq, the Gulf War, and Suez*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- SMITH, Philip, 2008, *Punishment and Culture*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

THE BIRD IN HAND RATIONAL CHOICE – THE DEFAULT MODE OF SOCIAL THEORIZING

Peter Wagner

“Entangled in words, as a bird in lime-twigs.”

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

OF SPARROWS AND DOVES

There is a saying in the English language that holds one bird in the hand to be worth two in the bush. The recommendation presupposes an order of preferences in which, firstly, a “bird” is considered to be a good worth having and, secondly, the possession of this good in increasing quantities has a positive utility attached to it. There is nothing extraordinary about this assertion thus far; economic theorizing has long formulated such propositions and elaborated them further. The interesting part of the recommendation comes with the comparison between actually having a certain quantity of the good, on the one hand, and having a greater quantity in view, on the other.

In the metaphorical language characteristic of everyday wisdom, “hand” stands here for actual possession, whereas “bush” refers to present unavailability and potential but uncertain future possession. From the point of view of the preference-holder, the difference in the spatial location of the goods is one of accessibility. For reasons that will become clearer in a moment, let me underline that a difference in quantity of the good is here related to a difference in accessibility, and that the question of accessibility itself is confined to “having” and “not now (or yet) having.” On the face of it, there are no further significant connotations that come with “hand” or “bush” in this context.¹

¹ Or at least not for the purposes of my reasoning. Arguably, there are sexual connotations in this proverb, as in the other ones in different languages that I will quote below. A consideration of those connotations would make this introductory argument much more complex. Since it seems safe to assert, however, that my line of reasoning would only be further strengthened through their inclusion, I will largely leave them out for the sake of brevity.

Before moving on, an observation on the status of this proposition is in order. The recommendation is clearly one of prudence, but this does not necessarily imply that the social world in which it is uttered and accepted is one in which prudence reigns. In general, everyday wisdom is known to be internally contradictory. A counter-recommendation, for instance, is contained in the proverb: “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” The existence of such contradictions can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Often, it is assumed to be inappropriate to expect coherence and consistency from a body of knowledge which has been accumulated naturally, such as everyday wisdom. This is precisely what is considered to distinguish scientific-philosophical reasoning from common sense. Alternatively and more interestingly, however, one can see everyday wisdom as working with a plurality of repertoires. In that case, its single maxims would not be meant to be applicable across all kinds of situations; rather, their application is situation-dependent, or, more precisely, dependent upon the interpretation of the situation.

In the German language, there is a saying that at first sight seems to make precisely the same recommendation as the English one just cited. Its literal translation is: “The sparrow in the hand is better than the dove on the roof.” In this proverb, having a bird is also better than only hoping to obtain one. But this saying moves beyond triviality, not by increasing the quantity of the birds-not-possessed, but by introducing a qualitative distinction – between a bird of lower utility and one of higher utility. At the same time, the metaphor chosen to mark the distinction between that which is accessible and that which is inaccessible is also cast in different terms. While “hand” (in lay Heideggerian terms) stands here, too, for what is available, conversely that which is not accessible is moved, we may be justified in saying, to a higher, a superior, plane – using the philosophically time-honoured and linguistically almost unavoidable association of altitude with value and importance.

If, just for a moment and for the sake of developing the argument, we worked with a standard cultural-linguistic theory of social life and assumed that linguistic forms express cultural values, would there be an important difference between an “English” society and a “German” one, using these names as short-hand for societies whose members understand and accept, in principle, the one or the other maxim? Moving beyond the shared emphasis on prudence contained in these particular sayings, rather different registers of evaluation can be identified which stand behind the choice- and decision-making situation.

The “German” choice is between goods of different quality, whereas the “English” one is between different quantities of the same good. Some may want to say that this aspect should not be exaggerated – after all, a bird is just a bird. And the fact that the one is larger than the other and that the one is widely considered edible and the other is not do not make much of a difference – or only a difference that makes the preferences assumed in these proverbs plausible, as is necessary for their proverbial status. If those points exhausted the differences between a sparrow and a dove, this objection would be valid. Either the difference is located on a common scale of size, that is, large/small (or more/less) and the size of a “good” equals its value, or this difference is translated into the ability of the good to satisfy a universal human need, that is, the need for food.¹

Such a reading, however, would miss some significant interpretative possibilities. Firstly, it ignores the irony that often occurs in everyday wisdom. For all intents and purposes, a sparrow is no good at all, and this observation means that the proverb should possibly not be read as advice in a situation of choice and decision. Instead, the German saying may indeed be telling us that there are moments in which one has to resign oneself to quite a miserable life in spite of high-flying ideas and ambitions. Among the latter are peace, and also love and freedom, for all of which the dove can stand as a symbol. Because of that, we may also find explanations for why the German dove is on the roof, while the two English birds are in the bush. That which is inaccessible in the English saying is just in a different place, a site different from that of the subject and one which he or she could only reach by making an effort. In the German saying, by contrast, inaccessibility refers to a higher plane, where ordinary life does not take place, and from which one would look at life from a different perspective.²

Thirdly, the suspicion that there may actually be no choice or decision to be made in this situation can be read in the opposite way. If the saying is taken to mean that a sparrow in the hand is *obviously* better than a dove on the roof,

¹ If this were the case, however, one could also ask why the “Germans” did not develop or appropriate the much clearer form of “English” wisdom. As we know, even folk wisdom travels. Those who may be inclined to think that the German form typifies the common obscurity of Continental thinking should be aware that there is a version of this wisdom in French which is closer to the English than to the German, at least with regard to the quantitative aspect. In “Un ‘tiens’ vaut mieux que deux ‘tu l’auras” (“Something you have is worth more than two things you will have”), the temporal dimension is explicitly introduced in addition as an aspect of human interaction (bringing in issues of trust). Rational choice theorizing is notorious for having difficulties in dealing with future time, since the preferred strategy, namely discounting the future, is open to a number of objections.

² May it not be the case that these proverbs refer to birds, among the many goods one may want to have, because they are always inclined to fly away, because of the difficulty of durable possession?

then it may call for a halt to further inquiries. By digging further into what one's preferences actually are and how they can best be satisfied, one may destroy any possibility of satisfying them. Ultimately, there may be no way to avoid the connotations of intimacy, since it is here that this aspect is most evident. If one keeps questioning oneself about whether the person you are with is the one you love, then one precondition of love and friendship, namely their existing unquestioningly, will cease to hold. Theorists as diverse as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Hannah Arendt and Jon Elster (1986b, p. 13) have discovered this insight.

I will call a halt here to further inquiries in comparative cultural meta-physics, since this is not the purpose of this chapter – worthwhile as such an effort could be, if it were pursued on more secure grounds than one constituted by two proverbs. This little comparative exercise was meant to direct attention to some features of “decision-making” that are often neglected, and which I will now explore in more technical language.

OF RAGS AND RICHES

Two observations have been made about the relation between the two proverbs (and it will have become clear that they are indeed two proverbs and not, as they appeared to be and as dictionaries treat them, two versions of the same proverb). Firstly, I have suggested that they vary in their construal of the goods at stake. A qualitative difference in the one case turns into a quantitative one in the other. This raises the issue of the commensurability of these goods. If there is a situation of simple increases in marginal utility, then inhabitants of the “English” world could probably indicate for which number of birds in the bush they would give up the one bird in the hand. But could “Germans” conceivably give the sparrow up for, say, an eagle – that is, for (collective) power and glory instead of for peace and love? Possibly, but there would be no formal method, at a level comparable to marginal utility theory, of approaching the question. Eagles (as well as doves)¹ may belong to a quite different order than sparrows, and the ones could not be traded against the others. This observation leads into a discussion about what Charles Taylor calls “hyper-goods” as well as

¹ Eagles as well as doves can symbolize freedom, but possibly the eagle – as a state symbol – stands rather for collective freedom and collective self-determination and the dove for individual freedom.

“irreducibly social goods” (e.g. Taylor, 1989; 1995), both of which are difficult to conceptualize from a rationalist- individualist point of view.

Secondly, pursuing that kind of observation further, one could argue that a world in which there are sparrows, doves and eagles is a world quite different from one in which there are only birds existing in different quantities. In other words, the “Germans” and the “English” use quite different registers of evaluation when interpreting and judging the world in which they find themselves. The theoretical conclusion that follows here is that there may be differences between registers of evaluation such that they cannot be reduced to differences of preferences, at least not without further implications. Such a conclusion can be related to a Wittgensteinian emphasis on languages rather than on words or concepts, and to the idea of the “form of life” that emerges from there. More recently, Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot (1991) have attempted to show that disputes in contemporary Western societies are indeed approached from a number of different registers of evaluation, many of which have their own internal consistency and coherence, but which are incommensurable and thus mutually irreducible.¹

At this point, we may ask what happens if one tries to make goods commensurable or to translate from one language or register to another, say from “German” to “English.” This would be an effort at redescription, which, in Richard Rorty’s (1989) understanding, changes the world. In other words, when moving from “German” to “English,” one may indeed make different goods commensurable and reinterpret differences in registers of evaluation as differences in preference-orders, but at the same time the situation is altered for those human beings who face the choices. Arguably, this is precisely what the application of rational choice theorizing does, and what such theorists normatively recommend human beings to do.

To broaden the view on rational choice theorizing as a mode of social theory still further, I shall take up the two other observations made briefly above. I have claimed that with some kinds of “preferences” it is essential for satisfying them that they should not be revealed in the situation of “decision-making” – without this being a question of deception of others or even of oneself. Reasoning against the background of an ideal state of complete information, rational choice theorizing holds information to be a good, of which it is always preferable to

¹ This is, however, far from saying that communication and compromise are impossible, as is sometimes alleged.

have more. This good is weighed only against the cost of obtaining yet more information, which is conceptualized as a form of transaction cost. In contrast, the example developed above held that acquisition of further information may make a certain good unobtainable and a given preference unsatisfiable. Thus, it undermines the general validity of the concept of grounding rationality in information.

As in the earlier two cases, following the advice from rational choice theory would considerably alter the situation of “decision-making”. This alteration, however, may be highly undesirable; and the degree of such undesirability might be untheorizable from the point of view of rational choice theory. A final observation relates to the question of the “situation” itself. Building on the insight that singular human beings may avail themselves of more than one register of evaluation, the interpretation of a situation gains crucial significance. To elaborate further on one example, the relation to another person may be one of justice – for example, between colleagues at work – or it may be one of love (see, *e.g.*, Boltanski, 1990). The observably different registers of evaluation which human beings apply would have to be interpreted as a violation of the need for consistent preferences as presumed by a rational choice theorist. The only alternative, in order to avoid strongly counter-intuitive outcomes, is to claim that situations can unequivocally be defined as “given” – that is, as one of justice or as one of love – and can then be treated unproblematically as the “context” of decision-making. The rational pursuit of preferences “under constraint” could thus again be made consistent. Situations, however, are often not unequivocally defined, and the interpretation of a situation may be exactly what is contested or in doubt. In this case, then, rational choice theorists would apply the maxim of scrutinizing both one’s preferences and the situation, since this is seen as the only maxim that is applicable to *any* situation. But it would invariably favour the calculating individual. This, however, means preferring a *particular* register of evaluation, and transforms the situation to make it amenable to this register.

Four problems of decision-making have now been raised: incommensurability of goods; a variety of registers of evaluation; inconsistent preferences across a variety of situations; and situation-dependent rules of application. Already at first sight, they pose enormous difficulties for theories of the rational chooser. Rational choice theorists have pursued two different strategies to deal with these complications. Accordingly we can group those theorists into two categories, the doves and the hawks.

Doves and hawks are equally convinced of the superiority of rational choice theorizing. Thus, a major spokesperson for the doves, Jon Elster, claims unequivocally that this approach is unrivalled as a normative theory. But let us see what price, to use hawkish language, he has to pay for that assertion. He and his fellow-doves allow their individuals all kinds of preferences – they may follow social norms, engage in collective action, accept institutions as bounds of their rationality, or may forgo the best outcome for an inferior one because they are satisfied with it. In short, they appear like quite ordinary and reasonable human beings. But what is their claim to rationality and in what sense is this normatively superior behaviour?

Technically speaking, all particularities of human lives are assimilated into either the preferences of the actors or the context of the decision-making situation, both of which are outside the realm of the rationality of the choice. The claim to normative superiority ultimately boils down to an understanding of rationality in which to be rational, *pace* Hegel, means to do what you think is good for you. While this is quite agreeable, it leaves all the tasks of social research and social theorizing to others – namely to find out how preferences emerge and change and what the social contexts are in which human beings happen to find themselves.

Hawks, in contrast, keep their eyes firmly on the calculating individual. In their view, reason-endowed atoms are what the social world consists of, and the more this fact is recognized, the better everything will be. Rather than accepting the particularities of human social life and trying to adapt their theorizing to it, as the doves do, they recommend ways of acting and behaving. Summarized briefly, in the light of the above observations, their advice runs as follows: Consider yourself an individual who knows what you want before you enter into any situation of decision-making. When in such a situation, aim at establishing cognitive control over it; that is, provide yourself with as complete information as is available (or as much as you can afford). Systematically relate the information gathered to your preferences. Design strategies to see which preferences you can satisfy to what degree. Weigh your preferences, that is, make them comparable, so that you can establish a hierarchy of strategies. Decide.

Looking back at the decision-making problems discovered by interpreting the proverbs, we see that the following happens here: if commensurability of goods was not given, it is now established. Any diversity of registers is reduced to one. Preferences are being ordered in a consistent way throughout. The situation is now unequivocally defined. The two presuppositions that are needed for this

procedure to work are the assumption of an individual with fully established preferences and the assumption of the possibility and desirability of absolutely context-independent judgement. Rather than always/already being in some world full of strange birds and other animals, the human being is seen here as initially standing outside the world and only moving towards it with some intention and purpose. Or, more precisely, since it is a theoretical operation we are talking about, the distancing from a context is seen as the precondition for rational action of the individual. However, this specifically entails an alteration of the situation, in the sense in which I referred to such an occurrence above. It is inappropriate to say that a rational choice approach allows a different (read: superior) way of dealing with a given situation. Rather, a rational choice approach changes the way in which a human being is situated in the world. It is an intervention in the world rather than an analysis of it.

A number of rational choice theorists will not be at all unhappy with such a diagnosis. After all, some may see themselves as engaged not only in knowing the world, but also in improving it. And there can be no doubt that a rationalist-individualist approach, in a broad sense, has enabled human beings to gain insights and possibilities, many of which they would not want to miss. (Though space is too short to go into detail, I will implicitly provide some illustrations below.) However, the action that is performed is one of reducing that which is not reducible. Translations introducing commensurability and unequivocalness lead to an impoverishment of the available repertoires of evaluation. The messy richness of the world is exchanged for some clean rags. While hardly any reasonable being would prefer rags to riches as a matter of principle, there may be situations in which one has reason to believe that one cannot do otherwise.

OF WARS AND REVOLUTIONS

As a mode of social theorizing, rational choice theory is – or, better, relies on – a theory of modernity. It works with a postulate of autonomy; human beings have wills and are, in principle, able to act according to them. And on this basis, it takes the pursuit of their strivings, with a view to accomplishing their objectives, as that which human beings will want to do, that is, as expressions of rationality. In terms of Enlightenment philosophy, rational choice theory takes a version of the combination of freedom and

reason as its basic philosophy. It thus relates closely to what I like to call, in somewhat broader terms, and following Cornelius Castoriadis (*e.g.* 1990, p. 17–19), a commitment to autonomy and mastery as the double signification of modernity.

However, rather than merely situating itself within modernity, rational choice theory provides a very particular interpretation of modernity. As I have tried to argue at some length elsewhere (Wagner, 1994; 2000), both of those meaning-providing terms (autonomy and rationality) are underspecified and ambivalent on their own, and tension-ridden as a double-barrelled concept. The social signification of modernity is widely open to interpretations. Autonomy, for instance, can be understood predominantly on individual terms, but it can also be read as collective self-determination. Rationality or mastery can be conceived of in purposive, instrumental and then procedural terms, but it can also be related to substantive concerns. And these formulae for ambivalence – individual/collective, instrumental/ substantive – do not yet capture anything approaching the richness of possible interpretations, nor are they even necessarily the best way of framing the issue. Rational choice theory, in contrast, proceeds from an unequivocal starting-point. Its social entities are individuals, and they behave according to instrumental rationality.

If rationalist individualism (from now on I will use this broader term because moving on to historical considerations) is a theory of modernity, but a very particular one, the question arises as to the grounds on which it was preferred to others. To approach an answer to that question, a rapid survey of the history of this thinking is useful.¹ Rationalist individualism initially emerged in social contract theories, as first spelt out unequivocally in Hobbes's *Leviathan*, and was emphatically developed as a basic theoretical approach by thinkers such as Condorcet in the context of the French Revolution. In parallel to the latter, Smith's moral philosophy provided a space for rationalist individualism within the confines of the economy, an approach which also inspired Marx. Abolishing the elements of a separate moral-political philosophy, this thinking was radicalized during the marginalist revolution in economic thought, which led to what is now the dominant thinking in this field, namely neoclassical economics. During the inter-war years of the twentieth century, European cultural critics identified

¹ In the view of its own proponents, the real history of rational choice theory only starts in the middle of the twentieth century, but an insight into its deeper roots or “predecessors” can occasionally be found. Similarly and significantly, rational choice thinking also lacks a long historical view on the development of Western societies, although it could and should have one, a matter to which I return below.

a degraded version of rationalist individualism, in the form of a conjunction of atomism and conformism, as the prevailing attitude in mass society, in particular the North American one. Weber, though not a typical proponent of this thinking, laid many of its foundations. After the Second World War, rational choice theorizing gained the form in which we now know it and spread from economics to the other social sciences.

With the help of these few historical reference-points, it is possible to provide elements of a contextual understanding of the way in which the particular, rationalist-individualist interpretation of modernity imposed itself (the following draws on Wagner, 2000). I will anticipate the general argument and will then situate it in various contexts. Rationalist individualism may emerge and find acceptance, or even impose itself, as a social theory by default. By default I refer to a move that is made in situations in which other interpretations of the modern condition, while they may be available in principle, cannot be utilized. The default situation may arise as a consequence of the exigency that all other such interpretations have to make stronger social presuppositions or, in other terms, would need to assume more substantive social prerequisites than the individualist-rationalist one. To relate this idea to the signification of modernity: *not* to interpret autonomy as purely individual autonomy requires, if not a coherent and stable collectivity, then at least socially rich ways of relating to others, that is, both singular others and networks of others. *Not* to interpret mastery or rationality in instrumental terms requires other substantive value orientations, which again need to be, if not shared with, then at least communicable to and acceptable to others.

If this consideration is generally acceptable, the next task is to identify the conditions under which such other interpretations become difficult or impossible so that the default situation arises. Very abstractly speaking, such conditions prevail in times of destruction of a social configuration, in particular rapid and forceful destruction, and in times of the founding or refounding of social configurations, especially if this occurs under pressure or comes from a great diversity of sources. Destruction may be caused by imposed social change, such as was the case historically due to the capitalist revolution and through the building of bureaucratic state apparatuses. Here we recognize Marx's theory of alienation and Weber's theory of rationalization as responses to such experiences; and now we would also need to include the experience of totalitarianism. But destruction of a social configuration also occurs through warfare and revolutions. And in this context it is significant that individualist-rationalist modes of theorizing

made early breakthroughs in the context of the seventeenth-century religious wars and the eighteenth-century revolutions. In such situations, no other way seemed available to conceptualize the return to peace and order.

To the present day, Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1962 [1651]) is one of the key references when discussing the attempt at grounding political order on an abstract conception of the individual human being and 'his' rationality. The abstraction from any concrete situation, later to be called the hypothesis of the "original position" (John Rawls, 1970; 1993), would then provide the required distance and make rational-scientific knowledge possible. However, rather than reading Hobbes's *Leviathan* as the inauguration of scientific method in political thought, it can also be interpreted as a contribution to solving an urgent socio-political problem, namely how to bring an end to violent religious strife.

In such a contextual perspective, Hobbes's attempt shows a clear awareness of an inescapable dilemma. On the one hand, there is a deep intellectual consciousness of the lack of stability and certainty. Radical doubt is indeed the starting-point of the reasoning. On the other hand, Hobbes was also driven by the conviction that humankind could not live well without some categories of social and natural life which impose themselves on everybody, and such categories would only impose themselves if and because they were considered as undeniably valid. The situation of uncertainty that was experientially self-evident, where devastating religious and political strife had to be overcome, was to be transcended by appeal to an instance that, in his view, could only be found outside such experience. The coexistence of these two, apparently incompatible, convictions gives his work a character which one might label as dogmatically modernist: radical in the rejection of unfounded assumptions, but inflexible in its insistence upon some definable minimum conditions of cognitive and political order that could, and would have to, be universally established. After the religious grounding of unity had been irretrievably lost, it could, in his view, only be replaced by individuals and their rationality. All other categories could be contested, and strife would be renewed.

Rather than giving intellectual support to the idea of a strong state, Hobbesian thinking opened the way for an increasingly consistent derivation of political power from the combined will of the individuals in a given collective. The American and the French Revolutions marked attempts to implement such a conception. Thus, they revived the theoretical problem and gave it a new ur-

gency. Edmund Burke (1993 [1790], p. 8–9), skeptical observer from across the Channel, issued an early warning in his reflections on the French Revolution:

“The effect of liberty to individuals is, that they may do what they please: We ought to see what it will please them to do, before we risque congratulations.”

In this situation, the rationalist-individualist approach reaffirms itself, alongside the other emerging social sciences, as one way of finding out “what it will please them to do.” The hope and aspiration was that the moral and political sciences should and could now achieve “the same certainty” as the physical sciences (Baker, 1975, p. 197). Certainty was a requirement of some urgency, since the new political order needed assurances of its viability. But it was also regarded as a new historical possibility, since political action was liberated from the arbitrariness of decisions made by rulers of doubtful legitimacy and given into the hands of the multitude of reason-endowed human beings. The “blend of liberalism and rationalism,” which Keith Baker (1975, p. 385) observed in Condorcet’s convictions, can thus be explained as stemming from the Enlightenment linkage of freedom and reason.

In such a view, the rights-endowed individual became the only conceivable ontological as well as the methodological foundation of a science of political matters after the revolutions. Once the rights of man had been generally accepted as self-evident and inalienable, it seemed obvious, to Turgot and Condorcet for instance, that they were also “the logical foundation of the science of society” (Baker, 1975, p. 218). In rights-based liberalism, the individual is the only category that need not, and often in fact cannot, be contested. The individual is simply there, whereas everything else – for instance, what criteria of justification are to be applied when determining the collective good – is subject to argument. Substantive aspects of human interaction are dependent upon communication and consensus. And it is even uncertain, to make the issue yet more complicated, with whom should one enter into communication, because the boundaries of the community are not themselves given, but subject to agreement. Once this assumption was accepted, basically two avenues for constructing a science of the political had opened up. One possibility was to try to identify by theoretical reasoning the basic features of this unit of analysis, individual human beings, and their actions. Since this unit was conceived of as an ontological starting-point, devoid of all specific, historical and concrete ties to the world, its characterization had to proceed from certain inherent features. From earlier debates, those features

had often been conceived of as twofold, namely as passions and as interests. In the late Enlightenment context, the rational side of this dichotomy was regarded as the one amenable to systematic elaboration. It thus allowed the building of a scientific approach to the study of at least one aspect of human interaction with the world, namely the production and distribution of material wealth. This approach inaugurated the tradition of political economy, later to be transformed into neoclassical economics and, still later, into rational choice theory.

While political economy was based on a highly abstract, but for the same reasons an extremely powerful assumption of human rationality, the other conclusion from the individualist foundational principle was possibly even more reductionist but much more cautious. Avoiding any substantive assumptions whatsoever about the driving forces in human beings, the statistical approach, often under the label of political arithmetic, resorted to the collection of numerical information about human behaviour. The space for substantive presuppositions was radically evacuated in this thinking, but the methodological confidence in mathematics seemed to have increased in inverse proportion (Brian, 1994; Desrosières, 1998). This approach would later lead into quantitative-empirical research and behaviourism.

Up to this point, I have interpreted the seventeenth-century religious wars and the eighteenth-century revolutionary upheavals as events of social disruption that made observers inclined to adopt a rationalist-individualist position. The objective of this withdrawal from richer social theories was to identify the point from which order could be rethought, in the first instance, and then reconstructed. At the same time, the establishment of the European state system, in the Treaty of Westphalia, and the creation of the French Republic, in the course of the Revolution, were obviously also moments of the founding or refounding of social configurations. In the case of the French Revolution, a certain rationalist individualism indeed informed republican political language. Overall, however, European consciousness saw other substantive resources with which to refound social order as still being sufficiently available after these events, and thus rationalist individualism did not achieve an overall breakthrough in social and political thought. However, from a later European point of view, this was much less the case for the creation of the American republic, the master-case for the founding of a polity in the West.

OF EUROPE AND AMERICA

During the early twentieth century, in particular between the two wars, a European image of America developed in which an individualist-rationalist modernity was seen to have been established in America and, owing to some of its features, had expanded from there to transform Europe in a similar way. I shall briefly summarize the main features of this view: “America” is what we may call *presentist*, that is, without history and tradition. It was a country without tradition, “where no medieval ruins bar the way, where history begins with the elements of modern bourgeois society,” as Friedrich Engels (1958 [1887], p. 354) already pointed out in 1887. It was even “the specific country of a history,” as Alfred Weber, Max Weber’s brother, remarked in 1925, in stronger tones (Weber, 1925, p. 80). America is also *individualist*, that is, there are no ties between human beings except for those that they themselves create. And it is *rationalist*, that is, it knows no norms and values except the increase of instrumental mastery, the striving to use efficiently whatever is at hand in order to achieve one’s purposes. Again Tönnies (1922, p. 357), here using Max Weber’s concept of rationality, succinctly expressed his view on American public opinion as “the essential expression of the spirit of a nation: it is ‘rationalistic’... in the sense of a reason which prefers to be occupied with the means for external purposes.” Or, in D. H. Lawrence’s (1962, p. 28) words, the American “is free to be always deliberate, always calculated, rapid, swift, and single in practical execution as a machine.” And, finally, America is what we may call *immanentist*, that is, it rejects the notion of any common higher purpose, anything that transcends individual lives to give them orientation and direction. In other words and in sum, this view saw the ideal society of rational choice theorists as already established on earth.

There are very strong reasons to doubt whether this image provides a proper representation of American social life, but this is not the question that I want to raise here. It is for two other reasons that this image of America is important in the context of a discussion of rational choice theorizing. Firstly, it provides the major, and historically early, example of a use of such theorizing to describe an existing social configuration; and it does so in comparison to another one, namely by way of the – largely implicit, but sometimes explicit – comparison of Europe and America that informs these writings. Since in doing so it also suggests that the “other” society provides Europeans with a view of their own future,

a *hypothesis* about the *direction of history* can be derived from it. More precisely, it suggests that the history of humanity led to the emergence of a social order inhabited and sustained by rational individuals. To be sure, most of the European traffickers in this view also criticized and rejected this perspective. Secondly, we can nevertheless infer a *normative* perspective, namely a *metaphysics* of the rational individual, by inverse reasoning, that is, by identifying precisely what the Europeans were rejecting. I shall briefly discuss these two features before drawing conclusions about the particular force of their combination.

The European image of America resonates strongly with a specific mode of theorizing, and specifically of theorizing modernity. This theorizing is *modernist*, rather than modern, because it builds on the double notion of autonomy and rationality, which are key characteristics of modernity, but it also turns this notion into an unquestioned and unquestionable assumption for theorizing the social world. Such thinking pervades many areas of intellectual life, and possibly its strongest version is rational choice theory in social thought. At its core, such theorizing proceeds by a double intellectual move, as discussed earlier. It first withdraws from the treacherous wealth of sensations that come from the socio- historical world to establish what it holds to be those very few indubitable assumptions from which theorizing can safely proceed. Subsequently, it reconstructs an entire world from those very few assumptions. Its proponents tend to think that the first move decontaminates understanding, any arbitrary and contingent aspects being removed. The second move is held to create a pure image of the world, with scientific and/or philosophical validity, from which yet further conclusions, including practical ones, can be drawn.¹

This description of theoretical steps fits a certain view of American history, namely as one of self-foundation *ex nihilo*. The European writings that convey this image of American rationalist individualism certainly contain no thorough sociological interpretation of the specificity of America. However, there are fragments of such an interpretation, and they point to the effects of large-scale migration and of the creation of a society by emigrants and exiles. The experience of emigration and exile is one of distancing from that which was known and familiar, from all that which appeared as given and natural. Such distancing – even when it was imposed – can liberate the mind to think of the world in different

¹ Whatever dissonance there may be between sensations and this image will then be treated as the secondary problem of the relation between theory and empirical observation.

terms. Emigration and exile, as forms of distancing, therefore lend themselves to a formal discourse in social theory and political philosophy, one that aims at avoiding or eliminating anything contextual or particularistic.

In the light of such distancing, the experience of going away is sometimes seen to change the character of the social bond with other people, at least at the level of the entire society or polity. Raymond Williams (1961, p. 107) once suggested that the exile will usually “remain an exile, unable to go back to the society that he has rejected or that has rejected him, yet equally unable to form important relationships with the society to which he has gone.” Williams suggests that there is something irrecoverable, once one leaves one’s place of origin. The social bond cannot be re-created in the same way in which it existed before; the same density of social relations and density of meaning in the world around oneself can no longer be achieved. Sometimes emigration has even been related to a radical loss of the ability to give meaning. The liberating effect that distancing may have turns into the inevitability of negation and, normatively speaking, into cynicism. One of the protagonists in *The Plumed Serpent* (Lawrence, 1987 [1926], p. 77-78) holds that America, having no roots, no history, no tradition of its own, is incapable of any creation. Its very emergence in an extended process of migration is indicative of some degree of exhaustion of the creative power of humankind.

In such characterizations, we re-encounter the two steps of rationalist theorizing, albeit in a different form. In the process of migration, it is alleged, all substantive ties in social life are shattered and human beings are left without any important moral orientations. This is the first step. Then, from the loss of all these fetters, grows the hubris of wanting to re-erect a world without any such substantive bases. Rather than referring to a territorially locatable society, “America” stands here for a specific – a “modern” – way of living, which is traced to something like a generalized migratory experience. The – liberating – willingness to throw off the burden of history goes hand in hand with the impossibility of relating positively to a society with “thick” social bonds. The experience of migration and exile that sociologically is taken to account for the specificity of “America” can then be related to the tendencies towards rationalization and of individualization, as postulated in social theory from Marx and Weber onwards.

The historical hypothesis contained in such views thus focuses on a decreasing historical depth of social life due to the recomposition of societies, and on the overburdening of singular human beings with the task not only of reconstructing

their lives but also of reconstituting the guiding frameworks for the social world of which they have become a part. As a result, those beings are seen to be left on their own, without substantive ties to others, and with reason as the only resource they could reliably draw upon, given that other resources presuppose that they are to some degree shared or recognized by others. In the course of “modern” human history, it is seen as inevitable that a “flattening” of the temporal depths of social life and a “weakening” of the social bonds occur. In the most general terms, these are considered to be effects of the dynamics of modernity, although precise interpretations vary considerably in terms of their socio-historical explanations. Looking at the history of social theory, we find here a theme which unites its critical tradition from the eighteenth century onwards, in particular that strand which runs from German idealism to the Frankfurt School.

Obviously, in critical theorizing, these tendencies are both diagnosed and opposed. It is precisely the task of critical theory to identify the conditions under which they came about or the forces that brought them about, with a view to challenging them. Rational choice theory basically provides for an inversion of that perspective. If it had a historical dimension (which most often it has not), it could broadly accept a Marxian-Weberian narrative of individualization and rationalization. But rather than deploring this development, it would celebrate this course of human history as the progress of reason.¹ At the same time, it takes license – again implicitly – to derive a general theory of human action and social life from this supposed historical tendency. However, this brief analysis of images of America has shown that such reasoning starts out from a quite exceptional situation, namely the founding of a society by – for a variety of reasons – “disembedded” people.

¹ But then it may be the cunning of reason rather than its progress of which we find evidence here. From the middle of the twentieth century onwards, we find the earlier European view of America partially confirmed when, even if no overall individualist-rationalist way of life emerges in America, then at least its intellectual foundations proliferate at – predominantly – US universities.

OF WORDS AND WORLDS

The diagnosis of an increasing rationalization and individualization of the social world is a workable hypothesis for sociological inquiry, even though a complex and difficult one. It would have to be tested by research in comparative-historical sociology.¹ In contrast, the presupposition that it is possible to analyze human social life as if its basic units were rational individuals is a statement of basic social ontology, or of “social metaphysics” (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991). It would have to be judged in terms of its adequacy, necessity and consequences.

Starting out from the latter, the observations at the beginning of this chapter were meant to demonstrate that the application of rational choice reasoning leads to an impoverishment of social theory. A wide variety of registers of social and political philosophy are reduced to the application of instrumental rationality by individual human beings. Sometimes this step is justified in terms of an increase in the consistency of theoretical elaboration. However, the differentiation within the field of rational choice theorizing between doves and hawks shows that such consistency has indeed not been achieved. Crucial questions have always remained open to a variety of different answers.

If the consequences cannot be considered as unequivocally desirable, then the case for rational choice theory would have to be made in terms of its empirical adequacy. If the world were populated by rational choosers, it would certainly have to be described and analyzed in terms of rational choice theory. An analysis of existing discourses about moral-political evaluation, along the lines of the comparative cultural metaphysics hinted at above, would show that this is far from being the common way in which human beings justify their actions. In addition, comparative analyses of disputes and controversies in social and political life also reveal the variety of forms of justification that are actually applied (Lamont and Thévenot, 2000).

This leads us to the case for the necessity of the rational choice approach. The brief historical analysis of “contexts of discovery” resulted in the observation

¹ This issue can obviously not be pursued here. Let it just be noted that approaches that see modernity strongly in terms of the destruction of “traditions,” that is, of the withering away of common registers of moral-political evaluation, tend to underestimate the human ability to re-create richer forms of social life, even after crises. This is a theme insistently put forward by Hans Joas (1996a, 1996b), for example.

that rational choice theory is a state of emergency thinking. It applies either in situations of violent strife within a given social order, or in situations of founding an order without common ground. The two kinds of situations are indeed not entirely distinct. Hobbes transformed an analysis of conflict into a hypothetical rationale for the founding of an order. And the French Revolution was the attempt at founding an order that turned into violent strife. The problem being addressed is the lack of common cultural resources – or, in the terminology used throughout this chapter, of a common register of moral-political evaluation – to deal with a socio-political situation. Individualist rationality is then proposed as some kind of bottom-line on which everybody can agree – or at least would be willing to agree to end a dispute.¹

It is in this sense that rational choice theory provides the default mode of social theorizing – and it has a value and a place among the modes of social theorizing on this very ground. However, the social world is neither in a state of permanent crisis and strife nor in a condition of continuous change of such dimensions that everything is always uncertain and in question. In most situations most of the time, much more than such a very limited repertoire of evaluation is available to human beings in order for them successfully to “go on.” Only a social theory that remains sensitive to the richness of those repertoires will be able to understand social life.

There is even more at stake than “mere” understanding. The adoption of a rational choice perspective in situations in which richer repertoires are indeed available is not just a matter of description or analysis. It is an alteration of the situation, in the sense described above. By means of redescription, it aims at turning that situation into one in which individual human beings make means – ends decisions on the basis of a conscious preference ordering. In other words, it suggests reading a situation as one of deep crisis, distrust and lack of common resources, in which a default mode then would need to be mobilized, when in fact there may be no such crisis at all and common resources may be abundantly available. If successful in persuading the actors themselves of such an interpretation, the rational choice approach would provide the ground for its own application. But the price to be paid would be the loss of those common resources.

¹ As doves of rationalism have recently argued: “In the absence of strong environmental constraints, we believe that rational choice is a weak theory, with limited predictive power. The theory of rational choice is most powerful in contexts where choice is limited” (Satz and Ferejohn, 1994, p. 72). The authors, however, move from that insight to arguing for the compatibility of rationalism with “structuralism,” without considering the criticism the latter approach has encountered over the past twenty years.

The rational choice approach is the bird which social theorists will always have in hand. But out there in the social world there are many other animals, and social theory should not stop striving to grasp them, unless forced by necessity.

Thanks are due to Heidrun Friese, David Lambourn and Falk Reckling for helpful comments and suggestions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BAKER, Keith M., 1975, *Condorcet: From natural philosophy to social mathematics*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- BOLTANSKI, Luc, 1990, *L'amour et la justice comme compétences. Trois essais de sociologie de l'action*, Paris, Métailié.
- BOLTANSKI, Luc & Thévenot, Laurent, 1991, *De la justification. Les économies de la grandeur*, Paris, Gallimard.
- BRIAN, Éric, 1994, *La mesure de l'État : Administrateurs et géomètres au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Michel.
- BURKE, Edmund, 1993 [1790], *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. L. G. Mitchell, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- CASTORIADIS, Cornelius, 1990, *Le monde morcelé : Les carrefours du labyrinthe III*, Paris, Seuil.
- DESROSÈRES, Alain, 1998, *The Politics of Large Numbers: A history of statistical reasoning*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- ELSTER, Jon, 1986, "Introduction", in J. Elster (ed.) *Rational Choice*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- ENGELS, Friedrich, (1958 [1857]), *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- HOBBS, Thomas (1962 [1651]), *Leviathan*, ed. Plamenatz, London, Fontana.
- JOAS, Hans, 1996a, *The Creativity of Action*, Cambridge, Polity.
- JOAS, Hans, 1996b, *The Genesis of Values*, Cambridge, Polity.
- LAMONT, Michele & THÉVENOT, Laurent (eds), 2000, *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology: Politics and repertoires of evaluation in France and the United States*, New York, Cambridge University Press.
- LAWRENCE, David H., 1962, "The spirit of place", in A. Arnold (ed.) *The Symbolic Meaning: The uncollected versions of studies in classic American literature*, Fontwell, Centaur Press.
- LAWRENCE, David H., 1987 [1926], *The Plumed Serpent (Quetzalcoatl)*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- RAWLS, John, 1970, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- RAWLS, John, 1993, *Political Liberalism*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- RORTY, Richard, 1989, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- TAYLOR, Charles, 1989, *Sources of the Self: The making of modern identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- TAYLOR, Charles, 1995, "Irreducibly social goods", in Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

Opening Gift

- SATZ, Debra & FERREJOHN, John, 1994, “Rational choice and social theory”, *The Journal of Philosophy*, 91(2), p. 71–87.
- TÖNNIES, Ferdinand, 1922, *Kritik der öffentlichen Meinung*, Berlin, Springer.
- WAGNER, Paul, 1994, *A Sociology of Modernity. Liberty and Discipline*, London, Routledge.
- WAGNER, Paul, 2000, *Theorizing Modernity: Inescapability and attainability in social theory*, London, Sage.
- WEBER, Alfred, 1925, *Die Krise des modernen Staatsgedankens in Europa*, Stuttgart and Berlin, DVA.
- WILLIAMS, Raymond, 1961, *The Long Revolution*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL FACTS: SELF, OBJECTS AND ACTION AS PRODUCTS OF RECIPROCITY AND COOPERATION IN CONSTITUTIVE PRACTICES

Anne Warfield Rawls

A group of scholars gathered at Cerisy-la-Salle Normandy in May 2015 to consider whether a social theory that addresses morality and justice in our modern age is possible. Various attempts to articulate such a theory have failed over the past century and many believe it is not possible. We were asked to consider whether the problem is with theory itself – or merely with the particular types of theory that have been put forward so far – and if so to suggest alternatives (Caillé, Chaniel, Dufoix, Vandenberghe, 2018). I argued that a viable theory has been around – at least in outline – for a long time, but that a strong tendency to treat the individual, meaning and social facts as durable and/or natural had prevented an understanding of that theory. The social facts in question (including the individual self) are actually quite fragile, which has significant implications for moral theory. That popular approaches privilege the individual, along with positivist illusions about social objects and meaning, in ways that are Eurocentric is also problematic. What we seek is a theory that respects diversity and difference, does not impose unwanted modern western moral standards on well-ordered undifferentiated societies, but still addresses issues of freedom, equality and justice.

In clearing the ground for considering the possibility that we already have a moral theory that meets these requirements, I focus on Durkheim's argument that *social labor* becomes increasingly differentiated as modern societies diversify: that such differentiation is one of the hallmarks of modernity; that differentiation changes the way social facts are made, and, that as a consequence the moral requirements a society must meet also change. It follows that theory itself must change to accommodate these social and moral changes. It is my position that the theory that makes the needed changes has existed since 1893. However, assumptions about the composition of social life that treat social objects as durable and/or given and meaning as ideal – while overlooking the need to continually

achieve the meaning and coherence of individuals, social objects and meaning – have obscured the relevance of this theory to moral questions.

As Durkheim made it, the argument rests on the premise that mutual-cooperation in the achievement of social facts is increasingly situated and practice-based as societies become more diverse and differentiated. This change is the hallmark of modernity. Social theory, however, has persisted in interpreting his argument as if it were focused on durable social facts, symbols and ideals. It is not. Durkheim's argument has also been treated as if it were directed to the *economic division of labor* that came with the Industrial Revolution. Durkheim's concern, however, was with the new divisions of labor that were occurring across the entire social spectrum: *divisions of social labor* – not just a new division of economic functions.

For Durkheim, the industrial revolution was part of a larger process of differentiation with far-reaching effects that was producing new social forms of practice in every social domain, including sciences and occupations. The new forms of practice imposed new social and moral requirements. Most importantly, these new forms of social practice *do not require consensus*, as the social facts and practices of more traditional and homogeneous societies do. Therefore, they thrive on diversity and innovation (a proposal that social theory has ignored). Without the development of the new social forms Durkheim described, lack of consensus in contemporary social life would have made for the kind of chaos that many theorists have said we do have.

For Durkheim, what was striking was the degree of order, meaning and morality modern societies achieve without consensus. He argued not only that the practical and moral requirements of these societies are consistent with the ideas of individual freedom, equality and justice, but that the new differentiated forms of sociality in the modern era had produced these new ideas about individualism and morality, rather than the other way round. The problem with the arguments of the classical moralists, he argued, is that they began with these new ideas – as if they did not have a social origin and social requirements – and then tried to explain moral/social requirements on the basis of a conception of the individual that was created by the new form of sociality/morality – *which is circular argument*.

Misunderstanding this relationship between individualism and the social processes that created the idea, and putting the individual first as a consequence, Durkheim argues, has mired moral philosophy and economics in relativism and circularity, and left social theory looking for new sources of consensus that we

don't need. This contributes to contradiction and moral relativism, because it treats cultural forms, language and symbols, as durable givens instead of recognizing their fragile and constitutive character as differentiated modern forms of social practice that need to be created continually by participants in social interaction.

Durkheim argued that this new constitutive form of social practice and its requirements should be the focus of a new sociological study of morality that he called *Sociology*. The new discipline would replace classical moralism by situating the study of moral duties and obligations within the context of those social practices that are the origin of the new moral duties. In other words, sociology would focus on modern forms of the social and do so empirically.

It was in his first book, *De la Division du Travail Social (The Division of Social Labor)*¹ in 1893 that Durkheim made two important distinctions on which the new discipline of sociology and its scientific approach to studies of justice would rest. *The first*, a distinction between beliefs and concrete practices (and with regard to the latter, between ritual and ordinary constitutive practices), appears throughout the book. *The second*, is a distinction made in the Introduction, between classic individualist and rationalist approaches to moral questions, which Durkheim considered wrong and misleading in principle, and his own approach – beginning with the social and its requirements – that he called sociology. Durkheim's innovative conception of social facts (including the individual as a social fact) as fragile achievements constituted in social interaction (social relations), rests on these distinctions. Based on these distinctions he made a new moral argument in the body of the text: that modernity only works when its underlying justice requirements are met. The argument rests on the practical necessity to constantly create social facts cooperatively.

Durkheim's Introduction, in which he laid out the foundation for his moral argument and empirical approach to the study of social fact making, was removed from the Second Edition in 1902. Since then the book has been read without benefit of his framing arguments. The distinction between organic and mechanical solidarity in the body of the text has no apparent relevance to his moral argument without the Introduction. The loss of his arguments against classical rationalism and idealism is also problematic and his theory is often assessed in the very terms he rejected. Durkheim's proposal for a scientific study of the need

¹ The title was translated into English as *The Division of Labor in Society*, which supports the misinterpretation of the argument that has been so problematic. As a consequence, I prefer to refer to the book as the title should have been translated – which emphasizes its focus on social differentiation.

for justice in modernity does not work without his critique of individualism and his proposal that all social facts – including collective representations – need to be continually created, and that this is necessarily done differently in traditional and modern social contexts. Complaints that his view of morality is inconsistent and that he is a moral relativist are a consequence of not grasping the distinction between the two social forms and their corresponding moral requirements.

My discussion of Durkheim intersects with the argument of a book I am writing titled *The Structure of Social Facts* – which treats the collaborative making of social facts as the primary social phenomenon. My position is that explaining the possibility of sensemaking and the work of coordinating social orders, both rest on an explanation of social fact making: and, that this explanation grounds the moral argument we seek. The allusion to Talcott Parsons' 1937 book *The Structure of Social Action* is intentional: one objective being to correct mistakes Parsons made in his interpretation of Durkheim, another is to render social facts more fully interactional and dependent on mutual cooperation, with the aim of finally achieving a viable theory of social facts, and on that foundation erecting a viable theory of social justice.

The paper of mine distributed before the conference covers some of the same ground. However, that paper emphasized the contemporary development of the social fact argument in studies of social interaction by Garfinkel, Goffman and Sacks: noting for instance, that Garfinkel's objective in collaborating with Parsons from 1959–1964 was to render Action Theory more fully interactional (see Garfinkel, [1962] 2019). Here, I focus on establishing Durkheim's role (and by extension the role of Marcel Mauss) in grounding the approach to social facts as fragile ongoing situated accomplishments which these contemporary interactionists built upon. I also take up Durkheim's critique of Kant in the Introduction to *The Division*. Durkheim's anti-Utilitarian stance is well known, but, he is often mistakenly considered a Kantian (or Neo-Kantian), which obscures both his social fact argument and the coherence of his proposal to study morality sociologically.

In my view, Durkheim takes a revolutionary new position that puts the requirements of social fact making at the center of the new Sociology he advocated. In so doing, he overturns both Utilitarian and Kantian thinking – moving in a direction analogous to the one Wittgenstein would begin to take shortly after World War I. The sociology and social theory that emerge are entirely new in ways that require readers to abandon many preconceptions. I explain the importance of this, and its connection to Garfinkel, Goffman

and Sacks in a book that also reproduces Durkheim's original introduction (Rawls, 2019).

In Durkheim's view, there are no shared ideas, ideals, or symbols in a modern differentiated society in which constitutive practices have come to predominate, unless and until people make them collaboratively. Even then, the process of giving them meaning is a flexible and constant one of placing them into ongoing interactions in which one clear meaning emerges – and new meanings are constantly created – through their cooperative placement in ongoing sequences of constitutive practice. The purpose of moral requirements is to make this creation of shared ideas (social facts) possible by setting rules and expectations for making them and obligations to those rules/expectations. If social facts are treated as already given and/or durable (as they are in most social theory), this argument about modernity makes no sense.¹

Additionally, because Durkheim's argument that consensus is no longer necessary in diverse modern societies was misunderstood, and the meaning of concepts/symbols continues to be treated as given and durable (making ambiguity and indexicality perennial problems), his argument about morality has often been taken to mean that authority and consensus define morality – a relativist argument that would support a broad range of unfair societies including those with totalitarian governments.

This is how I was initially taught Durkheim, but, for Durkheim, modernity worked a different way. Without a need for consensus, morality involves commitment only to those conditions necessary to make social facts together – which he called justice. Authority and consensus are problems when they do not align with this new justice requirement. The social order that defines morality in modernity thus comes from the bottom up (driven by the requirements of constitutive practices): Only governments that succeed in “translating” the requirements of these underlying practices into a supportive framework of justice can survive.

¹ The conception of durable symbolic meaning supported by ritual practices still works for more homogeneous societies, however, which explains the popularity of this misconception in anthropology. The big problem occurs when theories that originate in anthropology are brought back into sociology which is engaged in studying modern societies in which meaning is not achieved the same way anymore. Then we get people worrying about the loss of meaning and trying to reestablish consensus – instead of realizing that we have a new way of making meaning that really works quite well – and that meaning has not been lost at all. The misconception has serious consequences.

I

In elaborating these issues, I borrow the phrase “slow theory” from Ilana Silber’s (2018) talk earlier in the conference week. Ilana urged us to resist the imperatives of the moment and stay true to problems that survive the test of time. In Durkheim’s argument, and the interactional social fact lineage that developed from it, we already have a theory that does just that. In that spirit I tell the story of a collection of scholars who have been working on a theory and persisting against individualism and the problems that follow from it for more than 120 years – refusing to compromise in the face of constant opposition, misunderstanding and neglect. The story begins with Durkheim’s distinction between ways of making social facts in traditional and modern societies. The position was elaborated by his student Marcel Mauss in 1925 in *The Gift*; picked up by Talcott Parsons and taken to the US in the 1930s, and then passed on by Parsons to his student Harold Garfinkel in 1946-1947, who passed it on again to their colleague Erving Goffman in the early 1950s; and then finally Garfinkel and Goffman passed it to their student Harvey Sacks between 1959 and 1964. The lineage is an interesting and largely unexamined one.

Unlike most social theories that treat social facts as if they exist in a kind of cultural substrate (as norms, concepts, beliefs, symbols, values or identities), which once created could just go on existing, Durkheim argues that social facts, even in traditional societies, need to be created again-and-again at regular intervals through the concrete performance of ritual and/or ordinary constitutive practices. The big difference between traditional and modern societies is that the frequency with which social facts need to be created increases until that creation is required again every next time people interact. In *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* ([1912] *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 1914), Durkheim demonstrated with detailed (secondary) anthropological materials how social facts are made through ritual, and argued for the priority of that process over beliefs and ideas, even in religious ritual. It was the empirical processes of ritual that created the ideas in the first place, he argued, giving symbols meaning, rather than the other way round. The consequences for social theory of even just that part of his theory would have been revolutionary had it been understood (Rawls, 2009).

Unfortunately, interpretations of *The Division* have typically been simplistic and functionalist, while the *Elementary Forms* was treated as a separate idealist

and psychological argument. Even Parsons' effort to champion Durkheim was damaging to the lineage because in defending *The Division* he blamed misunderstandings of Durkheim on what he called the radical "idealism" of the *Elementary Forms*. This further obscured the social fact argument Durkheim was actually making because that argument as he made it in *The Division* is the same as the later argument: that practices come before and create shared ideas. The arguments are not different – and neither is idealist. Nevertheless, the two books have been read as if they made entirely different arguments and the later book was dismissed in sociology (while it was more influential, but equally misunderstood in anthropology). Thus, Durkheim's attempt to clarify his position in the later book, ironically, resulted in the elimination of his social fact argument altogether, Parsons' attempt to champion Durkheim continued the misinterpretation, and *The Division* continued to be read without benefit of its principal argument.

In *The Division* Durkheim argued that in modern societies – in which work becomes differentiated and populations diversify – the work of making social facts needs much more constant attention and much more equality between participants than it had in traditional society. The lack of consensus in modernity means that more cooperation and reciprocity are required to create social facts each next time people interact – while the social facts themselves remain concrete and particular, have a short life, and belong only to limited spheres of social activity – rather than being generalized and conceptualized in a broad *collective conscience*, as most of Durkheim's interpreters suppose. Durkheim's principal examples of this in *The Division* involve discussion of scientific and occupational practices (in Book III and the Second Preface), which through their empirical details in interaction create the shared ideas that comprise the "occupation" or "science" in question. If Durkheim is right, the tendency of social theory to focus on concepts and beliefs as durable ideals that secure meaning and order is responsible for the difficulty explaining modernity, its moral challenges, which explains the problematic status of social theory today.

The "slow theory" I am sketching, begins with Durkheim's argument in *The Division* that changes in the requirements for social fact making in diverse modern social contexts require corresponding changes in the form of morality. The change from ritual social fact making, and consensus based social facts, to a form of constitutive practice that does not depend on either ritual or consensus, requires a corresponding change from a commitment to the beliefs produced by a given ritual, to a commitment to the underlying reciprocity conditions of a

practice and its participants/members (There is a parallel to Garfinkel's (1963) argument that Trust Conditions are a requirement for social fact making in modernity). Such constitutive practices require cooperation and reciprocity on the spot, which not only completely changes moral requirements, but also changes the location of morality.

In modern societies that lack broad consensus, morality can no longer be located in the consensus of a group and its beliefs, symbols and rituals. Instead, the new morality resides in the constitutive practices and commitment to them required to make the new form of social facts. In societies that have highly developed sciences and occupations this loss of consensus is a positive development. Morality becomes equivalent to the prerequisites for making social facts on the spot – which sets social fact making free from beliefs. According to Durkheim, this is what allows modern science and occupations to innovate (an argument he also made in his Lectures on *Pragmatism and Sociology*, 1913-14). Durkheim's discussion in the *Elementary Forms*, of rituals performed by tribal groups without elaborate belief systems made a similar point: in the absence of shared beliefs, people use concrete practices to constitute social facts. Before comprehensive belief systems develop, and again after they erode, this cooperative use of constitutive practice predominates. The problem is that in the consensus-based societies between these extremes, the importance of interactional practices is often hidden by an overlay of ritual, belief and symbol, which in turn generate the false assumptions that have made so much trouble for social theory.

Treating belief based (consensus based) orders of social facts as primary, led social theory to focus on the wrong question (“How are stable belief systems and social boundaries maintained?”), instead of asking: “What are the necessary conditions for making social facts?”

Durkheim's answer with regard to the importance and primacy of constitutive practices appears in both *The Division* and *The Elementary Forms*. The overall message that modernity is a resilient social form that can produce a great deal of solidarity, justice and freedom without consensus, belief, or ritual, rests from the beginning on his empirical claim that social facts can continually be cooperatively created on the spot. Treating the two books as making two completely different – even conflicting – arguments has entirely obscured this point.

Durkheim's position was further elaborated by Mauss in 1924 in *The Gift*, which documented the constitutive processes involved in “gift exchange.” Although the materials analyzed come from traditional societies, like Durkheim, Mauss offered his analysis of the constitutive *three part obligation* involved in gift

exchange (the obligation “to give, to accept, and to return” that constitutes the exchange as a “gift”) as a model for understanding that *modern* economic processes also involve reciprocal obligations that are constitutive of their social facts.¹

Talcott Parsons championed Durkheim in an attempt to overcome the individualism in American sociology and establish a new, less individualistic and more sociological theory. In Parsons’ (1938) view the individualism inherent in the classic positions of August Comte, Herbert Spencer, and the early Chicago School had damaged social theory and made it irrelevant to research (leading to problematic splits between Qualitative/Quantitative and Micro/Macro approaches in sociology). Unfortunately, Parsons did not manage to eliminate the individualism in his own position – although he seems to have understood why it was necessary to do so. That Parsons understood the problem, in spite of his failure to achieve a solution, helps to explain the relationship between Parsons and his student Harold Garfinkel (see Garfinkel, [1962] 2019).

Garfinkel first took up the challenge to articulate a new dimension of social facts theoretically in 1946, in a paper on Social Action Theory titled “Some Reflections on Action Theory and the Theory of Social Systems” (written for a seminar with Parsons). Garfinkel began empirical studies of social facts in 1947.² The challenge was passed on and taken up in the early 1950s by Erving Goffman who called this domain of social fact making an “Interaction Order” and referred to what he called a “working consensus” as essential moral grounding. Garfinkel called constitutive practices “ethno-methods” and argued that a foundation of “Trust Conditions,” much like Durkheim’s justice requirement, was necessary for constitutive practices to work.

Finally, Harvey Sacks, a student of both Garfinkel and Goffman, extended the position to the sequential structure of situated acts of talk. Working together from 1960–1964 Garfinkel and Sacks developed a theory of communication and talk as a constitutive practice with reciprocity obligations very like the ones Mauss documented for *The Gift* (the obligation to speak, to listen, to respond – which Sacks [1992] referred to as “listening and hearing obligations”). The social object changes with each next response and belongs to the sequence that completes it. The fragility of meaning, and the implications for the selves involved, bind all participants to the underlying moral commitments that meaning making and self rest on. In Sacks’ work – known as Conversation Analysis – mutual intelligibility

¹ See Mallard 2011 for a discussion of “The Gift” and War Reparations and Chantal (2020) for a Maussian synthesis of my own argument.

² See “The Red as an Ideal Object,” Garfinkel ([1947] 2012).

requires cooperative use of constitutive practices and an exchange of responses (comprising a sequence) to achieve mutual intelligibility. This approach to communication, or talk, as orienting shared sequential expectations and mutual obligations to cooperate – that hold across many situations – has been documented in many settings and is becoming important not only in sociology and linguistics, but in studies of technology (Luff, Hindmarsh and Heath, 2000), scientific work (Lynch, 1985; 1993), and the human-computer interface (Suchman, 2007). In Information Theory, the approach rivals cybernetic and semantic approaches (Garfinkel, [1953] 2008; Rawls and Mann, 2015).

This history is important because these streams of social theory are typically considered separate or even opposed to one another. It is my position that they comprise one long “slow” and determined attempt to argue for one comprehensive way of understanding social facts – as needing to be cooperatively achieved over-and-over again in interaction – and that there has been more collaboration and reciprocity between the various contributors to this approach than is generally realized. The position that emerges solves the problem of individualism. It shows reason to be a constant social accomplishment, offers a brilliant and versatile theory of talk and communication, and treats social fact making in modernity as an inherently moral enterprise that requires reciprocity, cooperation, equality, freedom and competence in the use of shared constitutive practices to succeed. But the original idea that these orders of constitutive practice can be assembled independently of external constraint and consensus, and that they create new moral imperative was Durkheim’s.¹

II

The distinctions made by Durkheim in *The Division* (between belief and concrete practice and between traditional summary *vs* constitutive rules) are the point of departure for crafting this new theory of modernity and determining its moral requirements – and they find parallels in the work of Garfinkel, Goffman and Sacks. The reasons why Durkheim’s argument was

¹ That over time oppression can affect the expectations people have is the subject of my book (co-authored with Waverly Duck) *Tacit Racism* (2020). The relationship is not one of constraint however. Rather what we found the oppressed doing was to reconfigure the field of social expectations (and relations) so as to neutralize the oppression.

misunderstood in the first place have therefore also played a role in creating misconceptions of the contemporary interactional work in this lineage. I am often asked why I write about Durkheim if I am interested in Garfinkel, Goffman and Sacks – as if there was no possible connection between them. In my view, they form a coherent lineage. Both Goffman and Garfinkel referenced Durkheim at critical points, while Parsons' pattern variable argument was an attempt to incorporate interaction into a theory that Parsons said was inspired by Durkheim (among others). In the end, however, it is the comprehensive empirical approach to *Social Facts* and social fact making – with its promise of overcoming individualism, ethnocentrism, and delivering a social theory of justice that respects diversity that interests me – and that begins with Durkheim's neglected argument.

Most consequential for current scholarship has been the loss of Durkheim's original Introduction to *The Division*, which I recently republished in French (Rawls, 2019). In the 30 pages that were removed from *The Division* in 1902, Durkheim had discussed the need to establish Sociology as a science of morality; analyzed problems with moral philosophies that begin with the individual and/or human reason; and proposed a sociology of modernity founded on the constant need to cooperatively make social facts together (including the individual and reason), and on the moral imperatives that follow from that need to cooperate closely in doing so.

At the end of the first section of the missing Introduction, Durkheim had posed the question whether, if the advance of the division of labor effects morality, it could itself be a moral imperative? Is it a moral duty to embrace the division of social labor, he asks, and become more and more specialized? His answer to that question is important in the context of current controversies about the possibility of a theory of morality. The question as Durkheim posed it, contrasted classical philosophical notions of duty with the idea of social obligation to the requirements of social fact making as a duty – coming down on the side of the social. But, in the shortened version of the Introduction that was available in most copies of *The Division* after 1902, Durkheim's answer to this question is missing.¹ The five pages that follow the question in editions after 1902 are from the concluding section of the Introduction – which creates the misconception that he gave a very different answer to the question.

¹ It was preserved in the 1933 English edition as an appendix, and in Italian editions, in its original position, but in indented text.

Durkheim's actual *answer*¹ involves a critique of both Kant and Utilitarian moral theory and concludes that the social division of labor in a differentiated modern context cannot work properly without justice. This sets up the much misunderstood argument of Book III, that modern society exists in an "abnormal form" because it lacks justice. This answer distances Durkheim's argument from positions that privilege the individual. Instead, Durkheim gives priority to the requirements for making social facts, including the individual, in a particular kind of society. Instead of privileging the western sense of justice, Durkheim maintains that *once the process of differentiation begins* it increases the need for cooperative processes of social fact making to the point that a moral obligation not only to embrace specialization, but to establish justice and equality becomes a requirement. This means that for societies that have not diversified and differentiated, justice is not a requirement. Those societies require consensus – not justice. To insist on justice in a well-ordered society that is still based on consensus would be both ethnocentric and unworkable.² The forms of differentiated social life and constitutive practice that require justice and create the idea of it must develop first, and whether they have and how they have is an empirical question.

In beginning his critique of moral philosophy, Durkheim contrasted the method of argument characteristic of philosophy and economics with the empirical approach to social facts that he proposed. Classic thinkers did not focus on empirical "facts" and observations because they did not expect to find moral ideals exhibited in actual social arrangements: A problem known as "deriving ought from is." Instead, they worked from first principles. Durkheim, by contrast, was not interested in first principles involving moral ideals or individual reason – which he considered to be the creation of social practices in any case (beginning with them thus resulting in circular arguments) – rather he was interested in the conditions that make social fact making possible in the first place. These conditions are both empirical and moral. Therefore, arguments about the moral character of these conditions can and should be based on empirical observation. Because previous moral theories put ideals

¹ Durkheim, p. 435-436 in the 1933 English translation, p. 144-145 in Rawls (2019).

² In the introduction to *The Law of Peoples* John Rawls (1999, p. 3-4) employs a conception of "well-ordered peoples" to include societies that are not "liberal" but nevertheless deserve inclusion in a Society of Peoples. If they are well-ordered they should be respected and not interfered with. This idea is further elaborated in Part II, where J. Rawls discusses recognizing "nonliberal peoples as equal participating members in good standing in the Society of Peoples" (Rawls, 1998, p. 59, and see also p. 75 sq.).

before the conditions for their creation, they had missed the relevance of the empirical.

Furthermore, because Kant did not recognize society as a need, Durkheim says that he was reduced to deriving all duties toward others from the concept of individual reason. Kant's idea of a *kingdom of ends* for instance, which is in some sense a social idea, nevertheless begins with the individual. If the primary duties come from obligations to others and not from obligations to ourselves, however, then according to Durkheim (1933, p. 413), Kant's argument is backwards. Establishing this requires establishing empirically that the rational and mutually intelligible character of social beings and social fact making depends on cooperative social relations with one another as a constitutive condition in the first place.

There is a further point that must also be established. As Durkheim argues (1933, p. 414), even if it could be established that persons depend on others, or on society, that does not yet make that dependence moral. In fact, as he points out, the Stoic philosophers argued that it was a duty to struggle *against* such dependency. Many contemporary social thinkers also take this position, conceptualizing an individual locked in a battle for freedom and agency against society. What is required is to establish the moral character of the dependency of the individual on social arrangements and Durkheim poses himself this challenge. He does so in a way that lays the grounding for Goffman's (1959) *Presentation of Self* argument and Garfinkel's (1967, chapter V) discussion of the presentation of Gender. The overall point is that the highest moral goods (the individual and reason) rest on this dependency.

What Durkheim proposes is a new type of intellectual inquiry. There are, as he points out, no established principles of morality for him to begin with. Principles that some might argue are well established continue to be debated and contested. But none of the existing principles would support his idea that duties to social cohesion supersede duties to the individual. Furthermore, no established formula could fit the case Durkheim is arguing for because, in his view, the division of labor requires being understood as a social *process* – on its own terms in empirical details – and none of the existing doctrines (in his day) had taken the empirical into consideration in a systematic way, let alone in detail.

It was also accepted practice for classical moralists to explain a lack of fit between their principles and empirical facts with the argument that actual human relations always fall short of moral ideals. Because Durkheim treats moral imperatives as having their origins in actual empirical conditions for social

fact making, however, he cannot accept this explanation. From his perspective, the relationship between the two must be close and empirically demonstrable. There should be no lack of fit. The social needs that give rise to moral obligations are actual and not ideal. Furthermore, because morality in Durkheim's sense involves close coordination between people, it must have visible markers that participants can use to interpret and coordinate the moral character and shared meaning of social activities. These can be studied empirically.

Durkheim also points out that the philosophical prejudice against empirical facts does not stop philosophers from resorting to empirically based opinion. Even arguments based on ideas like “duty” make key assumptions that are tangled up with matters of fact, without any systematic observation of the relevant facts. In other words, even philosophical arguments that claim to be based on reason alone sneak in empirical evidence. The problem with that, as Durkheim (1933, p. 411) described it, is not only that classical moralists used empirical examples unscientifically, while also criticizing empirical evidence, but that “the facts which are used as a foundation for ethics are those duties generally admitted or at least admitted by those with whom one is arguing.” In other words, they represent the empirical experiences that any particular philosopher has happened to have. This elevates personal opinion and social perspective over rigorous empirical observation, rendering the resulting arguments ethnocentric and circular.

Finally, because the classical moralists and Kant in particular, limited consideration to duties that can be derived from ideas of the individual or reason in this way, they overlooked those essential social duties that are necessary for the cooperative creation of the rational being (the duties Garfinkel and Goffman would focus on) and their location in social interaction. In discussing this limitation with regard to Kant, Durkheim says (1933, p. 412):

“Shall one say that under these conditions [Kant's conditions] human society becomes impossible, that would bring up considerations extraneous to the Kantian imperative.”

By contrast, for Durkheim, *human society is a necessary condition for the achievement of the social individual* and, therefore, conditions that make society impossible would also make the social individual and its ability to reason impossible – thereby violating moral requirements.

In criticizing Kant's (1783) categorical imperative, Durkheim argues (1933, p. 413) that treating the individual as an end in itself involves a contradiction. Because the individual rational being could not exist without the creative force of society, society is the primary good on which individuals depend for their own existence. *Kant's argument is backwards*. The existence of society requires individuals to treat themselves as means to an end (while treating either society or social cooperation as an end in itself – depending on whether they live in a modern or traditional society) and to make themselves subservient to the good of the cooperative whole.

In Durkheim's (1933, p. 3) view, Kant's attempt to explain charity and care in the context of the individual as an end in itself offers a particularly clear demonstration of the problematic character of his approach. Durkheim says:

“On the contrary, true charity, the one that consists in giving of oneself, necessarily implies that I subordinate my person to an end that surpasses me. I admit that this end may be the human person of others; it is nonetheless true that I cannot exalt the humanity of others unless I mortify it in myself, reducing it to the role of a means.”

There is a disconnect between the duties Kant describes and the actual duties of social persons. Durkheim reiterates the point (1933, p. 4):

“The duties that might be deduced from [Kant's ‘end in itself’]... in no way resemble those that really bind us to our fellow men; for the latter consist of obligations to be at the service of others...”¹

The progress of the division of labor was seen by some as setting the social being free from cultural constraints, while others saw it as destroying culture. Durkheim's proposal that the increasing division and specialization of social labor gives rise to a cooperative social order that in fundamental ways is responsive to moral requirements while it changes the moral character of what human life *should* be, was intended to *challenge both views*. The new social form of culture was producing a new need for, and possibility of, freedom and equality.

¹ In a modern society, I have argued, it also follows that there is a duty to become an autonomous being through commitment to constitutive practices.

Classical moralists could not see this because, in addressing the question of moral duties, they focused on the individual person (or reason), on individual liberty, and the respect due the individual person, as if these could exist before social cooperation. The tendency was to treat liberty as a quality belonging to natural individuals, rather than as a social/moral fact created through cooperative social relations. For Durkheim these priorities are backwards. All social facts (including individual liberty) are produced through cooperative social relations.¹ The conditions making the process possible are therefore *a primary good*. Furthermore, changes in the type of solidarity in a society produce changes in the social fact making processes in that society and the conditions necessary for making them. Insofar as we consider the individual and liberty to be moral ends, the social arrangements that make them possible are moral duties.

For Durkheim, individual liberty is very important. However, he argues that liberty is a social creation and therefore it is only possible in a social context. Furthermore, not all types of society will promote individual liberty. What he argues is that the constitutive practices of a highly differentiated and diverse society require both justice and liberty for participating individuals. Therefore, the division of social labor does become a moral imperative when a society becomes diverse and differentiated because *only* by treating commitments to these social practices as ends in themselves can we achieve liberty and justice for the individual in that social context. The big problem with modern society from Durkheim's perspective is that *we do not sufficiently treat the constitutive requirements of social practices as ends in themselves* – making the mistake of focusing on the individual and on concepts, symbols, and beliefs instead – and thereby fail to achieve a theory of individual liberty and justice that corresponds with and supports contemporary social reality.

¹ This is similar to Rousseau's point in *The Origins of Inequality* that morality begins with society. Durkheim acknowledged the debt to Rousseau in his Rousseau and Montesquieu (Durkheim, [1893] 1966).

CONCLUSION

The argument that results from this lineage is not a case of deriving “ought” from “is” in any conventional sense. Durkheim does not expect social arrangements to be perfectly moral, or to display a relationship to general moral principles. What they are expected to exhibit is an orientation toward immediate moral requirements. Goffman, Garfinkel and Sacks document this orientation through detailed analysis of orders of interaction and the troubles that result when reciprocity conditions are not achieved. The argument is a case of deriving ought from the *documented constitutive requirements* of actual social arrangements. If a social practice has constitutive requirements and one depends on that practice for existence as a human social self – and others depend on it in the same way – there is an obligation to meet those requirements.

Furthermore, if moral obligations relate to social needs in this way, they *must* be marked in visible/hearable ways, so that others can observe which requirements have been met and which have not. Making the orientation to rules/expectations visible is a basic part of sense and self making that makes it possible for participants to coordinate their activities in accord with constitutive practices, rules and expectations, and evaluate the responses and commitments of others. If constitutive requirements are not met, meaning and social fact making fail. It is the empirical markers of these constitutive requirements that Durkheim proposed to study. It is the empirical markers of these requirements, how they are typically met, and what happens when they are not met that Garfinkel, Goffman and Sacks delivered empirical studies of.

Because what is moral and marked as such is determined by social needs, not by abstract principles, morality varies as social needs vary. To the extent that social needs vary between traditional societies the result is moral relativity (although Durkheim argued that there are natural limits to the inequality traditional society would tolerate). But, in modernity moral relativity is reduced as the social requirements of constitutive practices in the division of social labor become more and more the same. Ironically, this happens as the particulars of identities, practices and beliefs become less and less the same. In other words, *the increasing specialization, diversity and differentiation of work, practice, and identity lead to a sameness in the underlying constitutive requirements of practices*. Consensus is a source of moral relativity. Losing the sameness of consensus generates conditions that require justice. The moral imperatives of the new social needs thus become

one big interconnected “is” that imposes one increasingly universal “ought” that Durkheim refers to as justice.

Ultimately, it is diversity that gives rise to a need for justice. In a diverse and differentiated society, the need for equality and inclusion is at its highest. When equal participation is not open to all a diverse society cannot function well – as can be seen in the persistent *fracturing of the United States* over issues of racial equality. In our research on Race and racism in the US, Waverly Duck and I (Rawls and Duck, 2020) documented that conditions of oppression, inequality and exclusion can lead to the formation of alternate sets of constitutive practices, the existence of which prevent mutual understanding across what we call Interaction Orders of Race. Without full equality and inclusion for everyone, a constitutive practice based society cannot function, encouraging the proliferation of both clashing constitutive orders of practice and nostalgic consensus based social forms – that also fail – because modern societies can no longer support consensus.

Durkheim’s great achievement, in my view, was to distinguish a type of social fact making that does not require consensus, from a traditional type that does require consensus. If we are to achieve an adequate theory of the social organization and moral requirements of diverse modern societies, we should understand this first. The distinction corresponds to the two sides of the contemporary US social divide. It is not a “war” between two different cultures as it is typically described – but rather, a clash between two entirely different ways of making the social facts of a culture in the first place: one way of making culture that requires homogeneity and consensus and one that does not.

In the first pages of *The Division* in its *Second Preface* of 1902, Durkheim referred to rules that are *summaries of the past actions of a people* or place – rules that hold by tradition. These are normative orders that can be broken (or deviated from) without disrupting social fact making – although deviations may be punished – and as normative orders they require consensus. The most important thing Durkheim did in my estimation was to distinguish these rules as “summaries” of tradition and consensus from what he called “constitutive rules” that define criteria for particular situated social fact making activities. Rules by summary are descriptive. Constitutive rules, on the other hand, are used to create social things (which he demonstrates at length in *The Elementary Forms*). They also self-sanction – meaning that action fails if it does not meet constitutive criteria. This is why the word “norms” is misleading in referring to constitutive practices. Norms are descriptive – not creative. Garfinkel’s (1963) “Trust Conditions,”

Goffman's (1959) "Working Consensus" and Sacks' "listening and hearing obligations" are all elaborations on this point.¹

Seen this way, modern occupations and sciences and their global reach hold solutions to important theoretical problems, but only on the condition that theories about modernity remain in close touch with the constitutive practices and interactional conditions of social fact making that comprise the moral and practical foundations of modern sociality. These conditions of equality and inclusion are a functional prerequisite for the creation of social individuals and the social facts with which social individuals reason, and must be taken into account.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- CAILLÉ, Alain, CHANIAL Philippe, DUFOIX, Stéphane & VANDENBERGHE, Frédéric (dir.), 2018, *Des sciences sociales à la science sociale. Fondements anti-utilitaristes*, coll. « La bibliothèque du Mauss », Lormont, Le Bord de l'eau.
- CHANIAL, Philippe, 2020, « La *Theory of Justice* d'Émile Durkheim selon Anne Rawls. De quelques bonnes raisons de ne pas désespérer de la sociologie », in *La Revue du MAUSS*, n°56, Paris, La Découverte.
- DURKHEIM, Émile, [1893] 1966, *Rousseau et Montesquieu précurseurs de la sociologie*, Paris, Librairie Marcel Rivière.
- DURKHEIM, Émile, 1893, *De la Division du Travail Social*, Paris, Alcan.
- DURKHEIM, Émile, 1902, *De la Division du Travail Social*, second Edition, Paris, Alcan.
- DURKHEIM, Émile, 1912, *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris, Alcan.
- DURKHEIM, Émile, [1912] 1914, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Chicago, Free Press.
- DURKHEIM, Émile, [1913-1914] 1955, *Pragmatisme et sociologie*, Paris, Vrin.
- DURKHEIM, Émile, [1913-1914] 1983, *Pragmatism and Sociology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- DURKHEIM, Émile, [1893] 1933, *The Division of Labor in Society*, Chicago, Free Press.
- GARFINKEL, Harold, 1946, *Some Reflections on Action Theory and the Theory of Social Systems*, unpublished manuscript in the Garfinkel Archive.
- GARFINKEL, Harold, [1947] 2012, "The Red as an Ideal Object", *Etnografia e ricerca qualitativa*, vol. 1, p. 19-31.
- GARFINKEL, Harold, [1953] 2008, *Toward a Sociological Theory of Information*, Boulder, Paradigm Publishers.
- GARFINKEL, Harold, [1962] 2019, *Parsons Primer*, Springer.
- GARFINKEL, Harold, 1963, "A Conception of, and Experiments with, 'Trust' as a Condition of Stable Concerted Actions", in O. J. Harvey [ed.], *Motivation and Social Interaction*, New York, Ronald Press, p. 187-238.
- GARFINKEL, Harold, 1967, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Englewood Cliffs NJ, Prentice Hall.
- GOFFMAN, Erving, 1959, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Chicago, Free Press.
- KANT, Immanuel, 1783, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*.

¹ The relationship between these arguments and John Rawls' "Two Concepts of Rules" is discussed in a *Special Issue of the Classical Issue of Sociology* in 2009.

- LUFF, Paul, HINDMARSH, Jon & HEATH, Christian, 2000, *Workplace Studies: recovering Work Practice and Informing System Design*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- LYNCH, Michael, 1985, *Art and Artifact in Laboratory Science: A Study of Shop Work and Shop Talk in a Research Laboratory*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- LYNCH, Michael, 1993, *Scientific Practice and Ordinary Action*, New York, Cambridge University Press.
- MALLARD, Grégoire, 2011, “The Gift Revisited: Marcel Mauss on War, Debt, and the Politics of Reparations”, *Sociological Theory*, 29(4), p. 225–247.
- MAUSS, Marcel, [1924] 1988, “Essai sur le don”, in *Sociologie et anthropologie*, Paris, PUF.
- MAUSS, Marcel, [1924] 1954, *The Gift. Form and Functions in archaic societies*, translated by I. Cunnison, London, Coehn & West.
- PARSONS, Talcott, 1937, *The Structure of Social Action*, Chicago, Free Press.
- PARSONS, Talcott, 1938, “The Role of Theory in Social Research”, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 3, p. 13–20.
- RAWLS, Anne, 2009, “Two Conceptions of Social Order: Constitutive Orders of Action, Objects, and Identities versus Aggregate Orders of Individual Action”, *Special Issue of the Journal of Classical Sociology*, 9(4), p. 500–520.
- RAWLS, Anne, 2018, « La structure des faits sociaux. Retour sur un argument durkheimien oublié » in Caillé, Alain, Chaniel Philippe, Dufoix Stéphane & Vandenberghe Frédéric (dir.), *Des sciences sociales à la science sociale. Fondements anti-utilitaristes*, coll. « La bibliothèque du Mauss », Lormont, Le Bord de l’eau, p. 325-337.
- RAWLS, Anne, 2019, *De La Division du Travail « Revisited » : Vers une Théorie Sociologique de la Justice*. Translated by Francesco Callegaro and Philippe Chaniel, Lormont, Le Bord de l’ Eau.
- RAWLS, Anne & WAVERLY, Duck, 2020, *Tacit Racism*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- RAWLS, Anne & MANN, David, 2015, “Getting Information Systems to Interact: The Social Fact Character of ‘Object’ Clarity as a Factor in Designing Information Systems”, *The Information Society*, 31(2), p. 175–192.
- RAWLS, John, 1999, *The Law of Peoples*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- SACKS, Harvey, 1992, *Lectures on Conversation, Vols. I & II*, edited by Gail Jefferson, Oxford, Blackwell.
- SILBER, Ilana, 2018, « Ponts dialogiques et alliances anti-utilitaristes », in Caillé, Alain, Chaniel Philippe, Dufoix Stéphane & Vandenberghe Frédéric (dir.), *Des sciences sociales à la science sociale. Fondements anti-utilitaristes*, coll. « La bibliothèque du Mauss », Lormont, Le Bord de l’eau, p. 339-352.
- SUCHMAN, Lucy, 2007, *Human Machine Reconfigurations: Plans and Situated Actions*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER

David Le Breton¹

“One must be a friend
for one’s friend
and return gift for gift
meet laughter with laughter
and falsehood with deceit”

Verse from the Scandinavian Edda,
Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*

THE GAME OF LIFE

Gift-giving is at the heart of the sociability of families, lovers or friends. It fosters relations of proximity where exchange comes naturally, most often without the least sense of indebtedness. It is practiced without ulterior motives in a context of reciprocity over time. To be always giving and perpetually in debt while receiving is a common feature of the sociability of emotional or spatial proximity. There is no mutual accounting. The exchange of jokes, laughter or smiles is part of this ordinary sociability that nurtures our connection to others. Based on the register of play, these exchanges blend into everyday life, discretely spicing it. They embody the game of life, a sort of pleasant narrow escape, a “gift of nothing,” as Jean Duvignaud (2007) would say. But the importance of this gift is measured by the extent of distress felt in its absence. Laughter marks an attachment to life or an inner strength in the face of adversity. By flouting the serious side of life, these exchanges improve relations, sustain them or bring them into being. In venturing beyond the serious, they also create bonds in a more incisive way. Sharing a moment of hilarity is akin to

¹ David Le Breton is Professor of Sociology at the University of Strasbourg (France), a member of the Institut Universitaire de France and the Institut des études avancées de l’Université de Strasbourg (USIAS). He is the author notably of *Rire : Une anthropologie du rieur* (Métailié) and *Sourire : Anthropologie d’une énigme* (Métailié, to be published). Author in English of *Sensing the World. An Anthropology of the Senses* (Bloomsbury).

sharing a moment of intimacy by uniting bodies in the same discreet break with more refined ways of being.

A jovial attitude gains (or deliberately seeks to gain) the appeal of an audience or individual by offering them humor, attention or pleasure. Laughter strengthens day-to-day sociability by creating moments of complicity. As Bergson reminds us:

“Several have defined man as an ‘animal which laughs’. They might equally well have defined him as an animal which is laughed at.”

1912, p. 3-4

Most often stories and jokes fly freely amongst family or friends, in the very flow of interactions, in the confidence and pleasure of shared sociability. They are uttered in the context of a friendly and joyful ambiance, unless serving to “lighten the mood” in a tense situation. The banterer often expects nothing from his listeners, beyond playing along and responding to his jokes. He takes for granted his own joviality and is content with the pleasure he takes at simply recounting or acting the life of the party. His sallies come naturally in the relationship. He gives of himself while giving cause for laughter.

Shared laughter, when not targeting others, conveys the generosity of sharing in the little things that give meaning to life. It is a squandering of time, not in the exchange of information or goods, but in the celebration of connection, a moment of jubilation in an economy of loss that creates an intense sense of unity. Laughter resides in the knowing how-to-be, the quality of relating. It yields no returns, has nothing to do with productivity or goods, and comes with no price or prize. Its purpose is precisely “just for laughs,” as children so aptly put it.

An amusing repartee often calls for intuitive dramatization. Someone preparing to share a funny story or anecdote recalibrates his attitude, primes the audience and prompts a rupture in the tonality of the conversation by creating a situation of expectancy (Le Breton, 2017). He might stand up or hit the table, cast a furtive, wide-eyed or inquisitive glance, raise his voice or loudly call out to someone... A humorous interaction unfolds through a series of intuitive rituals that build up to the amusing utterance. All eyes are on him. The way a joke or witty remark is delivered counts as much as its content. The pitch of the voice, its timbre and intensity, or the rhythm of speech change for an imitation, stuttering, grumbling or accent... The speaker emphasizes certain words, slows down or accelerates in the lead-up to the punchline, changes intonation to imitate

someone (a colleague, politician, neighbour...), takes on a falsetto or snobbish voice or exaggerated accent... One good trick is to recount a hilarious story with a dead-pan attitude that makes the story or punchline irresistible. The narrator embodies the story with his whole being, sometimes extravagantly acting out the roles of the characters. Mimics exaggerate features. Making faces is the surest way to elicit laughter with the least effort, even without the aid of a funny story. This requires a theme suited to the moment and interlocutors involved, otherwise it falls flat and elicits nothing more than an indulgent smile in response to many efforts made in vain.

RECEIVING HILARITY

The satisfaction in having invented or repeated a joke is not enough. An extra source of jubilation comes from sparking hilarity in the audience. The echo of laughter is needed to fully savor the moment and be thereby convinced of one's finesse. A witty remark or joke is inconceivable without a public. Laughter is a product of the group, even of chance, arising from shared circumstances. Someone watching or listening to comical material is less likely to laugh when alone than with others (Glenn, 2008). And when people laugh, it is often in anticipation of the shared hilarity of those around them. Solitary laughs are rare, often suspected of questionable or solipsist behavior, keeping their source of pleasure to themselves rather than sharing it. However, even alone, people sometimes laugh remembering a situation or remark, reliving an emotion or imagining the jubilation it will bring when recounted to others. "There are silly things I've done only because I knew it would be amusing to tell about later" (Guitry, 1947, p. 35). Even in this personal game, Guitry is invoking the gift, testing fate with his jokes for the pleasure of giving others the chance to hear his story. People sometimes laugh hearing a joke or verbal slip on the radio or television, or reading a passage of a novel on the train, where others may potentially take part.

Laughter is complicity, a source of fluidity in social relations. Contagious in a group setting, it ricochets from one individual to the next, even over something frivolous, because nobody really laughs for the exact same reasons. Where some find wit in a situation, joke or remark, others see a clumsy effort to charm the audience, but they still laugh in response to the narrator's awkward efforts.

They laugh in anticipation of the speaker's poor taste or second-rate story, at the valiant effort made to please, or at a colleague, known for his seriousness, laboriously trying to tell a joke. Laughter is always infinitely polysemic. Nobody laughs for exactly the same thing, even when apparently a temporary sense of communion prevails.

Laughter creates bonds between individuals, even among new acquaintances. Annie Dillard, raised by parents who "would have rather deprived us of Christmas than of a funny story," provides an example (1990, p. 79):

"Our parents kept a few select jokes up their sleeves – 'Archibald', for example – like fine wines reserved for special occasions. We listened to them, participated in these rare moments – three or four times in our lives – because circumstances had sent our father into a perfect state of bliss and he thus consented, from the precarious heights of his position, to throw himself into 'Archibald' [...] The story was long, absurdly funny, terribly complicated, and had to be told quickly while being careful to maintain a perfect tempo."

Some people develop a storyteller's talent for making the most of a funny story and satisfying their audience.

Sometimes wit serves a specific interest: to seduce, get into a group's good graces, or overcome mistrust by presenting oneself in a debonair light. The individual is thus trading his joviality or wit for some benefit, even if only to gain minimal recognition from others by getting on their good side. This attitude sometimes sets the tone of their relation to the world. Georg Simmel writes (1950, p. 391):

"It is most important to realize, that even if an individual gives only a particular item, offers only one side of his personality, he may yet be fully understood by this one side, may yet give his personality completely in the form of this single energy."

We sometimes laugh without knowing why, following the example of others, thinking there must certainly be a good reason for the revelry. This complicity amplifies the comical effect of the story, but even more so the sharing of a pleasant moment. Proust writes (2003, p. 100-101):

“On one of these evenings, it occurred to me to tell a mildly amusing story, but I stopped myself immediately when I remembered that Saint-Loup knew it already [...] And throughout the story he kept his excited and enraptured gaze fixed upon myself, and upon his friends. It was only when I had finished, amid general laughter, that I realized that it had occurred to him that this story would give his comrades an excellent impression of my wit, and this was why he had feigned ignorance. Such is friendship.”

The group catalyzes and amplifies emotions that the individual would not feel otherwise. Laughter resonates in the presence of others, gaily bouncing back and forth in a succession of ricochets. We sometimes laugh when seeing others laugh, without knowing the cause of the hilarity, but certain there is reason to be amused. Victoroff (1953, p. 111) once referred to a “stereotype of laughter” to describe a humoristic convention that is not necessarily linked to pleasure. Even when a story becomes stale and has lost its edge, having been heard so many times that it is known by heart, it still makes people laugh or smile due to convention or the tenacity of the storyteller. When an audience is asked about their familiarity with a witty remark or funny story, their faces light up with smiles or laughter, anticipating the pleasure to come. Faced with the proposition of a gift, the crowd positions itself to receive and expresses its gratitude by laughing before the joke has been fully uttered. Even those who know the routine join in on the exhilarating sense of anticipation. It has become entrenched, its aura persists, along with memories of having already heard it...

A lone witness seated next to a boisterous group in a restaurant might overhear jokes which he finds stale or vulgar. Were he participating in the sociability of the group, he could not escape the contagion of laughter. But he gets nothing from it, no attention, and no one addresses or acknowledges him as witness. The humoristic impact of most of the exchanges is defused. The comical is always subjective and emotional. It is not only the quality of the joke that makes people laugh but the exchange it makes possible, the effect of symbolic association it has on the group.

“A man who was asked why he did not weep at a sermon, when everybody else was shedding tears, replied: ‘I don’t belong to the parish!’

Bergson, 1912, p. 6

Generally, one has to feel the joke is addressed to them, otherwise it's more a curiosity than a source of hilarity, except perhaps in the case of burlesque situations that elicit universal laughter (Le Breton, 2017). The gift only affects those in the orbit of exchange. Others have nothing to offer in return. They are not part of the group, even if they are able to briefly join in.

Many funny stories or jokes form part of a “common stock” that can be used by anyone who remembers them – they “circulate anonymously,” as Freud once observed (1930, p. 214). They crystalize a sort of distancing from certain events or situations. Every epoch produces its own repertoire of sayings, stories, funny, lewd or obscene songs that circulate at weddings or other festivities and are continually renewed over time. When a new story makes its appearance, it spreads by contagion, especially when relayed by the media or through social networks. It creates a buzz and enters into the public domain for a certain period of time. Numerous humor collections and anthologies provide a supply of jokes to anyone seeking to entertain guests and make a good impression. Some people consult them before a meeting or get-together so they can sprinkle them into the conversation and showcase their wit. Today, there are countless repertoires of jokes that can be used to display an open-minded and easy-going attitude, whether among friends or at work. It is a great way to win over an audience by giving them cause for laughter or food for thought, and thus symbolically putting them in debt. These humor collections express a particular sensibility and common values. They seem to exist in every society and were already known in antiquity (Le Breton, 2017).

THE “GAME BREAKER”

Immersed in a group where jokes are flying non-stop, it is difficult to resist laughing at each jest, even though in other circumstances, when alone for example, none of these jokes would elicit such hilarity. Not laughing at a witty remark can be met with jeers and even more laughter among members of the group, who now suspect the guilty party of not understanding. He's the tough customer, the grump, the rude one who “doesn't know how to let loose” or “how to laugh.” But, more importantly, he does not return the gift, keeping it to himself and breaking the circle of exchange. If the tacit rules of the jovial group are violated, the game world is shattered, each left to their own devices, to mockery of the exchanges, to the insignificance of the jokes. One has to

“play the game” of complicity. The “game breaker” is always a threat (Huizinga, 1951, p. 29), unless the group diverts its criticism by making him the target of ridicule, reversing the situation and restoring shared laughter.

Those who reject a witty remark by remaining indifferent or too fussy with its quality, who refuse to play the receiving game while the others eagerly welcome it, contribute to disrupt the exchange. In “Swann in Love,” Proust describes a certain Doctor Cottard, an awkward man and regular of the Verdurin salon, who attempts to impress with endless puns but whose humor leaves something to be desired. Everyone gives him the satisfaction of laughing at his jokes, except for Swann. Forcheville, who is a “newcomer,” compliments Mme Verdurin on the originality of her white dress.

“[Cottard] caught in its flight the adjective ‘*blanche*’ and, his eyes still glued to his plate, snapped out, ‘*Blanche?* Blanche of Castile?’ then, without moving his head, shot a furtive glance to right and left of him, smiling uncertainly. While Swann, by the painful and futile effort which he made to smile, showed that he thought the pun absurd, Forcheville had shown at one and the same time that he could appreciate its subtlety and that he was a man of the world, by keeping within its proper limits a mirth the spontaneity of which had charmed Mme Verdurin.”

Proust, 1992, p. 350

Over the course of the evening, observing Swann’s distance and annoyance at Cottard’s puns, Mme Verdurin is offended by his disregard for the rules and concludes that he has no sense of humor. This contributes to his eventual exclusion from the salon. She finds, paradoxically, that he’s “not sincere. He’s a crafty customer, always sitting on the fence, always trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds.” Her husband describes him as a “failure, one of those small-minded individuals who are envious of anything that’s at all big.” Humor here serves to determine inclusion in the inner circle. Proust adds in this respect (1992, p. 368-369):

“In reality there was not one of the ‘faithful’ who was not infinitely more malicious than Swann; but they all took the precaution of tempering their calumnies with obvious pleasantries, with little sparks of emotion and cordiality; while the slightest reservation on Swann’s part, undraped in any such conventional formula [...] appeared to them a deliberate act of treachery.”

Swann is too demanding, he doesn't get the code. In this precise context he is refusing a questionable symbolic good, but, in doing so, he cuts himself out of the exchange, because the others care little about quality. They are enjoying both the joke itself and Cottard's efforts to please the group. And the gift is accepted wholeheartedly, even if his jokes are predictable. Swann's hesitations are his downfall. He is the killjoy, the one who doesn't know how to give back and interrupts the flow of exchanges. He demonstrates an arrogance in harshly judging the others who readily take part in the laughter and now find themselves in an awkward position, made to feel uncomfortable by the outsider's critical gaze.

THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER AND ITS AMBIVALENCES

Humor offers a beautiful illustration of Mauss's ideas. Making others laugh is a gift that seeks the counter-gift of others' hilarity, of recognition for providing moments of jubilation. The debt is paid through the complicity of laughter. But the gift can be refused and the audience remain unmoved despite the joke teller's desperate efforts. Laughter conveys the successful reception of the humoristic utterance. When unsuccessful, the speaker often feels disconcerted and uncomfortable, left wondering what went wrong. Insofar as the goodwill of the audience and quality of the offering are taken for granted, the civility of laughter is sometimes tyrannical. It is difficult to escape it without irritating or offending the person going out on a limb with his joke. As for the members of the group, they have no choice but to laugh, if only to conform, but especially to prevent the joker from losing face. The person seeking to entertain others exercises a symbolic constraint on his audience, bolstered by the positive image he is convinced of possessing.

Making fun of a person, group or situation, or telling a joke, always runs the risk of overdoing it and sapping the chances for a reaction of laughter. But not going far enough, skirting around the humor, can also fall flat. The art of eliciting laughter is an alchemy that is always under threat. The storyteller is never fully assured of success. In this sense, every proposition is a risk. "Whoever lends themselves to laughter is never sure of being repaid," as Raymond Devos once said. In the exchange of objects, reciprocity takes the form of money or some other compensation, but in the case of a service or simple presence, it is the other's reaction, expressed through their laughter or smile, through a corporal

attitude that reveals the joyous transformation of their entire being. The person telling the joke is thus symbolically repaid. The exchange of pleasure is based on this gift of nothing. The audience's jubilation adds to the pleasure experienced by the person sharing the joke or pun. It flatters his ego and makes him laugh even more to see the result of his efforts. People who are always laughing or smiling, sharing their humor, are often easily accepted into groups. Their laughter breaks the ice and creates trust. They are popular because people are rarely bored in their presence.

Gratitude towards the witty person is reflected in the favorable reputation they enjoy. Others seek out their company to add spice or ambiance to parties or gatherings. The gift and counter-gift become intertwined in the relationship, through an exchange of emotions rather than goods. As Georg Simmel recalls in his text on gratitude (1950, p. 389):

“But ‘benefit’ is not limited to a person's giving things to another: we also thank the artist or poet who does not even know us. This fact creates innumerable connections, ideal and concrete, loose and firm, among those who are filled with gratitude toward the same giver.”

The pleasure provided by the witty entertainer is of another kind, the audience enjoys it differently, but it is translated into the gratitude expressed towards him and the gratifying position he is given within the social group. Entertainers, jokers, jovial types often enjoy a high social standing. When not annoying, they add to the pleasure of being together, especially when laughter serves to unite the group. They are continually giving of themselves. Having won over the crowd, they are life of the party. Their presence is sought out as a guarantee of a relaxed atmosphere and fun times.

The discerning use of laughter or humor is a sociological art that increases a person's popularity and ability to exercise influence over others. It is a tightrope act that entails intuiting the balance between too much and not enough. Because the gift can sometimes, in contrast, be overwhelming, make for a saturation point. Not being able to escape an incessant barrage of jokes makes for an exhausting encounter and breaks the reciprocity of exchange. It is impossible to keep listening and laughing non-stop if one is not in the mood or unable to change the attitude of the jovial fellow whose narcissistic stance completely disregards the other person. A sort of endless potlatch engulfs the members of the audience “who can no longer get a word in” and find themselves stifled under

the onslaught of a joker suffering from verbal incontinence. The gift becomes an imposition and the mounting irritation can make the person overestimating his power lose face. Not being able to give back through shared enjoyment or laughter is a difficult situation. Stuck in an impasse, the group struggles to calm the funny guy without making him lose face but soon tires of his endless banter, which is less and less amusing and prevents any other discussion from taking place.

Laughter also serves a defensive function, often irritating, when a member of the group turns any topic into a joke, making any decision impossible. He thus avoids situations that make him uncomfortable all the while feigning joviality. It is a position of strength that is difficult to counter. An unhappy wife recalls how her husband would lay in wait for the slightest gag (Hornby, 2001, p. 163):

“He looked at you talking in a way that made you think, wrongly, he was listening to you, until a truly well twisted and generally mean remark would spring from his lips like the tongue of Hannibal Lecter; at which point I would either laugh or, more often than not, storm out of the room slamming the door.”

In humor, sometimes a third party pays the price for laughter, falls victim to ridicule. Derision, sarcasm, and scorn seek to injure and humiliate, to force a gift of hate that cannot be repaid, because the victim here is not in a position of power or equality. It is a gift of abjection that defiles a person, ruins his reputation. Laughter is not always, for everyone, an occasion to celebrate. What is received by some is subtracted from the other who pays for it. But this of course unites the in-group in their rejection of an other who is not one of their own.

JOKING RELATIONSHIPS

Many societies around the world have a system of relations or “joking relationships” that involve different members engaging in modes of exchange based on derision. Often this joking does not last long but serves as a jumpstart preceding more ordinary interactions. These relationships are observed in the African, Oceanian, North American and Asian societies that Mauss studied (1969, p. 148 sq.). Unthinkable jokes between people of dif-

ferent age groups and social status are permitted, even required in this specific context, where rigidity disappears under the aegis of custom. Radcliffe-Brown has observed symmetrical types of relationships in which jokes and derision are mutually shared, and other types where, conversely, a single member of the family is permitted to make fun of another, without the latter being able to respond, except discreetly. He sees in this “a peculiar combination of friendliness and antagonism” (1952, p. 91 sq.). In situations where these modes of relationship would normally engender conflict, they are here part of everyday life and create no animosity.

One’s position in the kinship group ritually authorizes lack of respect and verbal jousting of a mocking or aggressive nature. The person targeted is not the least offended. Any major tension is defused through humor to the benefit of the group.

“The most numerous and widespread examples of this custom were in the relationship of a man to the brothers and sisters of his wife. But it was also found in some instances between cross-cousins, between mother’s brother and sister’s son, and in a somewhat milder form between grandparents and grandchildren” or between groups.

1952, p. 105-106

In some societies, a child thought to be the reincarnation of an ancestor sometimes enjoys a position of authority over a relative of an older generation.

The apparent hostility is purely ritual and in no way affects the emotional connection between the individuals involved. Derision is also a form of mutual surveillance in that it draws on minor everyday details and playfully calls attention to the other’s errors or oversights. It pacifies the connection between groups and individuals. Marcel Griaule spoke in this sense of a “cathartic alliance” (1948), an exchange of insults or gibes that avoids real conflicts by simulating them. Self-derision is often involved. Geneviève Calame-Griaule describes a mode of kinship among the Dogon that “uses laughter, insult and derision in a manner contrary to normal usage” (1986, p. 474), which abolishes the generational system, denies the march of time and, in short, turns the world upside down to assure its continuity. It redistributes speech, momentarily breaking the hierarchy and thus avoiding arbitrary rule.

Mauss also sees in this a temporary relaxing of more formal relations, recalling the anthropological dimension of this type of social relationship and the different forms it takes in our societies.

“The reserve of daily life looks for a counter-state and finds it in indecency and rudeness. We ourselves still have this kind of sudden change of mood: soldiers escaping from standing at arms; pupils having fun in the schoolyard; gentlemen releasing themselves in the smoking room from overlong courtesies towards the women.”

Mauss, 2013, p. 327

These shifts offer moments of respite from social representations based on hierarchies and/or seriousness, ritual transitions that allow for a carefree attitude otherwise unthinkable in ordinary social interactions.

Laughter facilitates social relations, briefly eases the tensions inherent in many exchanges. In a workplace affected by jealousies, rivalries, or unspoken enmities, employees play with tense situations to poke fun at each other's privileges or advantages. The joke defuses the tension and renews the exchange while also pinpointing the source of conflict. Co-workers tease each other about their respective privileges, showing up late due to a “pillow malfunction” (*panne d'oreiller*), putting in extra work because of another group's annoying mistake, or the same people always getting the best vacation periods... The appeal to improve group solidarity is implicit but put forward in a supple way, without imposing lessons. It is a call to order, a delicate way of saying that the issue is perhaps settled but should not be pushed further. Bosses are often the butt of jokes, inflating them, of course, with ridiculous faults and foibles. Humor is a form of communication whose subtext is essential. It is a tempered way of negotiating relationships. Group breaks, meals or evening get-togethers are opportunities to take revenge on injunctions, little frictions arising in the workplace. The absence of the accused or the particular context of exchange is conducive to sharing jokes that are veiled criticisms or putdowns. Bragging, backstabbing, abuses of authority and errors are freely mocked in these suspended, slightly carnivalesque moments, but where workplace conditions are turned upside down. These moments of pleasant but also cruel and vengeful laughter create a sort of backstage space where people can finally relax.

In other contexts, jokes prompted by the novelty of a situation (a new hire, a departure or retirement, a hospitalization, marriage, birth, and so on) contribute

to ritualizing events that are still worrisome. The joking builds bridges between interlocutors and dispels the malaise. Seemingly incidental, under the guise of regular jokes, these exchanges highlight frustrations while also displaying a goodwill that cannot be sustained for too long. Humor between groups is a tool of de-dramatization. It recognizes the existence of a dispute but downplays it by offering brief compensation to those paying the price. The conflict is sublimated, expressed but at the same time defused. Humor acknowledges differences without making them a source of confrontation, because the laughter in this context is shared. It protects the group dynamic by keeping up appearances and dissipating individual frictions. It attenuates criticism or jealousy by legitimizing their expression.

“Laughter is a social lubricant but also a tool of control in contexts of conflict or otherwise inexpressible latent tensions. It contributes to facilitating good relations and reinforcing in-group bonds. It always links people together, even as it sometimes targets outsiders to build consensus. It weakens hierarchies, both in business and in society as a whole. Shared laughter eliminates distance, recreates solidarity and complicity. Sociability is revived in joyous reciprocity, at least for a moment. Potential conflict is dispelled through laughter, which is transformed into a lightning rod, a shock absorber.”

Eastman, 1958, p. 24

Translated by Carmen Ruschiensky

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BERGSON, Henri, 1912, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, translated by Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell, New York, Macmillan.
- CALAME-GRIAULE, Geneviève, 1986, *Words and the Dogon World*, translated by Deirdre LaPin, Philadelphia, Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- DILLARD, Anne, 1990, *Une enfance américaine*, Paris, Christian-Bourgeois.
- DUVIGNAUD, Jean, 2007, *Le don du rien* (préface d'Alain Caillé, avant-propos de David Le Breton), Paris, Téraèdre.
- EASTMAN, Max, 1958, *Plaisir du rire*, Paris, Sedes.
- GLENN, Phillip J., 2008, *Laughter in interaction*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- GODBOUT, Jacques T., 2000, *Le don, la dette et l'identité. Homo donator vs homo oeconomicus*, Montréal, Boréal.
- GRIAULE, Marcel, 1948, « L'alliance cathartique », *Africa*, vol. 18, n° 4.
- GUITRY, Sacha, 1947, *Toutes réflexions faites*, Paris, Édition de l'Élan.
- HORNBY, Nick, 2001, *La bonté : mode d'emploi*, Paris, 10-18.
- Huizinga, Johan, 1951, *Homo ludens. Essai sur la fonction sociale du jeu*, Paris, Tel-Gallimard.
- LE BRETON, David, 2017, *Rire. Une anthropologie du rieur*, Paris, Métailié.
- MAUSS, Marcel, 2013, "Joking Relations", translated by Jane I. Guyer, *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, vol. 3, n° 2, p. 317-334.
- MAUSS, Marcel, 2016, *The Gift: Expanded Edition*, translated by Jane I. Guyer, (epigraph by Maurice Cahen), Chicago, Hau Books.
- PROUST, Marcel, 1992, *In Search of Lost Time. Volume 1. Swann's Way*, translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, New York, The Modern Library.
- PROUST, Marcel, 2003, *In Search of Lost Time. Volume 3. The Guermites Way*, translated by Mark Treharne, Penguin Classics.
- Radcliffe-Brown, Alfred Reginald, 1952, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, Glencoe, The Free Press.
- SIMMEL, Georg, 1950, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, translated by Kurt H. Wolff, Glencoe, The Free Press.
- VICTOROFF, David, 1952, *Le rire et le risible. Introduction à la psychosociologie du rire*, Paris, PUF.

FOR ANOTHER WORLD HISTORY OF SOCIOLOGY

Stéphane Dufoix

In the vast majority of works devoted to the history of sociology, the chronology of the development and institutionalization of the discipline is hardly surprising. Sieyès' abortive invention of the word,¹ its second invention by Auguste Comte in the 47th lesson of the *Cours de philosophie positive* in 1839,² its revival by John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer before the formation of several national (French, German, American, English and Italian) traditions characterized by strong specificities. The end of the Second World War is generally seen as a period of great American influence under the banner of structural-functionalism at least until the late 1970s. The more recent decades, from the early 1990s onwards, are said to be marked by the globalization of the discipline, both in terms of its objects and the number of countries in which it is practiced.³

Moreover, the restrictive geographical synecdoche that I have mentioned above – the perspective of the history of sociology through a few countries⁴ – is coupled with a restrictive individual synecdoche, the history of sociology being mostly reduced to the sole dimension of history of ideas or sociological theories in which the great authors, the great currents or the great themes form the backbone of the disciplinary evolution. Thus largely stripped of any articulation between its internal and external history⁵ the so-called historicised analysis of the

¹ GUILHAUMOU, Jacques, 2006, « Sieyès et le non-dit de la sociologie : du mot à la chose », *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines*, n° 15, p. 117-134.

² The word *sociologie* appears in Comte's correspondence during the 1820s. See FEUERHAHN, Wolf, 2014, « La sociologie avec ou sans guillemets. L'ombre portée de Comte sur les sciences sociales germanophones (1875-1908) », *Les Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg*, vol. 1, p. 157-196 et p. 165.

³ ALBROW, Martin, 1987, "Sociology for one world", *International Sociology*, 2(1), p. 1-12.

⁴ DUFOIX, Stéphane, « Défaire la synecdoque. Pour une plus grande internationalité dans l'histoire française de la sociologie » to be published in *Socio-logos* in 2022.

⁵ LAKATOS, Imre, 1970, "Falsification and the methodology of scientific research programmes", in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 91-195. On the internalism-externalism debate, see in particular SHAPIN, Steven, 1992,

discipline becomes largely de-temporalized, de-spatialized but also de-situated within the more global space of the social sciences on a world scale.¹

The developments that follow wish to return to these three points by proposing a number of avenues and questions that would make it possible to envisage another history of sociology that is neither an anti-history that consists of overturning the now classic frameworks of the disciplinary narrative, nor a counter-history that aims to offer an alternative that is independent of the latter. It is much more a question of putting forward the possibility of another history, more complex, broader and, for many countries, longer than that which is generally given to them.

THE TRANSNATIONAL AND NATIONAL EMERGENCES OF SOCIOLOGY

Whatever the period to which one wishes to attach the beginnings of what is called sociology, the dimension of circulation of the term, through its translation or exchanges between individuals from different countries, is fundamental and yet still largely ignored in works on the history of sociology. The term invented by Comte does not spread spontaneously. It is carried by translators of his work, as well as by publishers or personal or collective networks. Its passage into the English-speaking world was ensured by several translations of his work, the most popular of which was Harriet Martineau's English summary of the *Cours de philosophie positive* in 1853.²

"Discipline and bounding: The history and sociology of science as seen through the externalism-internalism debate", *History of Science*, vol. 30, p. 333-369.

1 Of course, this is not to be generalized. In recent years, several authors or groups of authors have produced books or articles arguing for a more transnational form of sociology, one that is more rooted in power relations, but also less canonical and more diverse. Some examples include FLECK, Christian, 2011, *A Transatlantic History of the Social Sciences. Robber Barons, the Third Reich and the Invention of Empirical Social Research*, London, Bloomsbury; KEIM, Wiebke, ÇELİK, Ercüment, ERSCHÉ, Christian & WÖHREB, Veronika (eds.), 2014, *Global Knowledge Production in the Social Sciences. Made in Circulation*, Farnham, Ashgate; BEIGEL, Fernanda & SABEA, Hanan (eds.), 2014, *Dependencia académica y profesionalización en el Sur. Perspectivas desde la periferia*, Mendoza, EDIUNC-SEPHIS; STEINMETZ, George, 2017, "Sociology and Colonialism in the British and French Empires, 1945–1965", *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 89, p. 601–648; HEILBRON, Johan, SORA, Gustavo & BONCOURT, Thomas (eds.), 2018, *The Social and Human Sciences in Global Power Relations*, Basingstoke, Palgrave-Macmillan.

2 See in particular HILL, Michael R., 2017, "Harriet Martineau. The founding and re-founding of sociology", in Valérie Sanders and Gaby Weiner (eds.), *Harriet Martineau and the Birth of Disciplines. Nineteenth-Century Intellectual Powerhouse*, London, Routledge, p. 69–83.

before the publication (1875-1877) of the *System of Positive Politics* by John Henry Bridges, Frederic Harrison, Edward Spencer Beesly, Richard Congreve and Henry Dix Hutton.¹ During the second half of the 19th century, the different circulations and appropriations of positivism² – be it Comtean or not – and of Spencerism³ in Western and Eastern European countries⁴ as well as in the United States⁵ are generally responsible for the various vernacular emergences of linguistic equivalents of *sociologie* or sociology, although in other countries interest in the social sciences stemmed from other works such as Harriet Martineau⁶ or Adolphe Quételet's.⁷

A few examples drawn from the history of sociology in Latin America and Asia will allow us to better understand both the historical and epistemological stakes of a revisit.

¹ On the trajectories and work of the first three translators cited above, see WILSON, Matthew, 2019, "Rendering Sociology: On the Utopian Positivism of Harriet Martineau and the 'Mumbo Jumbo Club'", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History of Ideas*, 9(16), available online at: <https://journals.openedition.org/jihi/281> (last consultation on May 3rd).

² FEICHTINGER, Johannes, FILLAFER, Franz L. & SURMAN, Jan (eds.), 2018, *The Worlds of Positivism. A Global Intellectual History, 1770–1930*, Basingstoke, Palgrave-Macmillan. Also see HEILBRON, Johan, 2007, « Sociologie et positivisme en France au XIX^e siècle : les vicissitudes de la société de sociologie (1872-1874) », *Revue française de sociologie*, vol. 48, p. 307-331.

³ LIGHTMAN, Bernard (ed.), 2016, *Global Spencerism: The Communication and Appropriation of a British Evolutionist*, Leiden, Brill.

⁴ The Russian publicist Valentin Maikov had read Comte in French. He was the first one to introduce positivism into Russia. See TITARENKO, Larissa et ZDRAVOMYSLOVA, Elena, 2017, *Sociology in Russia. A Brief History*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 16.

⁵ The first two books having *sociology* in their title were published in 1854 in the South of the United States. They relied on Comtean positivism to defend the preservation of slave society. Their authors, Henry Hughes et George Fitzhugh, still deserve nothing but only one sentence in CALHOUN, Craig, 2007, "Sociology in America: An Introduction" in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Sociology in America. A History*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 1-38, p. 5-6. On this « sociology in the South », which was not professional but remains fundamental to understand the international connections and the dead-ends of certain births of sociology, see Bernard, L. L., 1937, "The Historic Pattern of Sociology in the South", *Social Forces*, 16(1), p. 1-12.

⁶ LARSSON, Anna & MAGDALENIĆ, Sanja, 2015, *Sociology in Sweden. A History*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 7.

⁷ BIRKELUND, Gunn Elisabeth, 2006, "The genesis of Norwegian sociology – a story of failures and success", *Sosiologisk Årbok*, 3(4), p. 41-67. As early as 1896, Sigurd Ibsen, one of the pioneers of sociology in Norway, considered that what he called *samfundslære* (*samfund* being closer to *community* than to *society*) was already taught in 8 countries and 49 universities by 217 instructors. See the list (that comprises numerous different "disciplines") in IBSEN, Sigurd, 1896, *Samfundslære og retvidenskab. Foredrag holdt i den juridiske studenterforening den 4. Februar 1896*, Kristiania, Thronsen & Co.S Bogtrykkeri, p. 49. I'm indebted to Gunn Elisabeth Birkelund who helped me find a copy of this booklet.

The foundation in Caracas in 1877 of the Instituto de Ciencias Sociales¹ – whose first director was Rafael Villavicencio, a former physician introduced to positivism and the social sciences by the German botanist Adolf Ernst, who emigrated to Venezuela in 1861 and disseminated the works of Comte and Darwin² – marks one of the earliest stages in the Latin American adoption of the term. Before the end of the 19th century, other dates also indicate the extent to which the notion of sociology – which could hardly yet be called a discipline – met with the desire of the intellectual and political elites in several Latin American states that had recently become independent to found a new cohesion on a “scientific” basis in countries marked by deep rifts. The lecture on sociology given in 1882 by the Colombian lawyer Salvador Camacho Roldan at the National University of Bogotá³ is sometimes considered as the creation of the first chair of sociology in the world.⁴ The sociology course given by the Dominican philosopher Eugenio de Hostos at the Normal School of Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) from 1883⁵ is also one of these first initiatives identified but not well documented. The first chairs were founded in Peru in 1896⁶ in Argentina in 1898⁷ or in Bolivia in 1902⁸ The social scientists who held them were not unknown scholars: the Peruvian Mariano Cornejo, Eugenio de Hostos and the Argentinian Antonio Dellepiane each had their own entry in Fausto Squillace’s *Dizionario di sociologia* in 1911⁹ They also wrote general sociological treatises published at the turn of

¹ The addresses delivered during the inaugural sessions of the Institute are available in VILLALBA, Luis, 1961, *El primer Instituto venezolano de ciencias sociales*, Caracas, Publicaciones de la Asociación venezolana de Sociología.

² See VALLENILLA, Nikita Harwich, 1990, “Venezuelan Positivism and Modernity”, *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 70(2), p. 327-344.

³ ROLDAN, Salvador Camacho, 1936 [1882], “El Estudio de la Sociología”, in Salvador Camacho Roldan, *Estudios*, Bogotá, Minerva, p. 15-65.

⁴ URIBE, Carlos H., HENAO V., Alberto & HERNÁNDEZ, Miguel A., 1982, *Cien años de la sociología en Colombia 1882-1982*, Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

⁵ GINER, Salvador, 1963, “El pensamiento sociológico de Eugenio María de Hostos,” *Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 7(3), p. 215-229.

⁶ NAVARRETTE, Julio Mejía, 2005, “El desarrollo de la sociología en el Perú. Notas introductorias,” *Sociologías*, 7(14), p. 302-337.

⁷ PEREYRA, Diego, 2000, *Antes de Germani, La sociología en la Universidad de Buenos Aires en los albores del siglo veinte*, unpublished manuscript communicated to the author by D.P.

⁸ PITTARI, Salvador Romero, 1997, *La recepción académica de la sociología en Bolivia*, La Paz, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, 1997, available online at: <https://www.andesacd.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Recepci%C3%B3n-Acad%C3%A9mica-de-la-sociolog%C3%ADa-en-Bolivia.pdf>

⁹ SQUILLACE, Fausto, 1911 [1905], *Dizionario di Sociologia*, Milan, Remo Sandron Editore.

the century like Eugenio de Hostos' *Tratado de Sociología* in 1904 or Mariano Cornejo's *Sociología general* in 1908.¹

On the other side of the Pacific, three Asian countries – Japan, China and India – are seeing sociological thinking take root, more or less rapidly. From the late 1850s onwards, after the compulsory opening of their country due to Western pressures, Japanese political and intellectual elites in Japan have considered it a duty to open the country to the scientific and technological progress while keeping the tradition of the “Japanese spirit.”² After the sending to Europe and the United States of several scientific missions, the goal of which was to gather as much Western knowledge as possible, the Japanese government implemented a specific policy aiming at hiring foreign instructors for Japanese universities. This is how the American philosopher Ernest Fenollosa became the first professor teaching sociology – and notably Spencerian sociology – in Japan in 1878. In a few decades, Japanese sociology became highly structured with a specific department of sociology at Tokyo Imperial University from the early 1880s; the first book entitled *Sociology (Shaikaigaku)* by Arigai Nagao in 1883; the first chair held by Shoichi Toyama in 1893; the first national association of sociology established in 1898 (*Shakaigaku Kenkyūkai*); the first sociological journal, *Shakai*, founded in 1899; and, in 1913, the foundation of the Institute of Sociology (*Nihon Shakai Gakuin*).³ Its founder was Takebe Tongo, one of the most famous Japanese sociologists of the early 20th century and the author of a four-volumed *General sociology (Futsû shakaigaku)* published between 1904 and 1918.⁴

¹ This book was translated into French in 1911 within the “Bibliothèque Sociologique Internationale” series directed by René Worms. See MOSBAH-NATANSON, Sébastien, 2015, « René Worms, directeur de la collection “Bibliothèque Sociologique Internationale” », *Les Études Sociales*, (161-162), p. 175-199, p. 186.

² See for instance BEILLEVAIRE, Patrick, 2004, « Le Japon ou la quête de soi » in Alain Mahé Kmar Bendana (dir.), *Savoirs du lointain et sciences sociales*, Aubervilliers, Editions Bouchène, p. 43-80 ; as well as SOUYRI, Pierre-François, 2016, *Moderne sans être occidental. Aux origines du Japon d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, Gallimard.

³ On the history of Japanese sociology, see notably KAWAMURA, Nozomu, 1994, *Sociology and Society of Japan*, London, Routledge; also see STEINER, Jesse F., 1936, “The Development and Present Status of Sociology in Japanese Universities,” *The American Journal of Sociology*, 41(6), p. 707-722. It seems that no specific degree in sociology existed in Japan before the second half of the 20th century.

⁴ TONGO, Takebe, 2007, *Japanese Family and Society: Words from Tongo Takebe, A Meiji Era Sociologist*, London, Routledge. This book is a translation of Takebe's introduction to the first volume and of a small part of the third one.

China followed with a slight delay. After a first discovery of Spencer through the translation of one chapter of *The Study of Sociology* by Yan Fu in 1897 – the very same year when Japan defeated China and thus became the country via which sociology became more and more known – the first sociology courses were delivered in American Christian missions in China from 1906 and the first department of sociology was founded in 1913 at the Hujiang College of the University of Shanghai by the American Methodist Episcopalians.¹ The early 1920s saw an acceleration in the institutionalization of the discipline in the country: the first department of sociology (and history) in a Chinese university was established in Xianmen in 1921; the first Chinese Society of Sociology was created in 1922, as well as the first sociology journal, *Shehuixue Zashi*. By 1930, China counted eleven distinct sociology departments and seventeen in 1934.² In his 1948 report, Sun Benwen recorded 143 sociology instructors in China.³

If the early development of sociology in Japan and China were connected, its rise in India rather depended on the introduction of positivism into the country in the 1850s and on how Comte's ideas fitted Indian intellectual elites' both admiration for Western science and anticolonial stance.⁴ From the late 1850s on, several scientific societies mixing British and Indian highly educated people were founded : the Bethune Society (1851)⁵ the Bengal Social Science Association (1867⁶ and the Society for Sociological Studies (1869) in

¹ CHEN, Hon Fai, 2018, *Chinese Sociology: State-Building and the Institutionalization of Globally Circulated Knowledge*, Basingstoke, Palgrave-Macmillan, p. 12.

² YEO-CHI KING, Ambrose (with Wang Tse-sang), 1978, "The Development and Death of Chinese Academic Sociology: A Chapter in the Sociology of Sociology", *Modern Asian Studies*, 12(1), p. 37-58, p. 38 ; WONG, Siu-lun, 1979, *Sociology and Socialism in Contemporary China*, London, Routledge and Kegan, p. 19.

³ Chen, Hon Fai, 2018, *Chinese Sociology, op. cit.*, p. 14. On the state of Chinese sociology before the Communist coup, see BENWEN, Sun (written Pen-Wen in this article), 1949, "Sociology in China", *Social Forces*, 27(3), p. 247-251.

⁴ FORBES, Geraldine, 2018, "Striking a Chord: The Reception of Comte's Positivism in Colonial India" in Johannes Feichtinger, Franz L. Fillafer and Jan Surman (eds.), *The Worlds of Positivism. A Global Intellectual History, 1770–1930*, Basingstoke, Palgrave-Macmillan, p. 31-51.

⁵ A "sociology" – "recently elevated to the rank of a Science" – section of the Society was opened in 1859 by the British Reverend LONG, James, 1862, See *The Proceedings of the Bethune Society for the sessions of 1859-1860, 1860-1861*, Calcutta, Baptist Mission Press, p. 4.

⁶ DUTT GUPTA, Bela, 1972, *Sociology in India. An Inquiry into Sociological Thinking and Empirical Social Research in the Nineteenth Century with Special Reference to Bengal*, Calcutta, Center for Sociological Research.

Jaipur.¹ However, despite all these reflections, sociology as a discipline only began in 1919 with the appointment of the British sociologist Patrick Geddes as Professor in the newly created Department of civics and sociology at the University of Bombay in 1919.² His Indian student G.S Ghurye succeeded him as the Head of the Department in 1924. Ghurye stayed within this department for 35 years and was prominent in the gradual institutionalization of sociology in India, notably with the creation of the doctoral degree in sociology in the late 1930s. By that time, there are four departments of sociology in India (Bombay, Calcutta, Lucknow, and Mysore).³

These few examples are simply intended to show that the chronology of the sociological discipline to which we – as Westerners, but not only, since the canonical history of sociology spread widely after the Second World War – are generally accustomed does not correspond to the much more complex processes by which the words sociology and sociology have undergone national appropriations⁴ which are certainly linked to fairly similar circulation phenomena, but which can nonetheless only be understood by taking into account the intellectual, political and social structuring of each of the countries concerned.⁵ Secondly, the comparison between these experiences shows us, despite the common temporality, a profound difference between the rhythms of institutionalization, for example between a very organized Japanese sociology from the end of the 19th century, and Latin American national sociologies where the creation of courses and the writing of “sociological” works in discussion with the European and/or American traditions did not lead to disciplinary institutionalization until the 1950s.

¹ Dube, C. S., 1977, “Indian Sociology at the Turning Point”, *Sociological Bulletin*, 26(1), p. 1-13, p. 6.

² MUNSHI, Indra, 2013, “On the Margins of Sociology: An Appreciation of Patrick Geddes’s Work in India”, *Sociological Bulletin*, 62(2), p. 217-238.

³ For an excellent history of sociology in India from the late 1910s onwards, see Patel, Sujata (ed.), 2011, *Doing Sociology in India: Genealogies, Locations, and Practices*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press.

⁴ This is also true in France where the word knows a variety of meanings and usages. See MOSBAH-NATANSON, Sébastien, 2017, *Une « mode » de la sociologie. Publications et vocations sociologiques en France en 1900*, Paris, Garnier-Flammarion.

⁵ The chronological tables recently proposed by Gisèle Sapiro in a very interesting article could not only be supplemented but also understood differently since they tend to radically oppose two phases of institutionalization – before and after WWII to put it bluntly – that could be relativized since they do not really take courses into consideration and also exaggerate the autonomization of disciplines. See SAPIRO, Gisèle, 2018, “Entre o nacional e o internacional: o surgimento histórico da sociologia como campo,” *Revista Sociedade e Estado*, 33(2), p. 349-367.

THIRD SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HEGEMONY

The absence of these national or transnational experiences in the classical historiography of sociology is not only the result of their simple ignorance. It is also the historical product of different processes by which certain Western sociologies have gradually adorned and seized the label *sociology* to the point of making it their domain, especially in terms of theories and concepts. This attempt to reduce the discipline to a few national traditions and a small number of “pioneer” or “classic” authors invisibilizes the existence of different sociological traditions and completely overlooks the role of international institutions, the circulation of authors and ideas, translations, and the influence of travel and encounters.¹

The foundation of the International Sociological Association in 1949 marked the beginnings of an international institutionalization organized around the membership of national professional associations rather than individuals, and led to the constitution of these associations or regional associations such as the Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología (ALAS) in 1950, which was the first regional sociological association in the world. Within it, a major characteristic of sociological structuring on a global scale was emblematically manifested, namely the fractality of the opposition between the center and the periphery. These two poles definitely appear as being less geographical than relational and epistemic, just like the frequent current opposition between “northern” and “southern” theory.² Inside the ALAS two groups rapidly stood against each other, a first one claiming to be the heir of the older sociological generations in their countries while the second one, composed of younger scholars, defended the “scientific” model of sociology based on the Western-type logic of empirical investigation. This opposition that crossed

¹ On this question, see HUGHES, Henry S., 1975, *The Sea Change: The Migration of Social Thought, 1930-1965*, New York, Harper & Row; HEILBRON, Johan, GUILHOT, Nicolas & JEANPIERRE, Laurent, 2008, “Toward a transnational history of the social sciences,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 44(2), p. 46-160; SCHRECKER, Cherry (ed.), 2010, *Transatlantic Voyages and Sociology. The Migration and Development of Ideas*, Farnham, Ashgate Publishing; RODRIGUEZ MEDINA, Leandro, 2014, *Center and Peripheries in Knowledge Production*, London, Routledge; Keim, Wiebke, 2016, « La circulation internationale des savoirs en sciences sociales. Facteurs pertinents d’acceptation et de rejet des textes voyageurs », *Revue d’anthropologie des connaissances* 10(1), p. 1-41; SAPIRO, Gisèle, SANTORO, Marco & BAERT, Patrick (eds.), 2020, *Ideas on the Move in the Social Sciences and Humanities. The International Circulation of Paradigms and Theorists*, Londres, Palgrave-Macmillan.

² CONNELL, Raewyn, 2007, *Southern Theory*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

the population of Latin American sociologists resulted in the older generation gradually leaving the ISA to join the older International Institute of Sociology – founded by René Worms in 1893 and that had continued to organize world congresses after World War II – whereas the younger one found a haven in the ISA.¹ The logic of domination needs to be understood relationally, at the national, regional, international but also transnational level.

Outside international associations where they gradually held more and more power positions even if no ISA World Congress was organized in a non-Western country before 1982 (in Mexico) and if non-Western participants constituted a minority, sociologists and social scientists from the so-called Third World tried to resist epistemic hegemony through the constitution of transnational networks from the early 1970s onwards, thus forming what could be called a “third sociology” or a “third social science.”

Here again, two rather unknown examples may suffice. Let’s start with the Third World Forum. Officially founded in Karachi in 1975 with Samir Amin at its head, its creation actually dates back to a first meeting in Santiago de Chile in April 1973, where a number of Third World social scientists coming from various continents (Asia, Latin America, Africa) gathered. Even though the Santiago Declaration asks for “the search of more relevant development strategies,” not only does it present itself as a “creative interaction between indigenous thinking and external experience.”² But the various scholars involved in this first meeting in Chile insisted on their will to become an Intellectual Forum of the Third World.³ Among the participants – mostly economists at the times – but the Brazilian sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso was present in Karachi – there were not only Latin-Americans like the Chilean economist Osvaldo Sunkel or the Uruguayan current director of the CEPAL (*United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America*) Enrique Iglesias but also academics from the Arab World like the Egyptian Samir Amin, the Nigerian economist H.M.A Onitiri, the Pakistani

¹ BLANCO, Alejandro, 2005, “La Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología: una historia de sus primeros congresos,” *Sociologías*, 7(14), p. 22-49.

² “Santiago Declaration of Third World Social Scientists” reproduced in TODARO, Michael P., 1977, *Economic Development in the Third World*, London, Longman, p. 411.

³ The Karachi communique announcing the creation and the programme of the Third World Forum can be found in ERB, Guy F. & KALLAB, Valeriana (eds.), 1975, *Beyond Dependency: The Developing World Speaks Out*, Washington, Overseas Development Council, p. 178-182.

Mahbub Ul Haq, the Indian economist Jagdish Bhagwati and his wife, as well as the Indian economist Padma Desai.¹

At about the same time, the United Nations University (UNU) opened its doors in Tokyo after numerous debates about it at the United Nations and at the UNESCO from the late 1960s. One of its first programmes, entitled Human and Social Development (HSDP), was headed by the Japanese political scientist Kinhide Mushakoji.² In 1977, it developed into to a specific project named Socio-Cultural Development Alternatives in a Changing World (SCA) under the scientific supervision of the Egyptian economist and sociologist Anouar Abdel-Malek. The SCA project linked together many researchers from diverse parts of the world (Asia, Latin America, the Arab world, but also Eastern and Central Europe) between 1978 and 1982. It organized several conferences in Kyoto, Belgrade, Mexico, Kuwait City, Algiers, Madrid and Addis-Ababa. Just to give an idea of the scope of the network, the first regional conference on “endogenous intellectual creativity,” that was held in Kyoto in 1978 gathered 67 participants coming from nearly 20 countries: Singapore, Indonesia, India, Japan, China, Philippines, France, Malaysia, the USA, Vietnam, Thailand, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, Fiji, Great-Britain and Yugoslavia (Abdel-Malek and Pandeya, 1980).³ Among many topics pertaining to the issue of relevance or “endogenous creativity” in general, the various symposia constituted a collective – mostly but not only Southern – opportunity to talk about the transformations of the world and about “globalization.” Sociologists like Anouar Abdel-Malek, the Yugoslav Miroslav Pečujlić, the Japanese Kazuko Tsurumi or the American Immanuel Wallerstein were active members of this network.

This apparent non-existence marked by the absence of non-Western sociologist from the history of the discipline, this invisibility of the third sociology – and of third social science⁴ – remained the *doxa* at the very center of mainstream

¹ DEVÉS, Eduardo, 2006, “Los científicos económico sociales chilenos en los largos 60 y su inserción en las redes internacionales: la reunión del foro tercer mundo en Santiago en abril de 1973”, *Universum. Revista de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales*, 1(21), p. 1-34.

² MUSHAKOJI, Kinhide, 1998, *Global Issues and Inter-Paradigmatic Dialogues. Essays on Multipolar Politics*, Turin, Albert Meynier Editore, p. 171-179.

³ ABDEL-MALEK, ANOUAR & NATH PANDEYA, Amar (eds.), 1981, *Intellectual Creativity in Endogenous Culture*, Tokyo, The United Nations University.

⁴ The use of “social sciences” here alludes to the fact that the aforementioned networks involve scholars from different disciplines in order to claim for a global epistemic recognition. Moreover, sociologists are not the only ones claiming for “indigenization” to struggle against hegemony. To give but one example, in the Philippines, the communication scholar Gloria Feliciano published in 1965 an article about the limits of Western social research. The mid-1970s saw the development of “Filipino psychology” (*Sikolohiyang*

sociology – in the major journals, in the major publishing houses, in the major international associations, in the citation indexes, in the circulation of books and ideas – until the late 1980s. The gradual popularization of several critical movements of ideas (cultural studies, postcolonial studies, subaltern studies, modernity/coloniality group), most of them initially based on the work of Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze or Gramsci, as well as their international circulation during the 1990s, provided social scientists claiming to be from the South, as well as some of their relays in more “northern” circles, with a more solid base than the one that had been built up more silently and over a long period of time by the transnational networks mentioned above.

In the last thirty years or so, the growing presence in major publishing houses (Polity Press, Duke University Press, Routledge, Palgrave-Macmillan) or some high impact factor journals (like *Current Sociology*, *International Sociology*, *The Journal of Historical Sociology*) of both Western and non-Western scholars challenging the “classical” history of the discipline and asking for real debates about social science epistemology and the solidity of the sociological canon – here considered as a crystallized and neutralized product of the very historical process of canonization. Hardly seen as a real issue by major sociologists, with the exception of Immanuel Wallerstein,¹ challenging the canon has now become one of the main debates within international sociology. Whether it is understood as something that does not really exist and should not deserve as much attention²; as a claim that is much more political than academic, thus jeopardizing the scientific basis of the discipline³; or as a historical fact that needs being analyzed and acknowledged in order to find a way relativize or expand it,⁴ the debate about the sociological canon needs a renewed attention to the history of sociology. An other history that would be more global here and now but also during the

Pilipino) around the figure of Virgilio Enriquez. See FELICIANO, Gloria, 1965, “Limits of Western Social Science Research Methods in Rural Philippines: The Need for Innovation”, *Lipunan*, 1(1), p. 114-128; ENRIQUEZ, Virgilio, 1987, “Decolonizing the Filipino psyche: Impetus for the development of psychology in the Philippines” in Geoffrey H. Blowers and Alison M. Turtle (eds.), *Psychology Moving East: The Status of Western Psychology in Asia and Oceania*, Boulder and London, Westview Press, p. 265-287.

¹ WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel, 1999, “The Heritage of Sociology, The Promise of Social Science,” *Current Sociology*, 47(1), p. 1-37.

² BAEHR, Peter, 2002, *Founders, Classics, Canons. Modern Disputes over the Origins and Appraisal of Sociology's Heritage*, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers.

³ ARCHER, Margaret S., 1990, “Sociology for one world: unity and diversity,” *International Sociology*, 6(2), p. 131-147.

⁴ ALATAS, Syed Farid & SINHA, Vineeta, 2017, *Sociological Theory beyond the Canon*, London, Palgrave-Macmillan.

19th century would certainly open new doors and allow for a more dispassionate debate about the future of a discipline, the diversity of which appears to be more and more obvious.

The social history of sociology or the historical sociology of sociology – but the same can be said of the history of the social sciences more generally – has an undeniable pedagogical value in casting a new eye on a more diverse and extensive reality of the forms of existence of sociology. From this point of view, scientific sociology appears as only one form among other.¹ But it also has a critical value that should not be underestimated. By emphasizing the mechanisms of epistemic domination, its fractality within national fields, the development of transnational South-South networks, and the increasing visibility of current counter-hegemonic claims, such an alternative history opens up prospects for the eventual recognition of alternative epistemological approaches as well as for the opening of a broader – and calmer – dialogue between different points of view that often only clash without listening or speaking to each other.

¹ A greater historicization of the categories of sociology identified by Michael Burawoy would undoubtedly make it possible to see beyond the mere distinction between “proto-sociologists” and “sociologists” or between “essayists” and “scientists,” which function above all as categories of distancing and self-affirmation. See BURAWOY, Michael, 2005, “For Public Sociology”, *American Sociological Review*, 70(1), p. 4-28. For an excellent historical usage applied to South Africa, see KEIM, Wiebke, 2017, *Universally Comprehensible, Arrogantly Local. South African Labour Studies from the Apartheid Era into the New Millennium*, Paris, Editions des Archives Contemporaines.

THE FATE OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES¹

Christian Laval

INTRODUCTION

There are certain concepts that are fundamental to the social sciences, forming a focal point where the sciences intersect in an intellectually productive way, and around which they might one day coalesce or even fuse. I would like to explore the question of whether the *institution* should be seen as one of those fundamental concepts.

If the social sciences are to be reunified, and in particular if the disciplinary borders between sociology and the economic sciences are to be crossed, we need a shared conceptual framework. Our task, then, is to create what our economist friends would call a “convention.” This convention could revolve around the concept of the institution, which in turn could contribute towards resistance to the utilitarian unification of the social sciences.

The institution is a particularly vast and complex subject, and it is often avoided precisely because of the risk of getting lost in its labyrinth of proliferating concepts and meanings. Moreover, the question of possible common ground between the social sciences is not new. Indeed, it has been asked many times, and we might add that a shared interest in the institution has sometimes led to fertile exchanges between economists and sociologists. We do not need to go back to the period between 1880 and 1930 to find repeated attempts, under the aegis of the *Revue du Mauss*, to bring the social sciences together. It is within the context of this long cyclical tradition that we must continue our exploration. The question I want to ask, then, is this: taking into account the uses and meanings of the concept of the *institution* in the social sciences, to what extent could it contribute towards the establishment of a shared framework for the anti-utilitarian social sciences? Which amounts to asking, what are the concept’s potential anti-utilitarian uses and meanings? The question is only worth asking again if we do not take

¹ English version of: Laval, Christian, 2016, « Le destin de l’institution dans les sciences sociales », *Revue du MAUSS*, n° 48, p. 275-292. Translated and edited by Cadenza Academic Translations, translator: Isabelle Chaise.

the answer for granted. For historical as well as theoretical reasons, there is no straightforward answer. There is what we could call a *historical chiasmus* between critical sociology and critical economics: the former has long been characterized by anti-institutionalist theory, while the latter is structured around an equally influential institutionalist hypothesis. How can the two disciplines find common ground when they hold diametrically opposed views of the institution?

A PROVISIONAL DEFINITION OF THE INSTITUTION

Our starting point is the premise that “institutionalism” is a truly human trait, based on the – undoubtedly debatable – opposition suggested by Gilles Deleuze between instinct and institution: “animals have instincts, man makes institutions” (Deleuze, 1955). But before we can accept this sort of opposition between “instinct” and “institution,” we must first agree on what an institution actually is. The concept was originally a legal and political one, and it proliferated in those fields from the seventeenth century on before being imported into the social sciences in the nineteenth century. Its scope was significantly expanded by the social sciences, especially sociology and anthropology, although the expansion perhaps came at the considerable cost of dilution. The question now is whether such a flexible, malleable term, with a semantic content so vast and so vague that it is hard to know for sure where it begins and where it ends, can be of any real use.¹

Before we move on, however, a brief etymological recap might be useful. The term “institution” contains a very old root of Indo-European origin: *sta*, which means “to stand” – the English word is derived from it and retains almost its original form, as does the German *Stand*, meaning state. *In-statuere* thus means “to place within,” “to establish,” or more accurately, “to cause to stay.” The European languages are rich in terms derived from this root. The closest etymological relatives of the word “institution” are terms like “state” or “statute,” in other words the vocabulary of law and politics. In modern politics, the word refers to a wide range of different realities and uses. It has at least three widely accepted meanings:

¹ See Virginie Tournay (2011, p. 3-4). Georges Gurvitch (1968 [1950], p. 429) asked the same question with some virulence about Parsons and his use of the term.

- The first has referred since the seventeenth century to a certain type of legal-political entity, modeled on the state, which itself is the institution of institutions or the meta-institution. From the beginning, therefore, it was associated with the various elements that constitute the structure of power in the modern West, which serve as models for thinking about power and rules in other societies.
- The second sense refers to any kind of social relation or organization that functions according to fixed, legitimate, respected rules. These are the “organs” or “structures” of society, or its frameworks if one prefers; in the words of Raymond Boudon or François Bourricaud, they are the “agencies of society”.¹
- The third meaning expands the scope of the term even further to include any kind of social regularity when considered as the expression of a social custom, or in other words the statistically objectifiable translation of the individual marks of the social.

The concept of the institution, which in the political sphere refers to a normative system composed of formalized rules and crystallized representations, thus expanded to include all stable forms of social regulation and eventually any kind of social regularity at all. This dilation, which could not take place without some dilution, could prove detrimental to the attempt to establish common ground. There is no doubt that we need a more restricted working definition. We suggest that an institution is any regulated form of social relationship resulting in a set of obligations imposed on the subjects of the institution. An institution defined in this way may be a formal grouping or an organization. Every institution has two indivisible aspects, like two sides of the same coin: the instituted and the instituting. The instituted aspect has the form of a more or less objective system of rules of practice, justified or legitimized by beliefs, standards, or higher principles. The instituted is never simply a given; it is the result of an act or process of institution that is based on a set of *instituting practices* – which may be those of a legislator, a monarch, a social group, a small community engaged in a specific activity or even an entire nation. What that means is that in different societies

¹ Raymond Boudon and François Bourricaud, *Dictionnaire Critique de Sociologie* (PUF), 328, cited by Jacques Revel (2006, p. 86).

and at different times in history, there has been a wide variety of forms of relationship between the weight of the rules and the beliefs that sustain them on the one hand, and the transformative power of the practices on the other; in other words between the instituted and instituting aspects. In this view, which borrows from Marx and Castoriadis, every social practice is in some respect instituted, or in other words ruled and represented, and also to some extent instituting.

THE INSTITUTION IN SOCIOLOGY

This still provisional definition should not make us neglect the history of the concept, which is also the history of the real relationships between institutions and individuals. We will start with the Durkheimian and Maussian definition, which sees the institution as the first human and social fact and, therefore, the particular, even principal, subject of the social sciences. According to Paul Fauconnet and Marcel Mauss's famous definition, repeated by Durkheim in the preface to the second edition of his *Règles de la méthode sociologique* (The Rules of Sociological Method), sociology is the science of institutions. But let us be frank: their definition, initially put forward in 1901 in the "sociology" entry of the *Grande Encyclopédi*,¹ creates serious problems. So far, it has not displayed the unifying or encompassing virtues that the Durkheimians, and Durkheim himself, assumed it to have. And it has not been able to stem the tide of utilitarian models in the social science.²

This Maussian-Durkheimian definition is based on a characteristic of human societies that is both general and universal: the *stability* of the frameworks of action and categories of thought that are imposed upon individuals. Society is a set of social representations, forms of power and action, or collective habits that pre-exists individuals and shapes how they act, feel, and think. Language, rules of marriage, and religious beliefs are just some examples. In brief, this view of sociology treats the institution as the grammar of social life. To speak of one

¹ FAUCONNET, Paul & MAUSS, Marcel, 1901, « Sociologie : objet et méthode ». Their article, taken from the *Grande Encyclopédie*, vol. 30, Paris, p. 165-175, was reprinted in *L'Année Sociologique*, 1901, and again in Volume 3 of Marcel Mauss's *Cœuvres* (1969).

² Georges Gurwitsch was certainly correct to point out the inadequacy of the Durkheimian conception of the institution, which was simultaneously too broad in its combination of very different phenomena and too narrow in that it excluded many for not fulfilling the necessary conditions, even though they exercised control over individuals.

is to speak of the other. And there is an important reason: what this approach emphasizes is the continuity of social organization as guaranteed by its institutions. The *pre-established* nature of the social fact, the fact that it existed *before* the individual, was what led Fauconnet and Mauss to propose their definition of sociology as the science of institutions, in which the institution was defined at some length as “a grouping of acts and ideas already instituted which individuals find before them and which more or less imposes itself upon them” (Fauconnet & Mauss, 2005, p. 10).

The second aspect is the obligatory nature of the institution. There is a clear logical link between the pre-existence of the rule or norm and its binding power. This is because what exists *before* gains prestige and authority, which the institution then enforces.

Durkheim phrased it thus (1982, p. 56):

“Those beliefs and practices which are handed down to us ready fashioned by previous generations. We accept and adopt them because, since they are the work of the collectivity and one that is centuries old, they are invested with a special authority that our education has taught us to recognize and respect.”

Deep down, this is nothing but a late variant of one of the central pillars of Auguste Comte’s thought, which as we know placed great emphasis on the idea of duty towards society as an organic whole. This is of course a very old legal philosophy, which originated in the concept of *obligation* but has been extended to the entirety of the social sphere. Obligation is thus always related to the exteriority of rules with respect to individuals, and this exteriority is at the same time the anteriority of the institution with respect to individual lives. The institution is what imposes itself obligatorily upon individuals. It is an order of reality independent of each individual person; it towers above them and exercises a binding power over each one.

This canonical definition of the institution in sociology is actually quite complex. It combines two different epistemological models, a biological one and a legal one. Durkheim is split between two paradigms: law (obligation) and biology (crystallization and adaptation to milieu). The institution is treated as a “crystallization” of life, following a train of thought very similar to vitalism, as Jean-Michel Berthelot has convincingly demonstrate.¹ In Durkheim’s words,

¹ BERTHELOT, Jean-Michel, “*Les règles de la méthode sociologique* ou l’instauration du raisonnement

the institution is life crystallized, fixed, stabilized (Durkheim, 1982, p. 58). In a neologism that would resurface later in sociology and the political sciences, he saw it as the “institutionalization” of life processes. For Durkheim, the institution is a social fact, a *sui generis* synthesis of individual wills. Durkheim’s starting point is the individual conscience, the original primary unit, which by associating and combining with other individual consciences creates a new social representation. And, because this synthesis is formed outside of the isolated elements involved, “it has necessarily the effect of crystallising, of instituting outside ourselves, certain modes of action and certain ways of judging which are independent of the particular individual will considered separately. As has been remarked, there is one word which, provided one extends a little its normal meaning, expresses moderately well this very special kind of existence: it is that of *institution*” (*Ibid.*, p. 45).

Although classic Durkheimian sociology does not neglect history, which is alteration, or the social effervescence that provides it with energy, it does, in keeping with its etymology, emphasize what is established or stable, whatever in society persists or maintains, over the active sense of the word as an act or a process. The institution is first and foremost a fixed, restrictive framework with the power to structure and embed society and to constrain, oblige and coerce individuals. This understanding of the institution is not unrelated to something that had posed a major threat to social stability long before Durkheim, who in this respect was merely a successor: the assertion of individual autonomy within institutions. In other words, this sociology dealt with the reorganization of the relationships between individuals and institutions that was typical of modernity and that has sometimes been given the overly broad name of individualism. It was against this background that Mauss and Fauconnet explained that while institutional obligation plays a particularly big role in so-called traditional societies, as shown by the religious value attached to the most mundane acts, in “superior” societies the individual seems much more autonomous, as if detached from the institutions that have nevertheless formed him and still, to a certain extent, surround and restrict him. The institution, therefore, has a historical destiny that sociology must interrogate, and that even calls for its own prescriptive and political intervention, as Auguste Comte so clearly asserted. To put it another way, sociology is called to respond to an unprecedented historical situation, in which the function of institutions and obligations tends to be rein-

expérimental en sociologie,” in Durkheim, 1988, p. 52.

terpreted solely from the perspective of individual needs and desires, despite the fact that it is modern institutions, which are themselves the result of the morphological evolution of society, that provide the historical conditions necessary for these individualist interpretations. The sociologists we are talking about are aware that the individualist, and more specifically utilitarian, interpretation of the institution is explicable in historical terms, and yet at the same time they determinedly oppose it on the basis that an institution is never the direct instrument of the needs and desires of the individual, unless of course we deny history and the social causes, inaccessible to the individual consciousness, that have constituted it as it is. For the “fathers” of sociology, the political consequences of this misinterpretation were considerable: it necessitated a reconsideration of the sources of the prestige, respect and authority of institutions in the face of the double threat of the restoration of the Ancien Regime and the growing anomaly of individuals who had become separated and disengaged from the social whole. The task of sociology, then, is to understand how these stabilized forms of social relationships are interiorized by the individuals who are forced to conform to them in order to be integrated into society.

The positive agenda of constructing a new, more cohesive and better integrated social order, which characterized much of classic sociology, underwent a series of transformations during the twentieth century. In particular, it gave way to the sociology of modernization and development, which ascribed to the institution a functional role of integration into a structure and adaptation to norms. This “structural-functional” sociology, whose great advocate was Talcott Parsons, reached its zenith in the United States and then in Europe after the Second World War. In the “social system,” all functions are or can be harmoniously guaranteed as soon as any of them are accomplished by a suitable organization. Each organization carries out its own specific agenda on condition that each of its participants knows its own place and plays its own role in accordance with the dominant values the organization implements. The interplay between the prevalence of the instituted aspect on the one hand, and a “Weberian” rationalization interpreted in terms of increasing organizational efficiency through the functional distribution of tasks on the other, gave rise to a theory of conformity that was particularly well suited to enthroning the sociological profession as the discipline of “good social order.” But this adaptive and integrative view of the institution hardly had time to make itself comfortable or implement its harmonizing effects before the “functional order” was confronted by conflicting realities, economic inequalities, democratic aspirations, and

profound transformations of subjectivity. The positive, constructive and organic agenda could do nothing to avoid being overtaken by those conflicts and attacked by what became known as the “social critique.” From the 1950s on, this social critique, operating simultaneously on the theoretical and practical levels of scientific investigation and political protest, started to scrutinize the role of institutions in reproducing a social order that was seen as unjust, oppressive and unequalitarian. It analyzed the internal functioning of institutions in the context of their effects of violence, confinement, and exclusion. One of the major reversals in the history of sociology was its increasing contribution throughout the twentieth century to the “critical agenda” that brought together numerous different trends and sociologists from far beyond the Marxist sphere alone.

SOCIOLOGY’S CRITICAL AGENDA AND THE QUESTION OF THE INSTITUTION

The “critical agenda” of the social sciences is by no means completely united in its inspirations. And for good reason. The agenda itself embraces the main elements of social transformation. Its approach is individualist in the broadest sense of the term: the institution seems inherently oppressive and alienating in the light of the individualist principle of the subject’s innate freedom or his right to pursue his own interests wherever he desires. When Mauss and Fauconnet evoked the “autonomy of the individual” in their article, they confronted sociology with a tough question: the modern individual is a “subject of institutions,” but only in a very specific sense, because he tends to think of himself as their creator rather than their creature. This is the major paradox facing sociology: at the very moment when it affirms the necessary role played by institutions in restricting and imposing obligations, it must also admit that institutions have the paradoxical effect of producing individuals who entertain numerous illusions about themselves, who believe themselves to be completely autonomous and who claim to have created their own values and norms.

The conflicts around democracy and socialism have also contributed towards a view of the institution as an apparatus of control and domination in the service of the most powerful. Critical work has consisted of bringing to light the forms of domination, vested interests and hidden strategies within institutions that turn them into tools of the dominant classes. The fusion of the individualist

critique and the democratic critique gave rise to an “anti-institutional current” (as Bourdieu put it when discussing May 1968) that translated into a readiness to denounce all institutions for wielding illegitimate control over individuals and a simultaneously violent and hidden power over subaltern groups. The result is that what is known as critical sociology has paradoxically participated, no doubt partly despite itself, in a trend that we should follow Mary Douglas (1986) in referring to as “institutional forgetting.”

Three broad analytical approaches were successively or simultaneously developed at the heart of the critical agenda: the critique of collective fictions, the exposure of the lies institutions tell about their real functions, and the denunciation of institutional incarceration and subjugation. In a revival of the nominalist tradition, the critical agenda led to the demystification of “collective beings,” the deconstruction of institutional fetishism, and the analysis of the fictions of language and the deceptions of spokespeople as perpetrated through the mechanisms of delegation and representation. Where this approach has been particularly successful is in enabling the “deconstruction” of “established” (in other words instituted) entities by questioning their structure, their origins, or their heterogeneity. It was about not accepting the instituted and imposed representation of social identities as the ultimate truth, and not being content to let institutions talk as if they were conscious subjects articulating truths about themselves in their discourse (the “working class,” the “executives,” “the Church,” “the state,” “capital,” etc.). More generally, this nominalist sociology showed that institutions, in particular the state, would be unable to “remain standing” without belief.

The critical position, in effect, is that institutions lie, including to themselves, through their discursive productions. They always have other purposes than those they claim to have. In *La Reproduction* (1970), Bourdieu and Passeron demonstrated the need to analyze educational institutions in terms of their hidden goals and the symbolically violent methods they employ to achieve them. In more general terms, institutions perform impressively effective “acts of social magic” (Bourdieu, 1991).

Another form of critique, perhaps newer at the time, emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Alongside the critique of incarceration and subjugation was a general critique of the institution seen as a method of social control and a form of sequestration. Erving Goffman and Michel Foucault both thought about institutions using the model of a prison (total institutions and disciplinary institutions). They called – deliberately in one case and more ambiguously in the other – for liberation from educational, psychiatric or medical institutions.

In his introduction to the French translation of Goffman's *Asylums*, in which Goffman's phrase "total institution" is symptomatically translated as "institution totalitaire" ("totalitarian institution"), Robert Castel could write in 1968 that "every institution is inherently totalitarian" (Castel, 1968, p. 11). The guiding principle of these analyses was that the institution was never anything but a crystallization of power relationships. The task was to define the true function of the institution by analyzing the ways it controlled individuals, by finely dissecting its micro-powers, and by employing the more general and abstract mechanisms of normalization (Sauvêtre, 2009). As Foucault said in one of his classes, one had to be resolutely "anti-institutionalist" in one's metho.¹ What that meant was that it was necessary to move beyond the institution's own discourse about itself in order to grasp its true political function, and also to move beyond the institution itself in order to understand the real explanatory causes of its effects on the mechanisms of domination and social reproduction. The concepts of "field," "space," and "territory" immerse institutions in the multiplicity of activities and relationships that spill out of them on all side.²

This demystification work has not left the relationship between the social sciences and institutions untouched. As justified as it was and as successful as it may have been, "the anti-institutional current" has been nourished by these critiques at the same time as encouraging the intensification and expansion of the critical agenda. All this has had two major, and in a certain sense contradictory, theoretical consequences. The first was that the institution was seen as a sort of negation of living society ("the dead seize the living"), an alienation of praxis, a subjugation calling for "liberation." This attitude had already found sharp expression in Sartre, at the edges of the social sciences. In a powerful phrase in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, he described the institution as a "common degradation," a moment of "ossification," a "reification" of the living praxis of the group, forever condemned to keep lapsing back into the "practico-inert" (Sartre, 2004, p. 606). These and other phrases bear witness to a certain "decline of the institution" as an object of analysis and category of thought even then, a marginalization of

¹ "One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society", Michel Foucault (1978, p. 93).

² This comes at the cost of treating the institution as a borderline case of sociology, a disturbance in the field, as Bourdieu suggests in his *Méditations Pascaliennes*, where the "total institution" is synonymous with the rigidification of the field and the degeneration of games in the social space. See Pierre Bourdieu (1997, p. 188).

the institutional topic, which was relegated to a secondary position behind the energy of social movements and the dynamics of conflict.

Another conclusion, however, takes us in the opposite direction. The critique of institutions has made it possible, in the social sciences as well as in the political sphere, to address the problem of the *birth* and *transformation* of institutions, and from there to raise the question of the instituting aspect, in other words the active, dynamic, and creative dimension of the institution. The effects of this questioning were felt from the 1960s on in Marxist spheres, dissident currents; in psychiatry and pedagogy, with the emergence of schools of institutional analysis; and in political and philosophical thought, with Castoriadis's redefinition of democracy and revolution as the "self-institution of society."

CRITICAL ECONOMICS REDISCOVERS THE INSTITUTION

If sociology's critical agenda has nurtured a certain "anti-institutional current," critical economists have taken the opposite approach. As Bernard Chavance slightly ironically remarked, the institution is rather fashionable in economics nowadays (Chavance, 2009, p. 2). We should perhaps instead say that it is becoming fashionable *again* after a long eclipse. It sometimes seems as if entire branches of economics, both in and outside the mainstream, are rediscovering sociological thought as they start taking into account the role of values, beliefs, norms, and the law. It is clear that even the central question of economic value cannot escape an institutional rereading when, for example, money is no longer understood as a simple "technical device," but as an institutio.¹ In a certain sense, contemporary critical economics is re-engaging with an institutionalism that has struggled to harmonize with sociology since the end of the nineteenth century, thanks to its renewed emphasis on the legal frameworks, social uses, ways of thinking, and patterns of action that are not constantly reinvented by economic actors each time they make a choice, but rather are already pre-established. The institutional economist John Rogers Commons described the approach very clearly:

¹ André Orléan cites a comment by Schumpeter about money: "Money enters the picture only in the modest role of a technical device that has been adopted in order to facilitate transactions." (Orléan, 2014, p. 18).

“Instead of isolated individuals in a state of nature they are always participants in transactions, members of a concern in which they come and go, citizens of an institution that lived before them and will live after the.”¹

The relationships between economic discourse and the concept of the institution are certainly not simple. For one thing, it was neoliberalism that helped to reintroduce this institutional dimension into economics, at least as long as we do not confuse neoliberalism with neoclassical theory. It has even reached the point where the purpose of any neoliberally inspired public policy must be to reshape the institution, as the German ordoliberalists were well aware. Indeed, one of the main characteristics of this neoliberalism is its more or less explicit rejection of naturalism, which is true even while neoliberalism as a political project aims to *construct* market order and to instigate institutional transformations that can help adapt the structures of society to economic competition. Bernard Chavance, therefore, is right to say that “the *mainstream* has recently carried out a re-endogenization of institutions in economic science” (Chavance, 2007, p. 64). As he explains it, this is precisely the result of the neoliberal political practice of placing institutions in competition with one another through international benchmarking:

“In the course of the last decade, numerous studies have relied on vast databases and ‘institutional’ benchmarks in various countries, using information drawn from surveys of companies or investors, studies by international organizations, evaluations of the legislation of different countries and the extent to which that legislation is implemented, and sometimes even opinion polls. In attempting to measure the ‘comparative institutional performance’ of different countries by establishing correlations between indicators of ‘institutional quality’ and growth rate, the restrictive interpretation of the axiom *institutions matter* has tended to reduce considerations of the role of institutions to an analysis of the supposed efficiency of the ‘best institutions’.”

Ultimately, for *benchmarking*, “institutions matter”! But what is this institution that economists talk of? There is a tendency among institutional economists to confuse institutions and organization.² They see the institution as a rational

¹ COMMONS, John Rogers, *Institutional Economics: Its Place in Political Economy* (Transactions Publishers, 1934), 74, cited by Chavance (2012, p. 23).

² This theoretical and empirical orientation of institutional economics re-engages with a sociol-

instrument for achieving efficiency. This view renders the institution invisible behind the organizational structure of programming. This tendency is explicit in Commons, who defines all institutions (not just economic institutions) as “active organizations” (Chavance, 2009, p. 23). It is even stronger in the new company-focused institutional economics of Coase and Williamson. This functionalism certainly makes it possible to highlight dysfunctions with respect to the explicit, official rationalization of organizations – indeed this is its primary contribution – but it fails to get to the heart of institutionality.

To escape utilitarianism, then, it is not enough to reintroduce the institution into economic analysis, in particular property rights or the legal forms of commercial companies. Certain neo-institutional economists even see the institution as a simple tool of contractual relationships. But a view of the institution as the product of the rational attempts of individuals to increase their own advantages, as found in Menger, von Mises or Hayek, has nothing to do with the definition of the institution as a set of “fixed habits of thinking and acting,” as Veblen has it.

AN INSTITUTIONALIST POLITICAL ECONOMY

Faced with such a diverse range of approaches, it might be tempting to question the supposed unity of “institutional economics” or “economic institutionalism.” But to do so would be to forget the real meaning of the growth in power of these institutionalisms, which is nothing other than the crisis of naturalism in economics.

We know that neoclassical economics is based on the denial of its own normative character, that it draws its strength from the illusion that the set of normative rules it prescribes are simply facts of nature. So it represents a significant reversal in economics, albeit an ambiguous one, when it is now said that the economic acts of production, consumption, or saving are always organized, structured by laws, and mediated by the symbolic representations through which judgments, evaluations, decisions, transactions, and conflicts operate.

ogy of organizations, an early form of which may be discernible in the contrast Saint-Simon drew between the “organization of industry” and the legislation and governmental institutions of his era. It can be combined with Weberian analyses of bureaucracy and with the various neo-institutionalist currents that lay claim to “institutional change” (see Virginie Tournay, 2014).

This idea could become the minimal base of a new, more or less unified economics. That was the aim of the *Quasi-Manifeste institutionnaliste*, written in 2006 by Alain Caillé and published in the *Revue du Maus*.¹ In an attempt to overcome the differences between the so-called heterodox economic schools of thought, the manifesto posited an *institutionalist political economy* (IPE) “in the French style.” Alain Caillé summarized it as follows:

“The central proposition of institutionalism is that an economy can function only within an institutional framework. The conditions necessary for a well-functioning economy lie simultaneously in a clearly defined general institutional system and in the dynamics of civil society. Even more succinctly, institutions matter, and they should be employed in the service of social creativity and vitality.”

According to the manifesto, this IPE, by revealing the social and symbolic frameworks of economic activity, initiates a profound break with any kind of naturalism. Its starting assumption is that capitalism is not a “natural economy” but rather an “institutional economy” that always requires “*general social coordination*.” Therefore, we must think of the economy in general and capitalism in particular as systems of the “institution”.²

The assertion of a shared symbolic and political framework that is crucial to all activities, exchanges, decisions, and conflicts, is clearly an important contribution towards thinking about the anti-utilitarian foundations of the social sciences. The importance placed by economic institutionalism on legal forms, classifications, and conventions, the role ascribed to beliefs and phenomena of power: all these considerations lead to the idea that we undoubtedly have here the foundations, and perhaps the only secure ones, of a shared paradigm for unifying the social sciences and transcending disciplinary boundaries.

¹ See CAILLÉ, Alain, 2007, « Un quasi-manifeste institutionnaliste », in *Revue du MAUSS*, n° 30, *Vers une autre science économique (et donc un autre monde)*, second semester. The manifesto is signed by, among others, Robert Boyer, Alain Caillé, Olivier Favereau, and François Vatin.

² See Nicolas Postel’s reading in “Hétérodoxie et institution” (Postel, 2007).

IS A NON-UTILITARIAN THEORY OF THE INSTITUTION POSSIBLE?

As we reach the end of our essay, which has never been anything but an invitation to have the necessary discussions in the social sciences, we must return to the chiasmus between the “anti-institutionalist” trajectory of sociology and the “pro-institutionalist” trajectory of recent political economy. The latter would have to penetrate behind the official façade of an organization to a social institutionality that goes beyond economic rationality. In other words, it would have to abandon any kind of functionalism or utilitarianism in the concept of the institution. But we have also seen that the unification of the social sciences, if possible at all, must fulfil another condition. Sociology must be able to move beyond methodological anti-institutionalism. That would amount to admitting that not only do we not need to reject the institutional dimension to fully participate in the “critical agenda” of the social sciences, but also, on the contrary, that it would even be desirable to pay greater attention to that dimension when thinking about a “reinstitution” of society. The prescriptive conclusions of the manifesto are clear:

“We cannot have sustainable economic efficiency without building a political and ethical community that is strong and vital and so sustainable. And a sustainable, vital political community cannot exist unless its members share certain core values and have a similar idea of justice. In other words, if it is not also a moral community.”

This is what gives purpose to the *Quasi-Manifeste Institutionnaliste*’s “general coordination of society”: an economy must be underpinned by a specific set of norms, crystallized in the form of institutions. The question of the institution, therefore, delineates the shared ground between sociologists and economists; shared ground that is precisely the moral and political institution considered as the basis, bedrock or framework of any possible economy. It is also the scientific ground where we must stand if we are to forge a connection. Our shared method will consist of considering the political forms and moral rules of all types of collective activity in all spheres, in order to think about possible ways to transform them.

Translated by Cadenza Academic Translations

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BERTHELOT, Jean-Michel, 1988, “Les Règles de la méthode sociologique ou l’instauration du raisonnement expérimental en sociologie”, in *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique*, edited by Émile Durkheim, 7(67), Paris, Champs Flammarion.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre, 1997, *Méditations pascaliennes*, Paris, Seuil.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre, 1991, “Rites of Institution”, in *Language and Symbolic Power*, edited by John B. Thompson, translated by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson, 117-126. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- CAILLÉ, Alain, 2007, « Un quasi-manifeste institutionnaliste », *Revue du MAUSS*, n° 30, p. 33-48.
- CASTEL, Robert, 1968, « Présentation », in *Asiles, Études sur la condition sociale des malades mentaux*, edited by Erving Goffman, Paris, Minuit.
- CHAVANCE, Bernard, 2009, *Institutional Economics*, translated by Francis Wells, Oxford, Routledge.
- CHAVANCE, Bernard, 2007, « L’économie institutionnelle entre orthodoxie et hétérodoxie », in *Revue du MAUSS*, n° 30, p. 64-70.
- DELEUZE, Gilles, 1955, « Introduction » in *Instincts et institutions*, texts selected and presented by Gilles Deleuze, Paris, Hachette.
- DOUGLAS, Mary, 1986, *How Institutions Think*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press.
- DURKHEIM, Émile, 1982, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, edited by Steven Lukes, translated by W. D. Halls, New York, The Free Press.
- DURKHEIM, Émile, 1988, *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique*, Paris, Champs Flammarion.
- FAUCONNET, Paul, & MAUSS, Marcel, 2005, “Sociology”, in *The Nature of Sociology*, translated by William Jeffrey, 1(30), New York, Berghahn.
- FOUCAULT, Michel, 1978, *The History of Sexuality*, translated by Robert Hurley, New York, Pantheon Books.
- GURVITCH, Georges, 1968 [1950], *La Vocation actuelle de la sociologie*, Tome I, Paris, PUF.
- ORLÉAN, André, 2014, *The Empire of Value: A New Foundation for Economics*, translated by M. B. DeBevoise, Cambridge, MA, & London, England: MIT.
- POSTEL, Nicolas, 2007, « Hétérodoxie et institution », in *Revue du MAUSS*, n° 30, p. 83-116.
- REVEL, Jacques, 2006, « L’institution et le social », in *Un parcours critique, Douze exercices d’histoire sociale*, Paris, Galaade Éditions.
- SARTRE, Jean-Paul, 2004, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, vol. 1, edited by Jonathan Rée, translated by Alan Sheridan Smith, London, Verso.
- SAUVÊTRE, Pierre, 2009, « Michel Foucault: problématisation et transformation des institutions », *Tracés, Revue de sciences humaines*, vol. 17, p. 165-177.
- TOURNAY, Virginie, 2014, *Penser le changement institutionnel*, Paris, PUF.
- TOURNAY, Virginie, 2011, *Sociologie des institutions*, Paris, PUF, coll. « Que sais-je? ».

CONNECTING SOCIOLOGY TO MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE POST-SECULARITY FRAMEWORK

Sari Hanafi

“The melancholy science... relates to a realm which has counted, since time immemorial, as the authentic one of philosophy, but which has, since its transformation into method, fallen prey to intellectual disrespect, sentimental caprice and in the end forgetfulness: the teaching of the good life. What philosophy once called life, has turned into the sphere of the private and then merely of consumption, which is dragged along as an addendum of the material production-process, without autonomy and without its own substance.”

Adorno, 2006, 1

Many argue there is a crisis of the social sciences in general and sociology in particular. The French journal of the MAUSS (*Revue du MAUSS*) released a special issue last year (2020) that addressed this crisis. Our previous work (Hanafi and Arvanitis, 2016) proposed to situate this crisis in the working conditions specific to these disciplines, notably with respect to the commodification of knowledge production and the breaking of the virtuous cycle between research, university, and society. Other researchers have developed similar arguments about the transformation of knowledge into a fictitious commodity (*e.g.* Burawoy, 2010). One of the consequences of this crisis is the abandonment by the social sciences, like other sciences, of any consistent engagement with civil society and social movements. Knowledge is certainly produced, but no use is made of it (Hanafi, 2018). In this article, I situate this crisis more in the realm of epistemology. On this issue, many works today focus on the hegemonic epistemologies of the North and denounce universalism as a Eurocentric project, to the point of calling for the development of alternative epistemologies, specific to the South (de Sousa Santos, 2014). This article will not, however, focus on this issue, important as it is.

Instead, it proposes to identify one of the sources of the crisis of the social sciences in their weak connection to each other in general and, more specifically,

between sociology and moral philosophy. It is by renewing these connections that we can hope to correct the positivist tendency of these disciplines and propose explicit methods, normative presuppositions, and forms of engagement. This approach is dear to some researchers, such as Frédéric Vandenberghe. While reviewing some of his main ideas, I will then emphasize the need to fill a symptomatic gap in contemporary thought by underlining the importance, within our modernity, of religion and religiosity as one of the sources of ethics and its influence on the social. While it has come under strong criticism and despite the valuable scholarship addressing “post-secularity,” the secularization paradigm remains very influential, and not only in the West (Gauthier, 2020). I will argue here, with a focus on the Arab world, that the prejudicial position of some social scientists hinders our understanding of the contribution of religious actors within social movements and prevents us from appreciating how social actors forge their normative position in everyday life.

Before I am accused of overstating the importance of morality, let me define what I mean by the term. Whether it is social morality (respecting laws, norms, obligations, rules, etc.) or personal ethics (adopting certain values or virtues), morality is best understood not as a fixed set of values, but rather, in Bourdieu’s words, as “structured and structuring structures.” Morality and ethics thus presuppose agency and reflexivity, but also otherness (alterity). Morality and ethics thus assume agency and reflexivity, but also otherness. In the words of Shai Dromi and Eva Illouz (2010), morality is a set of repertoires of justification, not iron-clad rules about “ought’s.” Morality is only a subsystem of the cultural system, which is itself only a subsystem among the other subsystems of society, such as economy, law, science, etc. (Vandenberghe, 2020). It is not, therefore, a superstructure that is “overdetermined” by the power relations between groups struggling for or against hegemony. On the contrary, it is necessary to hypothesize an “analytical independence” and a “relative autonomy” of morality, on the model of the theory of culture developed by Jeffrey Alexander (1990).

SOCIOLOGY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY: TAKING ETHICS SERIOUSLY

As part of their professionalization in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, sociology and the social sciences in general underwent a process of disenchantment. For John Brewer, “disenchantment within 20th-century social science was manifested in three particular ways: a methodological emphasis on objectivity that separated the personal from professional practice and restricted practitioners’ ethical commitments; a theoretical concern with cultural relativism that encouraged a moral disregard for evil, harm, suffering and injustice as morally absolute categories; and a value orientation that favoured technocratic and scientific mentality over moral sensibility” (Brewer, 2019, p. 615). The social sciences here describe and criticize the social life, but do not aim to intellectually construct a framework for society (Dubet, 2020).

Yet, over the past two decades, there has been a growing literature on the importance of morality, manifesting what Brewer has called a re-enchantment or cognitive revolution in the social sciences. Clearly, certain structural and material conditions have contributed to the reawakening of moral sensitivity and, consequently, renewed, even if only partially, the conceptual field of these sciences. This is why, in my opinion, the process of re-enchantment is still in its infancy.

In order to better amplify this process, Vandenberghe (2018) proposes to connect sociology to a new practical and moral philosophy. This constitutes a new development within the Convivialist International founded by the leader of this French anti-utilitarian movement, Alain Caillé (2008). This school of thought has published a first and, more recently, a second manifesto (Convivialist International, 2020), co-signed by nearly 300 intellectuals from all disciplines and 33 countries. It sets out five principles: the principle of common naturalness, common humanity, common sociality, legitimate individuation, and creative opposition (opposing without killing each other). Caillé (2008) has long reminded us of the importance of the gift and the gift paradigm, putting forward the anti-utilitarian hypothesis that the desire of human beings to be valued as givers means that our relationships are not based on interest alone, but also on pleasure, moral duty, and spontaneity. Here, giving only makes sense when it is understood as a means, a performer, and a symbol of public and/or private recognition (Lazzeri and Caillé, 2015).

Like anti-utilitarian sociology, which refuses to reduce Man to the figure of *Homo economicus*, some communitarian liberals defend comparable arguments. Thus, the American sociologist Amitai Etzioni (2017) has developed a critique of Abraham Maslow's famous pyramid. Establishing a hierarchy of basic human needs and analyzing how people seek to maximize their happiness by consuming goods, Maslow showed that once basic needs are met, these "economic creatures" will seek to meet "higher needs" (self-esteem and self-actualization). However, according to Etzioni, Maslow's theory is still completely egocentric insofar as it considers that the esteem that a person seeks is primarily aimed at satisfying his or her own psychological well-being, and that self-actualization only makes sense... for oneself. For Etzioni, the social sciences, which consider people as moral creatures, should take inspiration from a more "traditional" view of human nature. The latter has three characteristics: first, it considers that people are capable of distinguishing between right and wrong; second, this does not impede them from constantly erring; and third, they are assumed to be engaged in a perpetual struggle, an arm-wrestling match, between the brighter and darker sides of their nature. Thus, he writes:

"Certain social sciences are blind to an essential element of human nature and good society. They contribute very little to the understanding of the forces that make individuals more or less moral. They seem to be unwittingly overlooking the moral struggle that runs through everyone's life and is a defining characteristic of human nature. While other social sciences help to enrich our understanding of this moral struggle, they have nonetheless, in the process, undermined the very foundations of moral judgments."

Etzioni 2017, p. 519

Understanding the moral struggle calls for increased collaboration between social and moral philosophy and the social sciences, which for Vandenberghe (2018) is the only way to understand the ultimate moral aim, which Paul Ricœur formulates as follows: "The aim of a good life with and for others in just institutions," *i.e.*, an ethic of love, hospitality, care, and solicitude with and for others within the framework of institutions that ensure and reinforce social justice and democracy. This position does not imply ignoring the historical, social, and cultural preconditions of the good life and assuming that the Aristotelian good life is possible without the appropriate structures that social welfare can provide.

From this perspective, the question of otherness becomes a central issue. Critical realism, which influences many sociologists today such as Margaret Archer, makes a valuable contribution in this respect. Roy Bhaskar has proposed a critique of the Cartesian ego that defines people as subjects in opposition to a world of objects, of which other subjects. Conversely, he suggests approaching the ontology of persons in line with the notion of *ubuntu*, a term found in certain Southern African languages and which is roughly translated as “I am because you are” (Bhaskar, 2020). Other philosophers of deconstruction similarly offer ethical orientations and normative justifications, from Derrida’s formal “other” to Paul Ricœur and Emmanuel Levinas’s phenomenology of the “Other,” understood as that human face that calls for infinite responsibility. As Levinas formulates it, in a simple and astute way: “Before Cogito, there is hello!”

All these conceptions of otherness based on the “good life with and for others,” however, under-theorize evil. This *aporia* has taken on crucial importance since Hannah Arendt’s conceptualization of the “banality of evil.” Arendt ([1961] 2006) saw Eichmann as an ordinary, rather inconsistent bureaucrat who, in her words, was “neither perverse nor sadistic,” but “terribly normal.” He acted for no other reason than to diligently advance his career in the Nazi bureaucracy. Eichmann was not an amoral monster; he did bad things without bad intentions. The same could be said of many Syrians and Yemenis who have recently seen their well-intentioned uprisings turn into brutal civil wars. Evil, whether banal or radical, is central to the work of some social scientists, especially those sensitive to identity politics. They will thus spend much of their time cursing evil, whether it is the enemy nation or the colonial power. Such is the case of the Hezbollah in Lebanon, which concentrates all its efforts against Israeli colonial policy (evil) without giving itself time to reflect on how to build a good life with other Lebanese. In “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy” (1994), Arendt did not hesitate to go against Kantian and Socratic moral philosophies, as these have not stood the test of time. The Holocaust was the moment when the thread of this tradition was broken. Arendt refers in particular to Churchill’s statement (1994, p. 740):

“Few things that I have been led to believe are permanent and vital have lasted. All the things I was certain, or was taught to be certain they were impossible, have happened.”

In a similar vein, Theodor Adorno, in his critique of the Enlightenment, also perceived this rupture and presence of Evil in our lives, and argued that the experience of our encounter with others as unique and vulnerable individuals has been replaced by an impersonal and external appeal to supposedly universal laws and norms (Bernstein, 2001). Critical theorists thus provide a valuable mediation between moral philosophy and social sciences, so much that they temper the positivist tendency of the latter by injecting more literary and philosophical considerations.

What are then the implications of the connection between moral philosophy and social sciences? They are of two kinds. Let us distinguish these implications in terms of the global understanding of social phenomena and method. In terms of our understanding of the social, we must analyze social conflicts with respect to their material stakes, but also as a moral struggle. Actors are torn between moral sensitivity and insensitivity, seeking the good life while trivializing evil. But in late modernity, these parallel processes take place without there being a Hegelian synthesis that is able to overcome the tensions. They are permanent tensions.

To give an example from the sociology of migration, the best concept to reflect these dilemmas is that of “suffering at a distance” proposed by Luc Boltanski (1999). Some people commit to donating to refugees while refusing to allow their country/location/community to take them in when they are at their border. For Roshi Naidoo (2008), the fear of difference is fueled by the fear that “different” people will dilute a supposedly stable British identity. However, recognizing the “other” as the same as “us” disrupts this fantasy of wholeness in a much deeper way. The most threatening “other” is the one that goes unnoticed among us. The way in which social actors formalize their ethical position is thus very different from the Kantian conception of the ethical subject. For Kant, such a subject should act selflessly, bracketing his or her inclinations and thus rising above his or her fickle and biased desires to recognize the universal truth that transcends the immediate context of experience. If I help a refugee, for Kant, it must be guided by a commitment to honor the moral law rather than by the concrete reality of the refugee’s specific experience of suffering. But the decision I make is far more complex. It must take into account context and consequences, and combine my ethics of conviction with my ethics of responsibility, as Max Weber (2008) would say.

Paying attention to the moral struggle reveals how our late modernity has emphasized formal legality rather than more subtle moral judgments. In this

legalistic approach, human rights have become a tool for both the weak and the powerful. In some cases, rights brandished as weapons – to use the title of Clifford Bob's great book (2019) – and camouflage strategies designed to cover up ulterior motives further marginalize religious minorities (when, for example, blasphemy, a legitimate right, becomes a duty), and deprive vulnerable populations of social services (denial of public schooling for veiled students in France and Quebec).

The role of sociology is not only to show the complexity of these experiences and the forms of power that underlie them, but also to influence them by first stripping them of any prejudices that might undermine the sense of common humanity, by advocating for this humanity, and by engaging in action in this sense. Indeed, social scientific research is not only influenced by the social context, it also has an impact on it.

Thus, it becomes essential to link moral philosophy to the social sciences in order to understand and analyze the characteristics of our late modernity. As Vandenberghe writes, we need (2020, p. 13):

“A minimal morality (*minima moralia*), a moral baseline that sets forth the fundamental principles (universalism, pluralism, and individualism) and fundamental procedures (democracy, dialogue, and discussion) that allow for the formulation of the most basic rules of a reasonably [rather than rationally] ordered society that makes social life possible.”

In the pluralistic and polarized societies we now live in, where local and national communities are weakened by global forces, there is no longer a consensus on any version of the good life. Irish philosopher Maeve Cooke (2007) is right to insist on the autonomy (self-determination) of the ethical person, even when they appear to follow a moral code imposed by a community or religion. Morality is the “laws of freedom,” which are not based necessity but obligations. The search for the good life is therefore important, but its scope is limited and restricted to personal life. In this sense, with the advent of modernity and the discovery of the principle of subjectivity, the just takes priority over the good (Vandenberghe, 2018). The Ricœurian conception of justice and fairness should then be conceived as a corrective tool to be used to adapt legal and moral rules to concrete human needs and to the multiplicity of moral dilemmas. All this should be the subject of sociological investigation.

In terms of method, this connection between moral philosophy and social science should facilitate the analysis of principles, norms, and values from the performative perspective of actors in social life, while deploying the dialectic of structure and agency (what Vandenberghe calls a “theoretical approach to action”). Researchers are thus invited by critical realism to mobilize the “rationality of judgment” that allows them to distinguish between competing interpretations of empirical evidence, to evaluate and compare the heuristic strength of different theoretical explanations, and, finally, to select the theories that most accurately represent the “realm of reality,” given the present state of our knowledge (Hu, 2018). This requires both meta-epistemic reflexivity and ethical responsibility (moral, social, and political) on the part of the cognitive agents involved. As an example, in studying psychological assessments conducted on asylum seekers following their alleged torture, Patel and Pilgrim (2018) dismiss both the positivist assumption that evaluators can adopt a value-neutral perspective and the relativist position of social constructivism for which, because the evaluators cannot avoid resorting to values, must renounce any claim to objectivity. This makes it possible to escape both the relativistic excesses of postmodernism and the reductive instrumentalism of positivism.

RELIGION AS ETHICS: UNDERSTANDING SECULARISM

Reconnecting the threads between moral philosophy and the social sciences cannot be achieved without a serious reflection on the role of religion in the constitution of ethics and the social. A major research program of the International Panel on Social Progress (Davie and Ammerman, 2018) suggests that religion and religiosity can just as easily foster social progress and resistance to colonization and tyranny as they can unleash violent forces, encourage conservatism and sectarianism, and sustain forms of social and political oppression. In other words, the same religion can play different roles in different contexts. For example, many members of Pentecostal Churches in Brazil who voted for leftist leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (about 100 deputies in the 2016 parliament belong to these Churches) cast votes for extreme-rightist Jair Bolsonaro in 2019.

Yet, a large portion of social sciences have focused mainly on the negative role of religion. As concerns the Arab world, one can add a specific problem: the virulence of the conflicts between elites is such that most social scientific research

is insensitive to norms and values as they manifest themselves in the practices of social actors. Thus, fundamentally, the problem is reduced to a polarization between universalists and cultural relativists/particularists/contextualists, or between (il)liberal leftists and (il)liberal religious actors.

I will give an example of this dangerous polarization in the formation of elites by underlining two aspects: the interpretation of secularism reduced to a one-model-fits-all universalist concept and the conception of religious activism by certain social sciences.

THE UNIVERSALIST CONCEPTION OF SECULARISM AS A SINGLE MODEL

I am not unaware of how reluctant postcolonial scholars are to use the concept of universalism, primarily because of its problematic history (Hanafi, 2019). Still, I consider that there can be no science nor any global understanding of our world without the recognition of the universality of certain concepts (*e.g.* social class, democracy, citizenship) and values (*e.g.* human rights, gender equality). If we want to be both universalist and contextualist, how can we reconcile the local and the universal? The universal dimension of a concept rests on three conditions. The first is that it results from a quasi-cultural consensus and not from the generalization or universalization of values rooted in the Euro-American context. Second, a universal concept is not a teleological concept, but the result of a historical experience (Rosanvallon, 2008) that acquires its normativity as a result of an inherently open-ended collective historical learning process. Third, its universality has meaning and scope only as an imaginary. This is why a universal concept must be sufficiently general and flexible.

For example, is democracy universal? It is, but not as a model to be exported (Guénard, 2016), nor as a concept with a telos. Democracy refers to a historical experience that goes back to the French Revolution of 1789, to the 1980s in Latin America, to the 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe, and finally to the 2010s in some Arab countries. In this sense, it is the result of a collective historical learning process. What is universal is an *imaginary* desire for democracy, the traces of which can be found, for example, in the slogans chanted by Arab demonstrators demanding freedom, justice, and dignity. What we are witnessing today is not the crisis of the universality of concepts such as democracy or

social inequality, but a crisis of *imagination*: how to transform the imaginary of democracy into a model that can be realized in a given context? This normative universalism is therefore flexible and open, and does not exclude the existence of what Armando Salvatore calls “different patterns of civility” (2016).

Another good example that is important for developing this part of this article is secularism. Religion is often understood as a separate social sphere. François Gauthier (2020) refuses to see society as differentiated into separate compartments, one of them being religion. The spheres of religion, culture, politics, economy, and the social are traversed by common logics that allow a given society to be encompassed in its totality, exactly as Marcel Mauss and Karl Polanyi did. Due to this differentiation approach, there is much misunderstanding between the secular and the religious and the religious and the other spheres. Many social scientists have understood secularism as a mono model (which mainly follow the French model, *la nouvelle laïcité*) to be replicated. This positivist paradigm considers religion as a system diametrically opposed to rationality, and holds the view that religion is merely a minor sub-phenomenon or superstructure which will, through the development of the industrial economic structure and its associated scientific culture, become something of the past. It perceives secularism as a process of privatizing religion that will isolate it in the private sphere. Furthermore, the absolute contradiction between the sacred and the secular, and the presence of a clerical class, were projected from a Christian context unto the Islamic one (Asad, 2003; Hermassi, 2012); and the limits of this singular approach led many scholars to lose contact with the substance of religion, and of the intimate religious experience itself.

Another relevant example is that of secularism (*laïcité*). In this context, religion is often understood as a separate social sphere. François Gauthier (2020) is one to refuse to see society as differentiated into separate compartments, one of them being religion. The spheres of religion, culture, politics, economy, and the social are traversed by common logics that allow a given society to be encompassed (or “embedded”) in its totality, in accordance with the theorizations of Marcel Mauss and Karl Polanyi. As a result of an absolutist and exclusive distinction between religion and “the secular,” many social scientists, often those linked to the left, have understood secularism as a single model (mainly the French model) that should be identically reproduced. This positivist paradigm considers religion as a system diametrically opposed to rationality, a minor sub-phenomenon or superstructure that will be superseded by the development of the industrial economic structure and the scientific culture associated with

it, as if religion were necessarily to be shelved sooner or later as an antiquity. According to this paradigm, secularism is defined as a process of privatization of religion, now confined to the private sphere. The irreducible contradiction between the sacred and the secular, as well as the presence of a clerical class, have thus been projected from the Christian context onto the Islamic one (Asad, 2003; Hermassi, 2012). All this has led many scholars to lose touch with the substance of religion and personal religious experience. As a result, they have proven unable to recognize the coexistence of the sacred and the secular in the era of multiple modernities, within the paradigm of pluralism (Berger, 2014), or within a more realistic understanding of the process of separation of religion and state (Cipriani, 2017) that invalidates many scholars' assumptions about the inevitable decline of religion in modernity.

In the Arab world, the problem also manifests itself in other types of work. Some social scientists and theologians in this region of the world refuse to accept that changing patterns of religiosity are induced by local contexts and not by the "Western invasion" of the Muslim world. This binary reasoning has also affected some sociologists who identify the West with materialism and rationalism, as opposed to an Arab world characterized by simple indigenous knowledge based on revelation.

The new framework of the relationship between religion and state in a post-secular society has remained at the doorstep of the Arab world. One does not find any theorization of the need for an agreement or of a certain permeability between what has been dissociated for so long: religion and state, ethics and politics, religious and secular arguments in the public sphere. As Armando Salvatore (2016) writes, the post-secular era is generally associated with a plurality of views and practices that results not from the negation of secularism, but rather from the rise of a fairly broad reflexivity on issues concerning secularism and secularization. Many do not understand secularism as a process that only makes sense in its context, as Azmi Bishara (2013) has shown. All this is not without consequences and may explain the waves of counter-revolution at the time of the Arab Springs, but also the positions of Western countries towards the new democratic and secular processes in some countries like Tunisia and Egypt.

RELIGIOUS ACTIVISM: IS IT A CONSPIRACY?

Political conflicts in the Middle East are triggered by the persistence of strong polarizations within societies: the huge gap between social classes in economic terms, but also the incessant conflicts between elites unable to talk to each other. One of the main items of contention is the dichotomy between secularism and religion.

The two opposing camps within the elite adopt different behaviors. Before tackling the particular case of the Arab world, it is necessary to recall in what terms Gilles Deleuze characterized the perception of the world by the liberal left (and with it, by most social scientists): it is, in his words, a form of perception that starts from the most distant and moves towards the closest. It is from such a perspective that social inequalities, for example, have been understood as a vast global phenomenon of exploitation, the nature of whose relations is rooted in imperialism and colonialism. For this reason, most social scientists call for an examination of the existence and structures of imperialism and colonialism in order to address the suffering of the (abstractly defined) social classes involved. In contrast, some identity politics movements (*e.g.*, some Islamic, right-wing, and conservative movements) believe that these relations begin with the nearest and then move to the farthest. They believe in community work, family, and neighborhood relationships. For example, Trump's supporters believe in his ability to address the social inequities faced by the left-behind communities of rural white Americans. Similarly, in Lebanon, religious organizations are currently the most responsive NGOs, taking on families who lost their jobs during the Covid-19 related lockdown. For other identity politics movements (around ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc.), their struggles may vary considerably depending on the context, but they are most often rooted in community struggles, "armed" as they are with the universalist doctrine of Human Rights. Yet, as Richard Rorty (1999) pointed out, this "cultural left," while defending a pluralist agenda, gives only a minor place to the struggle for class justice.

While the Arab uprisings have shown some positive cognitive developments, the social sciences have had little impact in pushing for change or rationalizing the debate. I attribute this to a particularly strong anti-clericalism that conceives of secularism as a single universalist model (and not as an imaginary). Here is another case where certain groups on the left waste a lot of time cursing "evil," identified here with religious groups, even going so far as to ally themselves with

the military and authoritarian governments, thereby abandoning the tasks necessary to realizing the aim of “leading a good life with and for others.”

We are indeed living in a period of revolutions where political civil rights are supplanting (but not replacing) ideology. Many countries are showing the importance of certain Islamic movements, particularly in their ability to ally with other opposition groups (Bayat, 2013). In the midst of an internal transformation, some of these movements have launched slogans that go far beyond the simplistic slogan “Islam is the solution” to advocate freedom, democracy, and a range of concrete demands – similarly as other opposition parties. Thus, we have entered an era of post-Islamism, in the sense of the affirmation of a new form of reflexive Islamism characterized in particular by the fact that the leaders of these movements manifest their desire for pluralism and respect for freedom of expression. This reflexivity has made possible the emergence of a new revolutionary language and political symbols that refer to democracy, social justice, and dignity rather than religious slogans.

Several members of the Muslim Brotherhood and *al-Nahda* declared they were in favor neither of a Western secular state nor of a religious one. The use of the notion of civil state (*dawla madaneyya*) is again a self-referencing exercise which raises a problem in terms that are not yet determined. In spite of the blurring of terminology and the declarations of some Islamic leaders, there is no reason for scholars to consider the new position of the Muslim Brotherhood as a smokescreen for a long-term objective of establishing an Islamic state governed by the strict application of *Sharia* (Islamic law). These neo-Islamic movements, which Assef Bayat (2013) calls the “post-Islamists” (e.g., the Renaissance Movement: *al-Nahda* in Tunisia or the Justice and Development Party in Morocco), go beyond some of the characteristics attached to Islamist movements, and have called for replacing Sharia with the nation as the basis of legitimacy. The difference with classical Islamism is in the way social actors who believe in Islam as a moral system enter the political arena through participation, not contestation (Brown, 2012). It also lies in the way post-Islamists conduct discussions and debates in the public sphere using arguments inspired by Islamic values while also using other legal and sociological arguments.

If some classical Islamic movements have turned to, or are turning to, neo-Islamism, it is by advocating a politics that has tamed their rigid ideology and thus become more realistic. However, this transformation is not automatic. Khalil al-Anani (2018) has identified the intellectual and structural obstacles that led to

the crisis of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and the difficulties they faced in dissociating the defense of religion (*da'wah*) from politics.

Mohamad Bamyeh (2019) recently published a very important book in which he points out how the left often distorts the meaning of Islamic activism. He argues that the Islamic movement has allowed its members to choose between different options using an attitude of “discerning wordliness” or what Bamyeh calls a *participatory ethic*. Its most obvious effect is to create spaces or opportunities for daily social participation in local, national, or global life in ways that are personally experienced. Here, Bamyeh rightly draws some comparisons with secular elites who often privilege episodic democratic participation, while Islamists implement everyday participation in diverse and concrete forms, depending on local needs and capacities – from building neighborhood schools to helping with housing and marriage, encouraging charitable giving, helping each other, becoming politically engaged as an activist, and in some cases even as a campaigner. However, there is nothing exceptional about these practices. As has been observed in other parts of the world, for example with Christian democracy and social democracy in Europe, Bamyeh argues that Islam as a discourse underlying these social movements has nurtured ordinary social conservatism and has been able to politically mobilize different forms of religiosity. His analysis of Islamic social movements is particularly valuable for cutting through the “activist conspiracy” thesis according to which “local people are duped into supporting an unrooted movement that has helped them for ulterior motives.” Bamyeh is lucid when he states that “there is simply no evidence to support the conspiracy-paternalistic theory of Islamic activism in general” (Bamyeh, 2019, p. 41).

In light of the above, while many social scientists (and journalists) keep using the term “political Islam,” it is losing its meaning, as it does not recognize the foundational differences between classical Islamism and neo-Islamism. It is a stereotyping generalization that does not account for the heterogeneity of Islamic political thought, from the moderate to the extremist, from Islamic movements to official Islam. The term “political Islam” is often used to deride a movement and to suggest that all of their trajectories are the same – composed of people ranging from Sayyid Qutb of the Muslim Brotherhood, to Al-Qaeda, and ISIS. It is worth noting that among those who employ the term political Islam are the “guardians” of official Islam, *i.e.* the authoritarian politicians who consider that the Islam to which they adhere is essentially apolitical. Incidentally, placing their opponents under this banner is a way

for these ruling authorities to dismiss the opposition and deny them political legitimacy. In the Gulf monarchies, for example, any oppositional figure is *de facto* viewed as being part of the Muslim Brotherhood (this is how Khashoggi's murder was justified in some political statements and popular tweets in Saudi Arabia), and therefore considered a "terrorist." Alas! the French president Emmanuel Macron has also, on more than one occasion, announced that he would ban political Islam in France.

Lebanese philosopher Karim Sadek (2012) has analyzed Tunisia's *al-Nahda* leader Rachid al-Ghannouchi's liberal-leaning thought and policy in the light of Axel Honneth's (1996) theory of recognition. What Ghannouchi is asking for is the recognition of Islamic identity in the public sphere and the recognition of the importance of certain religious texts, interpreted through *ijtihad* (innovation) and the concept of *maslaha* (interest). Similarly, some of the most important reformists in the Arab world today are figures from these neo-Islamic movements, including Sheikh Ahmad al-Raysuni and Dr. Saadeddine Othmani. Al-Raysuni is currently president of the World Union of Muslim Scholars, and his innovative influence transcends Morocco (al-Raysuni, 1997). He was the head of the Movement of Unity and Reform (MUR), which is known for its criticism of the 2011 Constitution, which states, problematically so in his view, that the King of Morocco has a religious function (as the Commander of the Believers). Saadeddine Othmani meanwhile sits as the prime minister of the Moroccan government since 2017. Othmani was the first to clearly theorize the distinction between politics and religion without separating them, and proposed to differentiate between religious advocacy (*da'wah*) and political reasoning.

This being said, I am not unaware of the sensitivity we in the social sciences have with respect to the ambiguous and conservative social thinking of many religious movements. However, we cannot remain blind to the way in which they evolve and how their followers formalize their judgments, evaluations, and justifications in their daily lives, beyond the polarities of strict religious reasoning and the universalist model of secularism.

Maeve Cooke (2005) has proposed a valuable approach for confronting the tensions between the secular and the religious in a way that allows the embrace of pluralism and the recognition of others (whether religious, non-religious, or a-religious). It mobilizes the concepts of authoritarian and non-authoritarian public reasons for this purpose. Cooke (2006) argues that the problem with religious positions is not that they appeal to a single, unshared framework, as Habermas would say, making these positions authoritarian and dogmatic in their formu-

lation. Rather, if non-authoritarian arguments are formulated by religious actors, adopting positions that are open to argument, then these arguments can be translated into the public sphere without jeopardizing the freedoms necessary for the existence of democracy. A different measure for non-authoritarianism could be the attempt to integrate secular and religious knowledge in a single framework, in which both sets of knowledge are understood in light of one another. Cooke argues that there are assumptions that govern the debate about these tensions, including that:

“Historical time is progressive as opposed to cyclical; that political authority is neither divinely ordained, nor naturally given nor historically determined but a matter of co-operation among human beings for their mutual benefit; that there are no authoritative standards independent of *history* and *socio-cultural context* that could adjudicate rival claims to validity, especially in the areas of science, law, politics, morality and art; that human knowledge is contestable, in the sense of [being] open to revision on the basis of good reasons; and that human beings are essentially equal by virtue of capacities such as reason or moral judgment, and are entitled to respect on grounds of such capacities.”

Cooke, 2005, p. 380 (emphasis added)

Once those assumptions are laid out, Cooke states that considerations of “context” and “history” are what fundamentally distinguish authoritarian claims from non-authoritarian claims (2007). She also provides more specification regarding what authoritarian practical reasoning is and highlights two interrelated elements. The first is that, when knowledge is restricted, its access is reserved to a privileged group of people and thereby removed from the influences of *history and context*. Second, authoritarian practical reasoning occurs when conceptions of justification isolate the validity of propositions and norms from the reasoning of the same human subjects that they claim to be valid for.

The attempt of religious people to reconcile their worldview (and their justifications) with the findings of science is an example of this. Cooke’s theorization thus allows believers to maintain the certainty they find in faith (which is often the subject of innovation – *ijtihad*), and to engage in a public dialogue in which secular and religious languages are integrated into a single worldview. This is one of the findings of my recent study on gender equality and the formation of

non-authoritarian reasoning in the inheritance debate in Tunisia (Hanafi and Tomeh, 2019).

The great challenge of our modernity is to combine law and virtue, as the latter requires constant argumentation. Because religion is one of the crucibles of human virtues, it is necessarily involved in these discussions, as in its task of enforcing morality through various rituals. The post-secular society should thus encourage non-authoritarian practical reasoning and allow for deliberation among those who share different worldviews/ideologies, ensuring that the line between criticism and incitement to hatred is not crossed.

CONCLUSION

In contrast to Nietzsche's "gay science" I introduced this article by quoting Adorno's "melancholic science." Indeed, social sciences and philosophy do not aim at eudemonia (the good life and human flourishing). They do not seek Aristotle's "*magna moralia*," but simply a "*minima moralia*." It is in this spirit that this article has attempted to show that if, historically, moral philosophy and positivist social sciences have divorced, we must now, in our time of late modernity and acute moral sensitivity, unite them anew. Instead of shying away from the moral debate, we need to grasp it in all its complexity as a moral struggle by giving it a collectivist dimension while also understanding it on a personal level.

Methodologically, we need to analyze principles, norms, and values from the perspective of the performance of social actors, as proposed by Vandenberghe (2018). In order to develop moral sociology and anthropology as a practical philosophy, we must overcome the separation between philosophy and science, the transcendent and the empirical, the normative and the descriptive within a renewed moral sociology. This plea should also be read as a call to promote interdisciplinarity, to fight disciplinary compartmentalization, and thus rethinking the boundaries of sociology and social sciences.

If the ethical turn in sociology is already here, it is necessary to reinforce it by proposing explicit normative methods, presuppositions, and commitments. As far as commitments are concerned, these should not be limited to the respect of our personal moral commitments, but should be open to an active commitment to civil society and social movements.

Opening Gift

Finally, we must stop beating around the bush and face the thorny question of religion. Renewing the links between moral philosophy and the social sciences requires sustained attention to the role of religion as one of the sources of ethics. Religion is important not only as a defender of certain virtues, but also as a force for learning through ritual. Conceived on such a basis, an adjusted post-secular secular system will be more tolerant of the non-authoritarian presence of religion in the public sphere, and will forge more contextual models that advance our quest for social justice, democracy, and active citizenship.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ABDULRAHMAN, Taha, 2012, *Rouh Al-Dine: Mina Deeq al-'ilmaniyya Ila Si'it al-'itmaniyya (The Spirit of Religion: From the Short-Sighted Secularism to Openness of Trusteeship)*, Beirut and Casablanca: al-markaz ath-thaqāfi al-'arabī.
- ADORNO, Theodor, 2006, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, translated by E. F. N. Jephcott, London, New York, Verso.
- ALEXANDER, Jeffrey, 1990, "Introduction: Understanding the Relative Autonomy of Culture" in *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates*, edited by Alexander Jeffrey and Steven Seidman, 15-39, Cambridge England, New York, Cambridge University Press.
- ANANI, Khalil, 2018, "The Post-s: The Muslim Brotherhood as a Model", in *After Political-Islam: A New Stage or an Ideological Illusion*, edited by Mohammad Abu Rumman, 91-106, Amman, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
- ARENDT, Hannah, 1994, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy", *Social Research*, 61(4), p. 739-762.
- ARENDT, Hannah, 2006, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, first edition, New York, Penguin Classics.
- ASAD, Talal, 2003, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Stanford University Press.
- BAMYEH, Mohammed A., 2019, *Lifeworlds of Islam: The Pragmatics of a Religion, Lifeworlds of Islam*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- BAYAT, Asef (ed.), 2013, *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, first edition, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press.
- BERGER, Peter, 2014, *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*, digital original edition, Boston, de Gruyter.
- BERNSTEIN, Jay, 2001, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press.
- BHASKAR, Roy, 2020, "Critical Realism and the Ontology of Persons", *Journal of Critical Realism*, 19(2), p. 113–20.
- BISHARA, Azmi, 2013, *Religion and Secularism in Historical Context*, vol. 1, Beirut, Arab Network for Research and Publishing (in Arabic).
- BOB, Clifford, 2019, *Rights as Weapons: Instruments of Conflict, Tools of Power*, Princeton, Oxford, Princeton University Press.
- BOLTANSKI, Luc, 1999, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*, translated by Graham D. Burchell, Cambridge University Press. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511489402>
- BREWER, John D., 2019, "Book Review. Christianity and Sociological Theory: Reclaiming the Promise", *International Sociology Reviews*, 34(5), p. 614–23.
- BROWN, Nathan J., 2012, *When Victory Is Not an Option: Islamist Movements in Arab Politics*, first edition, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- BURAWOY, Michael (ed.), 2010, *Facing an Unequal World: Challenges for a Global Sociology*, Taipei, Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Council of National Associations of the International Sociological Association, Academia Sinica.
- CAILLÉ, Alain, 2008, "Beyond Self-Interest (An Anti-Utilitarian Theory of Action I)", *Revue du MAUSS*, 31(1), p. 175–200.
- CATALDI, Silvia, 2018, "The Public and Social Character of Love in the History of Sociological Thought", *Paedagogia Christiana*, 42(2), p. 101–20.

- CIPRIANI, Roberto, 2017, *Diffused Religion – Beyond Secularization*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.
- COOKE, Maeve, 2005, “Avoiding Authoritarianism: On the Problem of Justification in Contemporary Critical Social Theory”, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 13(3), p. 379–404. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09672550500169182>
- COOKE, Maeve, 2007, “A Secular State for a Postsecular Society? Postmetaphysical Political Theory and the Place of Religion”, *Constellations*, 14(2), p. 224–38.
- DAVIE, Grace & AMMERMAN, Nancy T., 2018, “Religions and Social Progress: Critical Assessments and Creative Partnerships”, in *Rethinking Society for the 21st Century: Report of the International Panel on Social Progress*, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press.
- DROMI, Shai M. & ILLOUZ, Eva, 2010, “Recovering Morality: Pragmatic Sociology and Literary Studies”, *New Literary History*, 41(2), p. 351-369.
- DROMI, Shai M. & STABLER, Samuel D., 2019, “Good on Paper: Sociological Critique, Pragmatism, and Secularization Theory”, *Theory and Society*, 48(2), p. 325-350.
- DUBET, François, 2020, « Le retour de la société », *Revue du MAUSS*, n° 56, p. 49-76.
- ETZIONI, Amitai, 2017, “The Moral Wrestler: Ignored by Maslow”, *SSRN Scholarly Paper*, Rochester, New York, Social Science Research Network. URL: <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3055735>
- GAUTHIER, François, 2020, *Religion, Modernity, Globalisation, Nation-State to Market*, London, Routledge.
- GUÉNARD, Florent, 2016, *La Démocratie Universelle. Philosophie d'un Modèle Politique*, Paris, Le Seuil.
- HANAFAI, Sari, 2018, “Knowledge Produced but Not Used: Predicaments of Social Research in the Arab World”, in *Universities in Arab Countries: An Urgent Need for Change: Underpinning the Transition to a Peaceful and Prosperous Future*, edited by Elias Baydoun and John R. Hillman, 143-62, Springer International Publishing. URL: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73111-7_7
- HANAFAI, Sari, 2019, “Global Sociology Revisited: Toward New Directions”, *Current Sociology*, 68(1), p. 3–21.
- HANAFAI, Sari, 2020, “Towards a More Convivial Left?”, open Democracy (blog). URL: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/openmovements/towards-more-convivial-left/>
- HANAFAI, Sari & ARVANITIS, Rigas, 2016, *Knowledge Production in the Arab World: The Impossible Promise*, UK, Routledge.
- HANAFAI, Sari & TOMEH, Azzam, 2019, “Gender Equality in the Inheritance Debate in Tunisia and the Formation of the Non-Authoritarian Reasoning”, *Journal of Islamic Ethics*, 3(1), p. 207–232.
- HERMASSI, Abdel Latif, 2012, *On the Islamic Religious Heritage: A Sociological-Historical Reading*, Cairo: Dar al-Tanwir (in Arabic).
- HOCHSCHILD, Arlie Russell, 2016, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*, New York, The New Press.
- HONNETH, Axel, 1996, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, translated by Joel Anderson, MIT Press ed edition, Cambridge, Mass, The MIT Press.
- HU, Xiaoti, 2018, “Methodological Implications of Critical Realism for Entrepreneurship Research”, *Journal of Critical Realism*, 17(2), p. 118-139.
- INTERNATIONAL CONVIVIALISTE, 2020, *Second Manifeste Convivialiste : Pour Un Monde Post-Néolibéral*, Paris, Actes Sud.

- KHUDARI, Anwar Qasem al-, 2007, *The Phenomenon of New Religiosity and Its Influence in Smuggling Westernization*, Jeddah, Markaz Ta'sil (in Arabic).
- LAZZERI, Christian & CAILLÉ, Alain, 2015, "Recognition Today: The Theoretical, Ethical and Political Stakes of the Concept", *Critical Horizons*, 7(1), p. 63–100.
- NAIDOO, Roshi, 2008, "Fear of Difference/ Fear of Sameness The Road to Conviviality", in *Soundings on Race, Identity and Belonging*, edited by Sally Davison and Jonathan Rutherford, London, Lawrence And Wishart Ltd.
- PATEL, Nimisha & PILGRIM, David, 2018, "Psychologists and Torture: Critical Realism as a Resource for Analysis and Training", *Journal of Critical Realism*, 17(2), p. 176–191.
- RAYSUNI, Ahmad al-, 1997, *The Theory of Approximation and Preference and Its Application in the Islamic Sciences*, Dar al-Kalima. URL: <http://waqfeya.com/book.php?bid=10421> (in Arabic).
- RORTY, Richard, 1999, *Achieving Our Country : Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press.
- ROSANVALLON, Pierre, 2008, "Democratic Universalism as a Historical Problem", *Books & Ideas*. URL: <http://www.booksandideas.net/Democratic-Universalism-as-a.html>
- SADEK, Karim Sadek, 2012, "Islamic Democracy: The Struggle for and Limits of Recognition", thesis, Georgetown University.
- SALVATORE, Armando, 2016, *The Sociology of Islam: Knowledge, Power and Civility*, Wiley.
- SOUSA SANTOS, Boaventura de, 2014, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*, Boulder, Paradigm Publishers.
- TOSCANO, Roberto, 2005, "Commemoration of Paul Ricœur", *The Journal Pace Diritti Umani/Peace Human Right*, n° 5.
- VANDENBERGHE, Frédéric, 2018, "Sociology as Practical Philosophy and Moral Science", *Theory, Culture & Society*, 35(3), p. 77-97.
- VANDENBERGHE, Frédéric, 2020, "What's Good about the Good Life? Action Theory, Virtue Ethics and Modern Morality", *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 1(17).
- WEBER, Max, 2008, "Politics as Vocation", in Max Weber's *Complete Writings on Academic and Political Vocations*, edited by J. Dreijmanis, New York, Algora Publishing.

AN UNFINISHED DIALOGUE

MARCEL HÉNAFF, PHILOSOPHER AND ANTHROPOLOGIST

Francesco Fistetti

I met Marcel Hénaff in person in October 2007 during the national conference “The Teacher’s Work – Wages, Justice and Gift,” organized in Bari by the CISL (Italian Confederation of Workers’ Unions). I was immediately struck by his kindness, his “gracious” side, in the sense of the term he uses in his research to designate the unilateral or unreturned gift, revealing a spontaneous generosity very close to the *kharis* of the Greeks and the *gratia* of the Latins. Our scholarly exchanges went back a few years, when I had reworked the classical *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* distinction in light of the gift paradigm in my book *Comunità* (2004). His book, *Le prix de la vérité* (2002), had made a deep impression on me. It is a monument of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, which should interest all those who share Marcel Mauss’ suggestion that ‘there are no social sciences but a science of societies’. It is also an instructive example of the epistemological and hermeneutical attitude that should be held towards the contemporary galaxy of post-structuralisms and post-colonialisms, and, more generally, of all deconstructionist and postmodernist postures.

THE ORIGINS OF WESTERN RATIONALISM

Hénaff’s approach has a particular mark, because his toolbox is very large, including not only the classical disciplines (from the history of religions and theology to literature – classical tragedy, the novel, poetry, theater etc.), but also linguistics, semiology, architecture, and the history of science. In his research he combines the ancient and the modern, philological rigor and the art of interpretation, historical documentation and the richest conceptual tools drawn from the human and social sciences. The studies of ancient Greece (M. Finley, G. Loyd, L. Gernet, E. Havelock, F. Hartog, J.-P. Vernant, P. Vidal-Naquet,

P. Veyne, etc.) are put in dialogue and interaction not only with the classics of modern thought, but also with linguistics (É. Benveniste), semiotics (C. S. Peirce), and ethology (K. Lorenz). In my opinion, though, the long-term lesson that Hénaff has given us has to do with the central role that both anthropology in its French-speaking version (from Mauss to Lévi-Strauss) and – however strange this might sound – the history of philosophy (from ancient Greece to the Frankfurt School and the philosophical constellations of the twentieth century) must play in the construction of a general social science. The specificity of his work is to combine philosophy and anthropology not as a scholarly curiosity, but as a necessary step to reconstruct the history of Western rationality in its transformations and crucial turning points. This happy hybridization, which can be traced back to Mauss himself, clarifies Marcel’s “encyclopedic” conception of Western rationality, in which the tight connection between modern anthropology as the science of “other” societies and Western philosophy (from Plato to Heidegger), because of the way it overdetermines our political and practical reflection, produces a precious epistemological gain. In short, if anthropology (from Mauss to Lévi-Strauss) teaches us that societies are not only socio-economic formations but also symbolic constructions, we can consider that Western philosophical speculation is essentially a self-reflexive exercise with respect to the challenges of living in society. From this perspective, contemporary theories of society – from Bourdieu to Giddens, from Freitag to Latour, from Parsons to Luhmann, from Weber to Habermas – developed “by articulating and integrating concepts at a level of generality that transcends the concepts of the various disciplines” (Caillé, Chaniel, Dufoix and Vandenberghe, 2018, p. 29). But beyond this work of complexification and beyond the national traditions underlying these theories, which are blending and merging with each other in the “axial age” of globalization, Marcel suggests to add the symbolic dimension to this “transversal” and “transdisciplinary” reading of the constitution of contemporary theories of society. In other words, the theories of society are structurally theories of rationality in the broadest sense of the term, within a tradition that goes back to the *logos* of the Greeks.

Of course, Hénaff does not propose a reductionism à la Hegel (who reduces the evolution of rationality to the History of the Spirit), and even less a dated model in which philosophy has primacy over the human sciences (or sciences in general), which are relegated to an inferior status. Hence, Marcel’s double working method. First, he interrogates the long-winded philosophical questions that are tacitly lodged or have become sedimented in the social sciences, because

they are the tail side – the unthought-of side – of specific concepts. In fact, the conceptual production of the humanities and social sciences is always irrigated not only by ideological beliefs, but also by philosophical categories, as well as metaphysical and theological ideas. This is what makes social relations symbolic relations. As Marshall Sahlins recently pointed out (*ibid.*, p. 42):

“As cultural forms, human social relations are themselves symbolically constituted [...]. This is not a matter of ideology, except that, because they are meaningfully constructed and ordered, all socio-cultural phenomena are ‘ideological’.”

The metaphysical questions behind the *anthropos*, the *polis*, *philia*, *agôn*, reciprocity, etc. are crucial questions which obsess all social sciences. An important clause must be added: these philosophical notions are cultural values which themselves form the coherent symbolic universe of “Western rationalism” (Weber) with its claim of universality. It suffices to have a vague knowledge of the sociological tradition (Durkheim/Simmel/Weber) to understand how philosophical reflection has determined the genesis of its paradigms and the construction of its systems. The same could be said of modern economics, from Adam Smith to Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarianism, and the ordo-liberalism of Walter Eucken, Wilhelm Röpke, and Alfred Müller-Armack. With the difference that in this history, the figure of the *homo economicus* has entirely confiscated the rationality of man as a “political” and “speaking animal” (according to Aristotle’s famous definitions). As Arendt liked to say, these are key concepts of our cultural tradition that are perpetually renewed, especially once “the thread of tradition is broken.” However, the project of rereading Western philosophy (and its history) in the light of Maussian anthropology has almost never been carried out.

This retroaction of anthropology and the gift paradigm in particular on philosophy produces surprising knowledge effects. In Hénaff’s hands, Mauss’s anthropology, which is always filtered through Lévi-Strauss, becomes an extraordinary historical and analytical operator. It provides the prism through which: 1) Western ethnocentrism is subjected to a radical critique by the discovery that *homo economicus* embodies neither natural nor absolute rationality; 2) Western philosophy, for its part, discovers that its fundamental structure since its origins – that is the structure of the history of metaphysics from Plato to Heidegger –, contains the vocabulary of the gift. A vocabulary that has been forgotten but which nevertheless remains active in the subterranean strata of our culture and

which continues to act as the bedrock (the “rock,” as Mauss would say) of life in society and, therefore, of all theories of society.

THE GIFT OF BEING

A single example suffices to explain the novel results that an anthropological perspective as practiced by Hénaff can bring to the study of philosophy and the latter’s relations with the humanities and social sciences. It is Anaximander’s famous fragment IX:

“Whence things have their origin, there they must also pass away according to necessity; for they give to each other justice and recompense for their injustice, according to ordinance of Time [*kata tou kronou taxin*].”

Marcel’s interpretation of Anaximander’s language extolls the vocabulary of the gift/counter-gift relation at work in the cosmic order and that of social relations. All beings must accept the order of time (*tou kronou cabs*), wait for their turn, and cede to others when the time comes. The highest form of social bond is reciprocal obligation, either positive (gift) or negative (vindictive justice). While Heidegger incorporates this fragment in *The Word of Anaximander* in the framework of the *Seinsfrage* (the ontological difference between being and being-as-such) to suggest that the initial enunciation of being – the gift of being – has been forgotten and erased, Hénaff makes us see that the question of reciprocity or of reciprocal ritual exchange is the reverse side of the question of the gift of Being. The original question of the history of metaphysics is thus the question of the gift or, better, the question of giving, or donation. However, what Heidegger does not understand is that the debt of which Anaximander’s fragment speaks is the debt of retaliation, the “agonistic debt, which is brought about by a failure to fulfill the obligation of reciprocity” (Hénaff, 2002, p. 306). In Anaximander’s text, the theme of vindictory justice resounds; that is to say, the theme of the right to retaliate modelled on the networks of the gift and marked by a ritually coded management of time. At the origins of Western thought, this obligation is so imperative that, as in all traditional cultures, Ancient Greece extends it to all living beings, to nature, and to the universe.

In his book *Le don des philosophes* (Hénaff, 2012), Marcel finds the *Leitmotiv* of the history of Western philosophy in the question of donation and that of the gift. From Plato and Aristotle to Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Ricœur, and Marion (to name only a few), the gift is the true object of philosophical practice. It is impossible to reconstruct the whole argument of the book, but it is important to emphasize its main thesis: if the donation of being is the beginning (*arché*) of Western philosophy, anthropology shows that the passage from the donation of the phenomenon (of the manifestation of Being) as “given” to the social and institutional practices of the gift is the limit that philosophy cannot cross by its own means. The interrogation on the donation of being remains in the register of the Husserlian *Gegebenheit* (the given), of the Heideggerian *es gibt*, of Derrida’s *il y a* (and for whom the gift is another name for Being) or of Marion’s *étant donné* (being given). Philosophical interrogation alone cannot go into the phenomenology of the gift as a social practice regulated by historically determined institutions. Hence Marcel’s project to bring into dialogue philosophical reflection and social sciences.

“The only possible approach – he writes – is that of a hermeneutics (or of any well-constituted discipline of interpretation) developed on the basis of objective knowledge concerning this practice.”

Hénaff, 2012, p. 194

Empirical knowledge or “scholarly inquiry” is, therefore, required for the philosopher who wants to understand his time and the world in which he lives. Cultural symbolisms are codes of behavior and systems of rules that are “singular, local, and non-deductible”; and, above all, “they reveal formal patterns that are everywhere recognizable” (*ibid.*, p. 195). Incidentally, it is not a coincidence if the last chapter of this important book is entitled “Philosophy and Anthropology. With Lefort and Descombes.”

A STRUCTURALIST READING

It is not possible here to discuss Hénaff's dialogue with Lefort and Descombes from the standpoint of the original relationship they had with Mauss's *Essay on the Gift*. But what we must admit is that this dialogue is strongly marked by Lévi-Strauss' reading of the essay in his "Introduction" to Mauss's writings (Lévi-Strauss, 1950). In his book, *Claude Lévi-Strauss: le passeur de sens* (Hénaff, 2008a), Marcel expresses his theoretical debt to Lévi-Strauss. Hence the great importance he attaches to the "formal models" underlying the symbolisms governing social relations. Hénaff shares the structuralist reading of Mauss' encyclopedic project of a "*novum organum* of the social sciences of the twentieth century," and he agrees with the central thesis of the author of the *Structures élémentaires de la parenté* that Mauss does not grasp the unity of the three moments of the gift: giving/receiving/returning the gift. Mauss sees these gestures separately as "three obligations: to give, to receive, to return the gift," and, consequently, they would remain "fragments" or "scattered members" (Lévi-Strauss, 1950, p. 38). In short, Mauss does not succeed in reaching down to the original structure of reciprocity hidden in "the discrete operations in which social life is broken down": it is this structure which for Lévi-Strauss constitutes "the primitive phenomenon" and which he calls *exchange* (*ibid.*). Moreover, Mauss confers an illusory unity to the three operations of the gift by adding an "additional quantity" to the three moments, namely the Maori's *hau*.

What is important to note here is that, in *Le don des philosophes*, Marcel continues Lévi-Strauss' approach, but he makes an adjustment that is not negligible. What Lévi-Strauss calls "exchange," Hénaff asserts, "is the totality of a relation which must from the outset be understood as integrating the moments and elements that make it up: the fact of giving back is already involved in the receiving that follows the giving, which constitutes the 'structure, of which experience offers only the fragments'" (*ibid.*, p. 260). The adjustment resides in the fact that the "structure" that Marcel refers to in this text leaves aside the "logic of the relations" that inspired Lévi-Strauss, *that is the symbolic logic of language* which he borrowed from both the formalism of phonology and the structural linguistics of N. S. Troubetsoï, as well as the discovery of the "unconscious mechanisms" of Freudian psychoanalysis. To escape the narrow rationalism of Lévi-Strauss, which is very close to Whitehead's and Russell's program of the *Principia mathematica*, Marcel turns to Wittgenstein's theory

of “language games,” in particular in its interactionist version in Goffman and with continuous reference to C.S. Peirce’s logic of triadic relations. The latter is characterized by a specific property that can be formulated as follows: any relation of exchange of objects between persons refers to a norm of exchange or, as one might say, it is a “relation according to a law” (*ibid.*, p. 76). In this respect, Hénaff takes advantage of Vincent Descombes’ criticism of Russell’s dyadic logic, according to which the gift relation – A gives B and C receives B – would be the simple transfer of a good from one partner to the other. On the contrary, the gift relation implies a relation between the partners through the good exchanged (Descombes, 1996, chap. 17). This valorization of the trivalent logic of Peirce leads Marcel to correct, at least in part, the heavy formalism of Lévi-Strauss and to foreground the historicity or the shifting dialectic of the struggle between human groups that Lefort opposed to Lévi-Strauss in 1951 as a keystone for understanding the constitution of the social bond (Lefort, 1978). The cycle of the gift – giving/receiving/returning the gift – is like a “game structure” and “a principle of alternance that is analogous to any game involving partners.” This is why entering a game entails the obligation to reply.

That the relation of the gift is a triadic relation and that the latter is bound by a law means exactly that it is, according to Mauss’ formula, a “total social fact”; or, to say it again with Marcel’s words, that it is: 1) an “unbreakable structure”; 2) an “intentional” relation; and 3) a relation that forms a “convention” between the partners (Hénaff, 2012, p. 77-78). Mauss knows perfectly well that the cycle of the gift is a social practice in which “the reply belongs to the game as such, or, let us say, to the *dispositif* of rules that must be accepted for the game to be possible” (*ibid.*). He knows perfectly well, therefore, that the ceremonial gift “is to be understood as a risky wager, a challenge even; it consists in *offering* in order to *seduce* and finally to bind” (*ibid.*, p. 79). Marcel believes, however, that “Mauss did not perceive this point” (*ibid.*, p. 78) and that it must be amended by Peirce’s logic of triadic relations and Wittgenstein’s theory of language games as forms of life (*Lebensformen*).

MARCEL AND MAUSS

We touch here on a decisive point of contention in Hénaff's approach to Mauss' *Essay*. Marcel Hénaff devoted most of his research to the rigorous elaboration of the notion of the ceremonial gift and, in this undertaking, he followed a method of ideal-typical identification of the forms of the gift inspired by Max Weber. It would take too long to reconstruct the differentiation between the three forms of the gift – gracious, supportive and ceremonial – which he supports with an extraordinary wealth of historical analysis. What is important to note is that the ceremonial gift seen as an institutional procedure of alliance and reciprocal recognition between human groups and, therefore, as a place where the “public sphere emerges,” is entirely convergent with the *Essay on the gift* [as the MAUSS has argued recurrently, *editors' note*]. It is not coincidental if Marcel has drawn attention to the status of the public space of the contemporary city, to its transformations, as well as to the growing risks in the era of globalization, of a disintegration of the places of participative life and, consequently, to the ways in which to rebuild a “common world” (Hénaff, 2008b). *Public recognition*, he insists, comes through the exchange of precious goods which are “the pledges and the substitutes of the donors: literally, symbols” (Hénaff, 2014, p. 203). However, with respect to Mauss, he follows Lévi-Strauss on this crucial point since the first expression of this public recognition is the exogamous alliance, which for him remains the “rule of the gift par excellence.” In this respect, the debate within the *Revue du MAUSS*, as Alain [Caillé] recalls in his homage to Marcel [cf. *Revue du MAUSS*, n° 56, 2020, *editors' note*], was very lively – yet always theoretically fruitful and humanly respectful of the diversity of mutual points of view. As one can see, the questions that remain open are numerous. Death brutally interrupted a dialogue that Marcel continued until his last day with the friends of the MAUSS. It is up to us to show the value of his remarkable scientific and human heritage.

Translation by François Gauthier

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- CAILLÉ, Alain, CHANIAL, Philippe, DUFOIX S. & VANDENBERGHE, Frédéric, 2018, « Introduction » to *Des sciences sociales à la science sociale*, Lormont, Le Bord de L'Eau.
- DESCOMBES, Vincent, 1996, « Les essais sur le don », in *Les Institutions du sens*, Minuit, Paris 1996.
- FISTETTI, Francesco, 2004, *Comunità*, Il Mulino, Bologna.
- HÉNAFF, Marcel, 2002, *Le prix de la vérité. Le don, l'argent, la philosophie (The Price of Truth. Gift, Money, and Philosophy)*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2010).
- HÉNAFF, Marcel, 2012, *Le don des philosophes. Repenser la réciprocité*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris.
- HÉNAFF, Marcel, 2008a, *Claude Lévi-Strauss: le passeur de sens*, Tempus Perrin, Paris.
- HÉNAFF, Marcel, 2008b, *La ville qui vient*, L'Herne, Paris.
- HÉNAFF, Marcel, 2014, *Violence dans la raison? Conflit et cruauté*, L'Herne, Paris.
- SAHLINS, Marshall, 2018, « Un manifeste anthropologique. Les origines de l'État » in Caillé A., Chaniel Ph., Dufoix S., Vandenberghe F., « Introduction » to *Des sciences sociales à la science sociale*, Le Bord de L'Eau, Lormont.
- MAUSS, Marcel, 1950, *Sociologie et anthropologie*, Presses universitaires de France, Paris.
- LÉVI-STRAUSS, Claude, 1950, « Introduction to the work of Marcel Mauss », in Mauss M., *Sociologie et anthropologie*, PUF, Paris.
- LEFORT, Claude, 1978, « L'échange et la lutte des hommes », in *Les formes de l'histoire. Essais d'anthropologie politique*, Gallimard, Paris.

MARCEL HÉNAFF AND THE HETEROGENEITY OF GIFT PRACTICES¹

Olli Pyyhtinen

Ever since the 1980s, anthropologists and sociologists have paid increasing attention to the modern gift, thereby turning the analytical gaze from the colonized Others – indigenous societies and their forms of gift-exchange – to our own societies and studied blood and organ donation, Christmas gifts, gendered aspects of gift-giving, and failed gifts, for example. Nevertheless, many of the questions motivating the recent work on the gift continue to stem from classical anthropology and utilize its concepts. It is only with few exceptions that scholars have critically questioned whether the forms of ceremonial gift-exchange studied by Mauss and other anthropologists can actually serve as the model to understand contemporary gift relationships and embody the same kind of generosity and reciprocity as they do.

The posthumously published book by philosopher and anthropologist Marcel Hénaff (1942-2018), *The Philosophers' Gift: Reexamining Reciprocity* (2020), which is a translation of *Le don des philosophes: Repenser la réciprocité* published in 2012, is a ground-breaking work within the field of gift theory in this regard. It elucidates a number of misunderstandings and badly stated problems surrounding the gift. Hénaff argues that contemporary gift practices cannot be regarded as the direct heritage of the traditional gift. The main argument of the book has to do with the *heterogeneity* of gift practices. In an uncompromising manner, Hénaff argues that almost all philosophers who have discussed the gift so far tend to merge different forms of the gift into one another. According to him, their fundamental and common mistake lies in judging all types of gift practices by the criteria applicable specifically to the gracious gift only. Gratuitous, free giving is typically taken as the standard by which *all* kinds of gifts are assessed, which leaves crucial differences between various modalities of gifts unacknowledged.

¹ Review of HÉNAFF, Marcel, 2020, *The Philosophers' Gift: Reexamining Reciprocity*, translated by Jean-Louis Morhange, Fordham University Press, New York.

In the book, Hénaff engages with the work of established authors who have studied the gift to re-examine the relationship of the gift and reciprocity. He has his eye primarily on contemporary French philosophy, but to some extent he also engages with the sociological and anthropological contributions of for example Alvin Gouldner and Marshall Sahlins, problematizes the relation of philosophy and anthropology, and reflects on what philosophy might gain from the re-examination of anthropological data. Hénaff divides the authors whose work he discusses into two main groups. The first of them consists of philosophers associated with phenomenology and its legacy. Here he focuses on the work of Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Marion, Emmanuel Levinas, and Paul Ricœur. The second group of thinkers take society as their object, approached either through political reflection (Claude Lefort) or through an epistemology of the relationship with Others (Vincent Descombes).

The criticism that Hénaff levels is stern throughout, disclosing the flaws, conceptual limitations, and logical inconsistencies of the arguments of the authors covered (though at times this is also to make it possible to better appreciate their actual contributions). Perhaps most fascinating – and relentless – is his critique of Derrida’s influential notion of the *aporia* of the gift. For Hénaff, Derrida’s refutation of the presence of the gift and the gesture of giving, which relies heavily on Heidegger’s notion of *Es gibt*, is problematic for mainly two reasons. Firstly, the justification of the priority Derrida grants to giving in the interpretation of the *Es gibt*, which opens Derrida’s questioning of the gift and giving, is according to Hénaff highly debatable. There is nothing in English (*there is*), French (*il y a*), Spanish (*hay*), or Italian (*c’è*), for example, that would invite the same shift toward the gift. It seems specific to the German language alone. One might even ask whether the German *Es gibt* itself involves also – or even primarily – this same semantic neutrality; it would be just as possible to read the expression *Es gibt Sein* as “there is Being,” without any reference whatsoever to the gift.

Secondly, Hénaff argues that Derrida’s theory involves a problematic extension or shift of the connection established between the phenomenological notions of *Es gibt* or the gift of Being to gift practices *among persons*. For Derrida, givenness presents an Urgift that founds or grounds all other gifts. However, according to Hénaff, it is highly questionable that the phenomenology of givenness could account for the analysis of all kinds of gift practices, including ceremonial gifts (the same criticism basically applies to Marion’s theoretical edifice too). “The idea of givenness belongs to a speculative thesis about the world” (p. 15), whereas the gift in ritual offerings, for example, is not without an agent who gives. There is a

gesture by a subject and a social bond between giver and the recipient. According to Hénaff, to subjugate the practices of gift-giving to “the requirements of an ontology of givenness” thereby “amounts to an illegitimate shift between fields that have no commensurable objects” and “do not and cannot involve the same questions” (p. 15). Because a number of terms in Derrida’s argument are presupposed as self-evident and equivalent, with no consideration of their polysemy, his line of reasoning becomes fragile. He continually shifts from one semantic field to another, but writes as if of one and the same thing all the time.

However, it would not do justice to *The Philosophers’ Gift* to read it as a sheer commentary, since ultimately its author engages with other thinkers and their texts to advance his own argument. Hénaff argues for the existence of three different orders of the gift (here, he draws on Pascal’s concept of “order”), each endowed with its own relevance and legitimacy (for other studies distinguishing different modalities of the gift, see *e.g.* Caillé, 2000; Silber, 2007; Komter, 2007; Chanial, 2010; Pyyhtinen, 2014).

The first is the ceremonial gift, characterized by the strict obligation to reciprocate. It can be found in the festive, ritual exchanges among parties in traditional societies examined by Mauss and classical anthropology. Mauss famously suggested that there were no free gifts in the ceremonies he studied, and that the gifts offered always involved three obligations (themselves entailing a mix of freedom and obligation): the obligation to give, to receive, and to reciprocate. Hénaff strongly opposes the economic interpretation of traditional gift exchange, a reading most common among authors, who criticize Mauss for reducing the gift to economic exchange. Hénaff insists that it is entirely mistaken to understand the ceremonial gift as an archaic exchange of *goods*. In it, the original gesture is not motivated by an expectation for profit or a return on investment, but ritual gifts are exchanges of *symbols*, public procedures of reciprocal recognition among groups. The offering and commitment of selves in ritual gifts has according to him nothing to do with an offer of ownership or appropriation. Rather, the ceremonial gift involves an alliance, a recognition between “us” and “you,” established through symbols. The purpose of ceremonial gift exchange is not to offer and gain economic goods, but to establish a bond, to bind the parties involved in the exchange and make collective life possible.

The second form of the gift is disinterested giving. It embodies an entirely different form of generosity. In it, the generous offer is not aimed at reciprocity but graciousness, and its primary nature is psychological and moral. The idea of voluntary, free, and gratuitous giving is also the meaning of the gift

sanctioned by ancient moral and religious traditions and cherished by common sense. We typically wish to understand the gift in terms of disinterested generous giving, counterbalancing interested, egoistic, and balanced economic exchange. While Hénaff refutes the reduction of the gift to unconditional generosity by insisting on different orders of the gift, he does not deny but rather wishes to preserve “the beauty of the gracious and disinterested gesture that utilitarianism can never dilute in the acid of its suspicion” (p. 50). He only suggests that the gracious gift should not be made the all-encompassing norm of every type of gift. To do so amounts to disqualifying a vast spectrum of relationships generated by gifts.

Finally, the third form of the gift discussed by Hénaff in *The Philosophers' Gift* is the mutual-aid gift given to the benefit of either familiars or strangers. It is associated with kindness, solidarity, and philanthropy, and therefore has a much more social character of generosity than the gracious gift. It may involve various practices of mutual aid among neighbours, loved ones, or members of such communities as religious groups, friendly associations, and scholarly societies. The goods offered are not primarily precious or prestigious, but goods useful in ordinary life, ranging from clothing to food, housing, and employment, for example. While some authors mistakenly view the solidarity-based gift as the modern form of the traditional ceremonial gift, Hénaff insists that its context is entirely different: it is not part of a ritual or a festive occasion, but related to an emergency requiring efficient action.

While all three forms share the characteristic of generosity, its nature is different in each case, Hénaff suggests: in the ceremonial gift, generosity involves a public challenge; in the gracious gift, it is discrete or even secret, aimed at generating joy in the recipient; and, finally, in the solidarity-based gift, it amounts to compassion through a gesture of support or aid. Thereby, it is easy to see how each of the modalities of gifts has its own system of justification and meaning. For example, reciprocity, which is crucial in and for the ceremonial gift, is not relevant in the gracious gift. Further, the self-effacement of the giver and the concealed expectation of reciprocation, which are appropriate in, or even necessary conditions for free, disinterested giving, would make absolutely no sense in the ceremonial gift, which is “*public by definition*”: “What would be the meaning of a pact unknown to the parties and nonreciprocal?” (p. 39).

By insisting on keeping the three forms of the gift separate, Hénaff wants to make us acknowledge and appreciate not only the specificity of each form, but also the transformations in gift practices and forms of recognition over the

process of modernization without regarding contemporary gift practices as the descendant of the traditional gift. Whereas the gracious gift and the solidarity-based gift are very much alive still today, the ceremonial gift as a public form of gift exchange between groups has almost disappeared. A displacement has taken place. In traditional societies the ceremonial gift exchange constituted a dominant phenomenon, a total social fact, shaping all aspects of the social life of the groups, from moral to economic, legal, religious, and aesthetic, for example. In contemporary societies, by contrast, public recognition is not expressed through ceremonial exchange. “Modernity has had to invent new solutions to ancient problems” (p. 201–202), Hénaff writes; in our own societies, public recognition is performed and guaranteed mostly by the law and by political and legal institutions. The heroic and ritual reciprocity of clan chiefs is no longer needed, as the law has priority over kinship-ties: all are equal before the law, which becomes “the common measure, the neutral figure of the third party, the norm of equality and freedom that all citizens give one another” (p. 48). If there is a direct descendant to the ceremonial gift, it is to be found in “instituted rights and the struggles over those rights” (p. 47), not in commercial exchanges of goods or in contemporary forms of mutual aid based on solidarity and kindness, Hénaff argues. In *The Philosophers’ Gift*, Hénaff focuses primarily on this line of descent, paying less attention to modern forms of the gift. Subsequent research needs to explore contemporary manifestations of the gift and how recent social transformations, new technologies (e.g. digitality), and discoveries in science (e.g. in genetics), for example, invite us to rethink the gift.

Interestingly, besides insisting on the heterogeneity of gift practices, Hénaff’s book also suggests rethinking gift relationships. The relationship between the giver and the recipient cannot be considered in a satisfactory manner in dyadic terms. This is already because the verb “to give” is trivalent: it entails that *someone* gives *something* to someone *other*. Or, as Hénaff writes: “the relationship of reciprocity cannot be reduced to a one-on-one interaction: It necessarily includes a third element, a thing from the world” (p. 170). Here we are not speaking about the third-party human agent discussed for example by Georg Simmel and Emmanuel Levinas, but about the “third party-thing” that binds together the partners in the gift relationship. The gift object – which can be a material solidified object but also a mere word or a gesture, for example – is not a supplement added to the relationship between the partners, but it makes their relationship possible. I, too, advance this line of argument in my book *The Gift and its Paradoxes* (2014). The gift relationship is not a transfer of a good/thing

from one party to another, but a relationship *mediated* by something external to the two partners. This mediating third element brings about what Charles S. Peirce calls the “triad,” a relationship among three logical subjects.

To me, the argument that Hénaff develops in relation to the mediating role of the gift can be extended to apply to all kinds of relationships among humans. While relationships are typically considered in the social sciences in dyadic terms, as relations between two partners, it is more apt to fathom them as triangular constellations consisting of three elements. There is a third element implicated and involved in every relationship between two parties. However, to fully acknowledge the effectivity of the non-human thirds involved – and how they make possible, support, mediate, translate, resist, or prevent our actions; what kinds of relations and agencies they assume, prompt, and enact; and how they become effective in relation to humans and other non-humans – it would be important to transcend Hénaff’s more or less anthropocentric perspective. While he acknowledges the significant role played by things from the world in our relationships, he ultimately reduces them to mere symbols, giving primacy to human agency and privileging language, meanings, and culture. This is already implied by the concepts third-party *agent* and third-party *thing* that he uses, which is prone to render objects passive and inert, distinct from active and free human agents. However, far from being passive and dead, objects and matter are in constant flux and have an ongoing historicity. When objects and materials are considered as only symbols, it becomes impossible to see their powers and activity to their full extent. They are effective already by their very materials. We do not have to “look beyond the material constitution of objects in order to discover what makes them tick,” as Tim Ingold (2011, p. 28) has argued.

Linked with the theme of the “third,” Hénaff notes that there are also situations, like matrimonial alliance in traditional societies, where the categories of the personal and impersonal third party intervene at the same time. In Claude Lévi-Strauss’s *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, “matrimonial alliance is the primordial and most accomplished form of gift exchange relationships as constituting a pact among groups” (p. 190). For Lévi-Strauss (1969, p. 65), the wife is thus “the supreme gift,” the third-party element exchanged by the groups. It is quite baffling that Hénaff does not problematize Lévi-Strauss’s idea of the exchange of women as the most elementary form of exchange or refer to any feminist authors who have explicitly criticized Lévi-Strauss for his view (*e.g.* Luce Irigaray). Would we really fall back into an original condition of disorder, into

some kind of anarchy or primitive violence of the state of nature, without the objectification and exchange of women? I doubt it.

The fact that Hénaff assumes the exchange of women to present the primordial model of the ceremonial gift also seems to contradict his claim that the offering of gifts in ceremonial gift exchange “has nothing to do with an offer of ownership or appropriation” (p. 25). It may indeed be true that it would be mistaken to understand the exchange itself in economi(sti)c terms, insofar as the gesture of giving in the ceremonial gift is not about gaining profit, but about establishing an alliance, a pact. Nevertheless, if the primordial model concerns the exchange of women as objects, it is based on the masculine *will to appropriate*. Thus, the wife exchanged between the groups may as well be a form of property, over which men claim ownership. Hénaff, too, writes:

“True, the wife is a person; her position is nevertheless identical to the position of any being or good that mediates the relationship between two agents.”

Hénaff, p. 190

If not outright driven by it, the public procedures of reciprocal recognition among groups in the ritual gift nonetheless seem to be inextricably entangled with the “law of appropriation,” identified by Hélène Cixous as the basis of masculine economy. Without the prior appropriation of the woman by the giver and the possibility of reappropriation by the receiver it would not be possible to give her as a gift, reducible to the position of an object. Thus, I am tempted to ask, is the gift eventually as alien to and distant from the economy and its law of appropriation, as Hénaff tries to convince us. It is worth recalling Mauss’s position here, suggesting that the gift, combining interest and disinterest, is never only economic, but *can* also be such.

This criticism notwithstanding, *The Philosophers’ Gift* makes an urgently longed for contribution to gift theory by resolving much of the indeterminacy around the term “gift.” It shows how gifts do not constitute a homogeneous class of objects, but the word ‘gift’ involves a number of very different practices and questions. The tendency to superimpose one single frame – gracious giving – onto practices that significantly differ from it leads to an erroneously uniform treatment of profoundly different modalities of gifts. The book introduces important conceptual distinctions and also clarifies the status of the notion of reciprocity in relation to gifts, social recognition, and the foundations of human society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- CAILLÉ, Alain, 2000, *Anthropologie du don*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer.
- CHANIAL, Philippe, 2010, « “L’instant fugitif ou la société prend” : Le don, la partie et le tout », *Revue du MAUSS*, n° 36, p. 521-538.
- INGOLD, Tim, 2011, *Being Alive. Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, London and New York, Routledge.
- KOMTER, Aafke E., 2007, “Gifts and Social Relations: The Mechanisms of Reciprocity”, *International Sociology*, 22(1), p. 93–107.
- LÉVI-STRAUSS, Claude, 1969, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. [Transl.] James Harle Bell, John Richard von Strauss, and Rodney Needham, Boston, Beacon Press.
- PYYHTINEN, Olli, 2014, *The Gift and its Paradoxes*, Surrey and Burlington, Ashgate.
- SILBER, Ilana, 2007, « Registres et répertoires du don: avec mais aussi après Mauss? », in Eliana Magnani (ed) *Don et sciences sociales. Théories et pratiques croisées*, Dijon, Editions de l'Université de Dijon.

TOWARDS A RADICAL MODERATIONISM AND A MAUSSIAN ETHIC OF DISCUSSION

Alain Caillé

Here is more or less where we find ourselves. In France, as in a growing number of countries, such as the United States for example, no one listens to or believes in anyone outside their reference groups any more. These reference groups are also belief groups. Each of these groups has its own preferred channels of information and discussion, mostly social media, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. It is only these that are supposed to tell the truth. Other reference and belief groups, as well as the national public media in general, are increasingly ignored or hated. Groups of belonging and belief are thus transformed into groups of shared anger and loathing.

This coalescence of groups of belonging, belief and detestation is not only the making of so-called popular classes, or what are just as easily called “conspiracy theorists,” facing the “elites”; nor is it just a matter of gangs of young people who fight each other, sometimes to the point of death, for a yes, for a no, for the sole pleasure of appearing heroic on social networks. Be it among intellectuals, people in showbiz or political partisans (the confrontation between Trump and Biden supporters was exemplary from this point of view), the tone and violence rise day after day. Everywhere, and increasingly, one exists only by participating in the denunciation and stigmatization of opponents who are often largely imaginary and invented to serve the cause (but who of course, then actually come into being). How long can democracies survive this multidimensional dislocation of the public space?

Where does it come from? There could be endless analyses of the causes of this explosion of a world which in principle should be common to at least all the inhabitants of a single country. For my part, I see two main sets of causes, which are also closely and paradoxically intertwined.

The first is the now global hegemony of neoliberalism. This is based on the postulate that society does not exist (“there is no such thing as society,” as Margaret Thatcher so sharply put it, “there are individual men and women and

there are families”) and that the only possible and desirable mode of relationship is one of generalized competition of all against all. This postulate has become the universal norm. It plunges the individuals in question, thus in principle de-socialized, into a bottomless state of distress or disarray, for whom the only remedy is to take refuge in the family and groups of belonging. These groups are themselves in competition with all the others, and also becoming vectors of hatred.¹

The second set of causes is both the result of the first and the outcome of the irresistible democratic dynamics so well analyzed by Tocqueville in *On Democracy in America*. Everyone wants to be (at least) equal to everyone else. No one can stand the slightest inferiority, nor therefore the slightest superiority. Societies fall apart and with them all inherited hierarchies. Past dominations, inequalities, contempt, exploitation, colonization, stigmatizations that seemed yesterday legitimate, natural, self-evident or at least tolerable, now appear for what they are: intolerable. After #MeToo and after the wave (the tsunami rather) of multiple cases of sexual harassment in all rungs of society, male domination will never again appear bearable. Every day, we discover new victims of incest or pedophilia. What remained hidden and silenced until yesterday, is no longer hidden today. Racism is unbearable. Colonial crimes, even ancient ones, starting with slavery, can no longer be passed over in silence.

This liberation of speech, this awareness of violence, of the multiple forms of violence, which have woven the fabric of the common history of humanity, cannot be seen otherwise than as gigantic progress of the human spirit and of its moral capacity. It is necessary to protect this progress from the perverse effects that it may cause. It must be protected, of course, from a backlash, which could result in the return of machismo, racism, authoritarian regimes or religious fundamentalism. But it must also be protected, and this is the most difficult to understand, from the reinforcement of the neoliberal hegemony which this liberation risks feeding – despite its intentions. By pretending to see only individuals without qualities, sex, color of skin, or defined social insertion, neoliberalism can indeed present itself advantageously as the great liberator and the great universal equalizer, even though it only equalizes by multiplying inequalities, and only liberates by sending each person back to his or her solitude, his or her powerlessness, and ultimately, his or her alienation.

The great challenge we are now facing is thus to relearn how to talk to each other and to debate while loosening the grip of neoliberalism and the ideology of

¹ Of course, I force the line, but the tendency is there, very real and always more current.

a rentier capitalism. Our societies, our pasts, are full of violence. So much is now evident. Yet should we wipe the slate clean, keep nothing of it, at the great risk of existing only on and through the world market, which cheerfully destroys nature and our solidarities? On the contrary, the question is: will we be able to rebuild a common world, to live together (while preserving our natural environment), to look at each other and to listen to each other instead of remaining each in our own cocoon of hatred?

To do this, it is important above all to understand the infinite complexity of the social formations that have succeeded one another in time and space, all or almost all of which were carriers of injustice, though, it must be said, many were also carriers of the arts of living and meaning. It is also important to understand the infinite complexity of processes of liberation. It is not enough to denounce dominations to find oneself automatically on the side of the true and the just, immune to any eventual desire of domination. With the permanent acceleration of our ways of life, so well brought to light by the sociologist-philosopher Hartmut Rosa, nobody really lives in the same social and historical space-time anymore. Thus, for example, Muslim feminists hardly recognize themselves in western feminism, because, while suffering more than western women from the weight of machismo, they do not intend to renounce the art of living that has been forged over the centuries within the framework of Islam, nor to participate in the stigmatization of their fathers or brothers. In the same way, western feminists of a certain age who had more or less succeeded in rebalancing relations with their male contemporaries, find it difficult to recognize themselves in the symbolic substitution of “gender” for “sex,” and to abjure the difference between the sexes. Or again, the colonized of yesterday who aspired to the recognition of colonizers, hardly accept the rejection of republican values by those of their children or their grandchildren who prefer the jihad to them. And so on.

Between all these points of view, between all these so different ways of relating to time and space, there is no overarching point of view from which one could decree for certain which one is the most just. But it is clear which ones are certainly *not* right and must therefore be fought as such: it is precisely those who believe they hold the truth and who, strengthened by this certainty, refuse to listen to others and grant them the slightest value or relevance. All those who absolutize and hypostasize their opponent: Islam, the West, men, women, populism, the political class, etc. Or, to refer to current debates, the point of view of people who want to ban from speaking or writing those who do not have the right gender, the right sexuality, the right skin color – in short, “cancel culture.” Or

again, those who believe they see leftists, communists or Islamists everywhere, or those who, conversely, refuse, or fear to speak out against cancel culture and the banning of those we don't like from expressing themselves in public. Those who allow themselves to advocate such bans believe they are at the forefront of the struggle for emancipation. They are only at the forefront of the struggle for an alienation even worse than the one they are fighting.

It is in this context that we absolutely need to develop and defend what I propose to call a *radical moderationism*, or a *moderationist radicalism*. A well-tempered radicalism, if you like. We need radicality to reveal and make intolerable all dominations and injustices. But we also need this radicality to be moderate enough to not tip over into its opposite and fail dramatically by revealing itself as more oppressive than liberating. This is a difficult objective to think through and to achieve, especially for young people who need an adversary within reach, clearly identifiable.¹ Yet it is essential if we want to rebuild our societies that have been dismantled by almost half a century of neoliberalism. What is required, in a way, is the introduction into the field of ideas of *a strategy of intellectual non-violence*. This non-violence has nothing to do with passivity or cowardice, quite the contrary. That it is not cowardice but courage will quickly become apparent when we see the outcry that it can provoke. What do you mean? Tolerating the infamous (those who don't think like me)? That's infamous!

FOR A MAUSSIAN ETHICS OF DISCUSSION

Let us now sketch out what a strategy of radical moderationism implies in the field of social thought.² It implies what I will call a Maussian ethics of discussion.³ The very idea of discourse ethics comes, as we know, from the German philosophers Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas who saw in it, at least for a time, the way to find a rational discursive basis of social norms. The norms upon which interlocutors of good faith would agree (however opposed they might have been at the outset) if placed in a situation

¹ Yet what gives us hope is that the current young generations are very demanding about democracy and pluralism.

² The question arises differently in the fields of politics, aesthetics or morality.

³ I will use the terms "a Maussian ethics of discussion" or "a radically moderationist ethics of discussion" interchangeably.

of ideal discussion – that is to say, not distorted by irrepressible passions or antisocial interests – would be universalizable.

The ambitions of this Habermasian discourse ethics are without question excessive. Nothing proves that it is possible to define universal standards without reference to ultimate values and thus to put an end in rational terms, through discussion, to that which Max Weber called “the war of Gods.” Not to mention that one sometimes has the impression that the ideal interlocutors of Apel and Habermas, far from being typical humans, are supposed to master the entire history of political and moral philosophy before being admitted to the debating table; to be, in fact, German philosophers. Rather than such an unrealistic ethic of rational discussion, we need an ethics of decent, *i.e.* moderationist discussion.

The rationale is provided by a formula of Marcel Mauss. At the end of his famous essay, *The Gift*, Mauss (2002, p. 105-106)¹ writes:

“Societies have progressed in so far as they themselves, their subgroups, and lastly, the individuals in them, have succeeded in stabilizing relationships, giving, receiving, and finally, giving in return. Thus, the clan, the tribe, and peoples have learnt how to oppose and to give to one another without sacrificing themselves to one another. This is what tomorrow, in our so-called civilized world, classes and nations and individuals also, must learn.”

To learn to oppose one another without sacrificing themselves. This formula takes on meaning when we pause and consider the first part. We have to learn to oppose one another, thus we have to oppose, which implies that opposition and conflict are part of life. We are very far indeed from the hope of consensus that animates the Habermasian ethic of discussion. It is not simply that opposition among humans is inevitable; rather, it is inevitable *because* the interests and points of view necessarily diverge between superiors and subordinates, the young and the old, men and women, the strong and the weak, and so on. Beyond this factual finding, the idea that is reflected in the statement that people “must learn to oppose one another” is that opposition is not only inevitable, it is also desirable. It is opposition that feeds “fertile disagreements.” Opposition is the creator of life and of meaning. It is through opposition that diversity emerges; a diversity which has value in itself.

¹ MAUSS, Marcel, 2002, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, Abingdon, Routledge.

This is not to say, however, that all opposition is desirable and legitimate. The only desirable one is the opposition between adversaries in pursuit of an alliance with those who subscribe to the dynamic of giving, receiving, and returning, rather than of taking-refusing-keeping. An alliance for life and creativity. Or, to put it another way, all forms of social collectivity are desirable and legitimate when they favor the greatest diversity within themselves which is compatible with their own maintenance and development – development in pursuit of the greatest creativity (others would say capabilities) for all. Anything that is inspired by this rule is welcome and admissible in the discussion.

This dynamic of giving, receiving, and returning is inspired by a wager of trust. A risky wager, to be sure. For it cannot be ignored that partners in the discussion, behind displays of big principles and virtuous proclamations, may well hide the most unpalatable interests. These may be purely narcissistic, as is frequently the case, but are also no less frequently based on material interest or power. These form the basic elements of a necessary critical approach that we cannot ignore. Moreover, whether we look at Marx, Freud or anyone else, distrust is often based on the double grounds that interests are unconscious and that subjects lie to themselves. Which is doing them too little honor. Very often the calculations of interests are much more conscious, and hypocrisy, deception, and desire to harm quite deliberate.

THE PRINCIPLES OF DIALOGICAL CHARITY

Nevertheless, what radical moderationism is betting on – that which must inspire an ethics of decent discussion – is that until it is proved otherwise, all participants in a debate must be supposed to be (a) of good faith, (b) intelligent, and (c) concerned about the common good. To put it another way, the rule that must preside over listening and reading the statements of those with whom we disagree is to apply the principle of dialogical charity. Thus, between several possible readings of a text or statement, it is preferable to choose the one that puts the adversary in the most favorable light, to systematically privilege that which seems to be the most intelligent and moral. In a word, a Maussian radical moderationist will *celebrate*, not fear, an opponent's intelligence and dignity. Respect for this simple, seemingly innocuous

rule would avoid most petty intentions and false quarrels that pollute public debate. This implies forbidding the use of any offensive or depreciative designation – not to mention name-calling – and any imputation of the fundamental immorality of the opponent. In other words, the *reductio ad Hitlerum* or *ad Stalinum*, *a priori* or more or less mechanical charges of fascism, racism, anti-Semitism, populism, conspiracy, communitarianism, secularism, nationalism, self-imposed cosmopolitanism, rightism, leftism, born-againism, or even Bourdieuisism, and so on are no longer tolerated. Unless proven otherwise – since a simple suspicion no longer suffices to disqualify adversaries – we must refrain from expressing any suspicion publicly until it is more solidly supported.

The appeal to the principle of dialogical charity – the hypothesis that an adversary is highly intelligent, honest, and respectable – does not merely have a diplomatic function. And not even principally. In reality, it would be completely counterproductive if it were a matter of hiding one's face so as not to confront real enemies and effectively condemn their unacceptable positions. This would merely be cowardice and pusillanimity. No. Its main use is to oblige us to be even more intelligent, honest, and respectable than those who we intend to criticize, and not to excuse ourselves from having to produce evidence for criticism.

But if those whom we oppose are deemed by us to be highly intelligent, honest, and respectable, why oppose them at all? It can only be because we are inspired by irreconcilable values, and/or because it seems to us that they have not fully appreciated the complexity of the problem. Even in the case of discussions between those claiming to be radical or Maussian moderationists, it is not possible to dismiss the first hypothesis because, if the agreement on the Maussian ethics of discussion acts as an *a priori* agreement on ultimate values, it does not prevent the dialogue between those who privilege different ideologies, such as communism, socialism, anarchism, or liberalism, for example.

Let us put this a bit differently. In the majority of debates one of the greatest sources of misunderstanding and incomprehension comes from the fact that the protagonists differ – often without knowing it – on the identity of the legitimate subject, or the most legitimate, in whose name they speak and for whom they make themselves spokesperson. Everyone worries about the common weal, and is thus respectable, but not everyone localizes it in the same way. Who must be accorded respect and recognition in the first case? Which of the possible subjects must be the source of law? Is it the individual, considered

as such, the one who only gives (herself) to herself, and, perhaps, to the society of individuals? Is it the person, who gives (herself) to her relations in the context of a community of personalized knowledge, and so receives in return? Is it the citizen, or the believer, the member of a large political and/or religious community, who gives herself to it and so receives in return from it? Is it the generic human being? Each of these points of view – or points of departure – is *a priori* legitimate, as long as the fact that the others are equally so is not ignored. Which is why it is inappropriate to attack anyone *a priori*. According to the accepted point of view, everyone will reason according to different scales, and because today the inherited spatiotemporal scales dislocate or deform at breakneck speed, we see ample material for *dissensus*. The difficulty, in effect, is to know how to combine and concretely articulate the four great modern ideologies (liberalism, socialism, anarchism, communism) *whose heirs we are*, or the four types of subject of preferential rights. They do not complement each other more spontaneously, harmoniously, or easily than liberty, equality or fraternity, for example. The goal of a radically moderationist discussion is to achieve consensus on the best possible combination – or the least bad – in any given context or situation, knowing that everyone is confused by the loss of inherited landmarks.

However, we cannot escape from some lingering doubt. Is not the ethics of the Maussian discussion, of which we tried to sketch the main features despite our insistence on possible divergences and on the value of opposition, ultimately too consensual? Perhaps too kindly? Does it not process in some way as if everyone were beautiful and nice?

To avoid this risk, we must now specify who does not have the right to enter the circle of the Maussian discussion, or to stay there, and why. And this is actually a great many people:

Those who do not respect the principle of discursive charity, who do not understand the plurality of legitimate points of departure, who replace arguments with insults *ad hominem*, and who imagine they are constantly surrounded by enemies to be destroyed (what better way to miss real enemies?) cannot be described as radical moderationists.

- Of course, those caught in the act of lying, who are compulsive narcissists, who seek improper personal interests, or who breezily say one thing and then its opposite, also cannot benefit from dialogical charity.

- Above all, those who do not understand the necessity of preserving and developing the forms of social unity that permit the expression of the greatest diversity possible that does not endanger the unity that allows for diversity (which allows unity, etc.) – they are without doubt not worthy of a charitable dialogue.

But all this can be better formulated if we start from the second part of the sentence by Mauss that we placed at the center of the present reflection.

“They must learn to oppose one another [writes Mauss, but adds right away] and to give to one another without sacrificing themselves.”

The most obvious and immediately accurate reading of this second clause is to see in it a critique of the invocation to an altruism that easily turns into its opposite. When ready to sacrifice oneself for a cause, one quickly feels authorized to sacrifice those who do not share our beliefs, or not enough in any case. Let us not forget that Mauss wrote *The Gift* the same year as *A Sociological Assessment of Bolshevism*, and precisely to criticize the eagerness to make others happy against their will. But let us go a bit beyond the explicit contents of Mauss’ formula. Applied to radical moderationists, “to give without sacrificing oneself” means that they are fully engaged in what they do and believe, that they give themselves wholly to this, but that they are not made prisoners to their engagement. They are not ready to sacrifice everything – to the point of not seeing that others are just as legitimately engaged in other causes. In other words, they are all the more engaged because they know how to disengage. It is the faculty of disengaging oneself that makes their engagement worth it. Those who fail to disengage are *en route* to fanaticism, not to radical moderationism.

CONCLUSION

Radical moderationism can seem at first as too kind and consensual; in fact, we can see that it has many potential detractors. Indeed, its tendency toward moderation borders on the most intransigent radicalism. But a genuine radicalism, not one of fakers and blowhards. Returning for a while to politics, let us observe, in support of this position and in conclusion, that the great modern political leaders who have been able to lead their countries on the right track – Gandhi, of course, but also Nelson Mandela in South Africa, Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia, or, in his own way, Lula in Brazil – have been inspired by one form or another of non-violence *i.e.* of radical moderationism. But when war is declared (against Hitler, for example), one must also choose how to fight. This can also be the case in the context of a revolutionary process or a revolt against dictators. What means should be used then? Certainly not all means. Not all means are good. The absolute counterexample is the argument put forward by Trotsky in his frightening “Their Morals and Ours,” which sought to justify the most violent methods in the name of their supposed effectiveness in achieving an intrinsically pure and radiant goal. One hundred years later, Russia has still not recovered. The same can be said of all terrorism, and especially today of Al-Qaeda or Daesh. No, the end does not justify the means. Rather, it is the means employed that bear witness to the end that is actually being pursued: domination.

So, let us conclude: radical moderationism is an incentive to unmask the will to dominate (to “wield the whip,” as George Orwell used to say) that masks itself behind a number of noble causes.

NOTE FROM THE UNDERGROUND¹

Fyodor Dostoevski

“But these are all golden dreams. Oh, tell me, who was it first announced, who was it first proclaimed, that man only does nasty things because he does not know his own interests; and that if he were enlightened, if his eyes were opened to his real normal interests, man would at once cease to do nasty things, would at once become good and noble because, being enlightened and understanding his real advantage, he would see his own advantage in the good and nothing else, and we all know that not one man can, consciously, act against his own interests, consequently, so to say, through necessity, he would begin doing good? Oh, the babel! Oh, the pure, innocent child! Why, in the first place, when in all these thousands of years has there been a time when man has acted only from his own interest? What is to be done with the millions of facts that bear witness that men, *consciously*, that is fully understanding their real interests, have left them in the background and have rushed headlong on another path, to meet peril and danger, compelled to this course by nobody and by nothing, but, as it were, simply disliking the beaten track, and have obstinately, willfully, struck out another difficult, absurd way, seeking it almost in the darkness. So, I suppose, this obstinacy and perversity were pleasanter to them than any advantage... Advantage! What is advantage? And will you take it upon yourself to define with perfect accuracy in what the advantage of man consists? And what if it so happens that a man's advantage, *sometimes*, not only may, but even must, consist in his desiring in certain cases what is harmful to himself and not advantageous. And if so, if there can be such a case, the whole principle falls into dust. What do you think – are there such cases? You laugh; laugh away, gentlemen, but only answer me: have man's advantages been reckoned up with perfect certainty? Are there not some which not only have not been included but cannot possibly be included under any classification? You see, you gentlemen have,

¹ Chap. 7, [1864] 1918, translated by Constance Garnett in *White Nights and Other Stories*, London: Heinemann.

to the best of my knowledge, taken your whole register of human advantages from the averages of statistical figures and politico-economical formulas. Your advantages are prosperity, wealth, freedom, peace – and so on, and so on. So that the man who should, for instance, go openly and knowingly in opposition to all that list would to your thinking, and indeed mine, too, of course, be an obscurantist or an absolute madman: would not he? But, you know, this is what is surprising: why does it so happen that all these statisticians, sages and lovers of humanity, when they reckon up human advantages invariably leave out one? They don't even take it into their reckoning in the form in which it should be taken, and the whole reckoning depends upon that. It would be no greater matter, they would simply have to take it, this advantage, and add it to the list. But the trouble is, that this strange advantage does not fall under any classification and is not in place in any list. I have a friend for instance... Ech! gentlemen, but of course he is your friend, too; and indeed there is no one, no one to whom he is not a friend! When he prepares for any undertaking this gentleman immediately explains to you, elegantly and clearly, exactly how he must act in accordance with the laws of reason and truth. What is more, he will talk to you with excitement and passion of the true normal interests of man; with irony he will upbraid the shortsighted fools who do not understand their own interests, nor the true significance of virtue; and, within a quarter of an hour, without any sudden outside provocation, but simply through something inside him which is stronger than all his interests, he will go off on quite a different tack – that is, act in direct opposition to what he has just been saying about himself, in opposition to the laws of reason, in opposition to his own advantage, in fact in opposition to everything... I warn you that my friend is a compound personality and therefore it is difficult to blame him as an individual. The fact is, gentlemen, it seems there must really exist something that is dearer to almost every man than his greatest advantages, or (not to be illogical) there is a most advantageous advantage (the very one omitted of which we spoke just now) which is more important and more advantageous than all other advantages, for the sake of which a man if necessary is ready to act in opposition to all laws; that is, in opposition to reason, honour, peace, prosperity – in fact, in opposition to all those excellent and useful things if only he can attain that fundamental, most advantageous advantage which is dearer to him than all.

— 'Yes, but it's advantage all the same', you will retort. But excuse me, I'll make the point clear, and it is not a case of playing upon words. What matters is, that this advantage is remarkable from the very fact that it breaks down all

our classifications, and continually shatters every system constructed by lovers of mankind for the benefit of mankind. In fact, it upsets everything. But before I mention this advantage to you, I want to compromise myself personally, and therefore I boldly declare that all these fine systems, all these theories for explaining to mankind their real normal interests, in order that inevitably striving to pursue these interests they may at once become good and noble – are, in my opinion, so far, mere logical exercises! Yes, logical exercises. Why, to maintain this theory of the regeneration of mankind by means of the pursuit of his own advantage is to my mind almost the same thing... as to affirm, for instance, following Buckle, that through civilisation mankind becomes softer, and consequently less bloodthirsty and less fitted for warfare. Logically it does seem to follow from his arguments. But man has such a predilection for systems and abstract deductions that he is ready to distort the truth intentionally, he is ready to deny the evidence of his senses only to justify his logic. I take this example because it is the most glaring instance of it. Only look about you: blood is being spilt in streams, and in the merriest way, as though it were champagne. Take the whole of the nineteenth century in which Buckle lived. Take Napoleon – the Great and also the present one. Take North America – the eternal union. Take the farce of Schleswig-Holstein... And what is it that civilisation softens in us? The only gain of civilisation for mankind is the greater capacity for variety of sensations – and absolutely nothing more. And through the development of this many-sidedness man may come to finding enjoyment in bloodshed. In fact, this has already happened to him. Have you noticed that it is the most civilized gentlemen who have been the subtlest slaughterers, to whom the Attilas and Stenka Razins could not hold a candle, and if they are not so conspicuous as the Attilas and Stenka Razins it is simply because they are so often met with, are so ordinary and have become so familiar to us. In any case civilization has made mankind if not more bloodthirsty, at least more vilely, more loathsome bloodthirsty. In old days he saw justice in bloodshed and with his conscience at peace exterminated those he thought proper. Now we do think bloodshed abominable and yet we engage in this abomination, and with more energy than ever. Which is worse? Decide that for yourselves. They say that Cleopatra (excuse an instance from Roman history) was fond of sticking gold pins into her slave-girls' breasts and derived gratification from their screams and writhings. You will say that that was in the comparatively barbarous times; that these are barbarous times too, because also, comparatively speaking, pins are stuck in even now; that though man has now learned to see more clearly than in barbarous ages, he is still far from having

learnt to act as reason and science would dictate. But yet you are fully convinced that he will be sure to learn when he gets rid of certain old bad habits, and when common sense and science have completely re-educated human nature and turned it in a normal direction. You are confident that then man will cease from *intentional* error and will, so to say, be compelled not to want to set his will against his normal interests. That is not all; then, you say, science itself will teach man (though to my mind it's a superfluous luxury) that he never has really had any caprice or will of his own, and that he himself is something of the nature of a piano-key or the stop of an organ, and that there are, besides, things called the laws of nature; so that everything he does is not done by his willing it, but is done of itself, by the laws of nature. Consequently we have only to discover these laws of nature, and man will no longer have to answer for his actions and life will become exceedingly easy for him. All human actions will then, of course, be tabulated according to these laws, mathematically, like tables of logarithms up to 108,000, and entered in an index; or, better still, there would be published certain edifying works of the nature of encyclopedic lexicons, in which everything will be so clearly calculated and explained that there will be no more incidents or adventures in the world.

— Then – this is all what you say – new economic relations will be established, all ready-made and worked out with mathematical exactitude, so that every possible question will vanish in the twinkling of an eye, simply because every possible answer to it will be provided. Then the 'Palace of Crystal' will be built. Then... In fact, those will be halcyon days. Of course there is no guaranteeing (this is my comment) that it will not be, for instance, frightfully dull then (for what will one have to do when everything will be calculated and tabulated), but on the other hand everything will be extraordinarily rational. Of course boredom may lead you to anything. It is boredom sets one sticking golden pins into people, but all that would not matter. What is bad (this is my comment again) is that I dare say people will be thankful for the gold pins then. Man is stupid, you know, phenomenally stupid; or rather he is not at all stupid, but he is so ungrateful that you could not find another like him in all creation. I, for instance, would not be in the least surprised if all of a sudden, *à propos* of nothing, in the midst of general prosperity a gentleman with an ignoble, or rather with a reactionary and ironical, countenance were to arise and, putting his arms akimbo, say to us all:

'I say, gentleman, hadn't we better kick over the whole show and scatter rationalism to the winds, simply to send these logarithms to the devil, and to enable us to live once more at our own sweet foolish will!'

That again would not matter, but what is annoying is that he would be sure to find followers – such is the nature of man. And all that for the most foolish reason, which, one would think, was hardly worth mentioning: that is, that man everywhere and at all times, whoever he may be, has preferred to act as he chose and not in the least as his reason and advantage dictated. And one may choose what is contrary to one's own interests, and sometimes one *positively ought* (that is my idea). One's own free unfettered choice, one's own caprice, however wild it may be, one's own fancy worked up at times to frenzy – is that very 'most advantageous advantage' which we have overlooked, which comes under no classification and against which all systems and theories are continually being shattered to atoms. And how do these wiseacres know that man wants a normal, a virtuous choice? What has made them conceive that man must want a rationally advantageous choice? What man wants is simply *independent* choice, whatever that independence may cost and wherever it may lead. And choice, of course, the devil only knows what choice."

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

to the *La Revue du M.A.U.S.S semestrielle*

I subscribe for one year or for two years

*The subscription includes two issues (paper and digital versions)
+ one issue only available in an English digital version*

LAST NAME & FIRST NAME, OR INSTITUTION :

ADDRESS :

CITY : POSTCODE :

COUNTRY : E-MAIL :

PRICE 2021

FRANCE

- Institutions (for an year) : 55€ | (for two years) : 100€
- Private individuals (for an year) : 40€ | (for two years) : 75€

EUROPE/AFRICA

- Institutions (for an year) : 60€ | (for two years) : 108€
- Private individuals (for an year) : 50€ | (for two years) : 90€

AMERICA/ASIA/OCEANIA

- Institutions (for an year) : 68€ | (for two years) : 127€
- Private individuals (for an year) : 60€ | (for two years) : 105€

Time limit for making a complaint : 6 (six) months

I am paying€ today, to the order of Le Bord de L'eau publishing house.

- by cheque here enclosed
- by bank transfer to *BPACA CAMBLANES*
IBAN : FR76 1090 7000 8305 8210 1562 755
BIC : CCBPFRPPBDX
- I want a receipt

Subscription Form to send back to

Le Bord de L'eau éditions | 18 rue du commandant Cousteau | 33310 Lormont

Subscriptions and online sales : www.editionsbdl.com

LA REVUE DU M|A|U|S|S



Depuis 1981, *La Revue du M.A.U.S.S.* s'est imposée comme une des toutes premières revues interdisciplinaires et un des lieux importants du débat public en France. Elle offre des perspectives inédites en sciences économiques, en anthropologie, en sociologie ou en philosophie politique.

Aux antipodes de l'encyclopédisme, et grâce à la variété de son questionnement et de ses angles d'attaque, *La Revue du M.A.U.S.S.* procède à un bilan permanent et raisonné des sciences sociales.

Parce qu'elle s'est toujours refusée à dissocier les discussions proprement scientifiques de leurs enjeux éthiques et politiques, *La Revue du M.A.U.S.S.* est à l'origine de nombreux débats de société aujourd'hui cruciaux.

« Anti-utilitariste », elle critique l'économisme dans les sciences sociales et le rationalisme instrumental en philosophie morale et politique. Rendant hommage par son nom à Marcel Mauss, elle incite à penser le lien social sous l'angle des dons (agonistiques) qui unissent les sujets humains.

Cette revue de recherche, de vulgarisation et de débats s'adresse à tous ceux qui s'intéressent à ce qui se produit à l'intersection des sciences sociales, du politique et de l'histoire, et plus spécialement aux universitaires, aux chercheurs et aux étudiants.



[FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT A BOOK, CLICK ON ITS COVER](#)

LE BORD
DE L'EAU

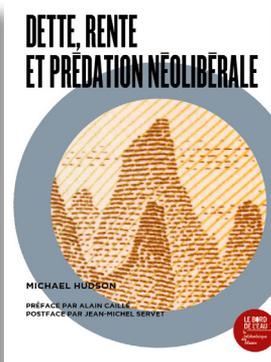
LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE DU MAUSS

Depuis 1981, Le M.A.U.S.S. procède à un bilan permanent et raisonné des sciences sociales en privilégiant le souci de leur unité et de leur implication éthique et politique.

« Anti-utilitariste », La bibliothèque du MAUSS, d'abord publiée aux éditions La Découverte et désormais au Bord de l'eau, poursuit ces mêmes objectifs en donnant les outils nécessaires à la critique de l'économisme et du rationalisme instrumental dans les sciences sociales, en philosophie morale et politique, comme dans le monde de la pratique.

Rendant hommage par son nom à Marcel Mauss, elle invite à penser le lien social sous l'angle des dons (agonistiques et harmoniques) qui unissent les sujets humains.

Elle contribue au développement d'un ensemble de théories et d'approches originales qui la font maintenant apparaître comme l'organe d'un courant de pensée original dans le champ de la sociologie, de l'anthropologie, de l'économie et de la philosophie politique.



[FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT A BOOK, CLICK ON ITS COVER](#)