

# THE IDEA OF 'INDIVIDUAL' IN DURKHEIM, MAUSS AND BOURDIEU

Ebru KAYAALP\*

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to analyze Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu's discussions of the 'Individual' by focusing on their concepts of homo duplex, total man and habitus respectively. A comparative perspective among these scholars aims at not only unpacking the similarities, twists and metamorphoses in their conceptualization of the 'Individual', but also exploring the long-standing divide in social sciences built between individual and society, agency and structuralism, and subjectivism and objectivism.*

**Keywords:** *Durkheim, Homo Duplex, Mauss, Total Man, Bourdieu, Habitus.*

## ÖZET

### DURKHEIM, MAUSS VE BOURDIEU'DE 'BİREY' TASAVVURU

*Bu yazı Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss ve Pierre Bourdieu'nün homo duplex, total man ve habitus kavramları üzerinde durarak çalışmalarında "Bireyi" nasıl analiz ettiklerini tartışmayı amaçlar. Böyle bir karşılaştırmalı analiz, bu düşünürlerin sadece "Bireyi" kavramsallaştırmalarında birbirleriyle benzerliklerini, farklılıklarını ve zaman içindeki değişimlerini açıklamakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda sosyal bilimlerde birey ve toplum; eyleycilik ve yapısalcılık; öznellik ve nesnellik arasında kurulan derin ayrışmayı da inceler.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Durkheim, Homo Duplex, Mauss, Total Man, Bourdieu, Habitus.*

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## Introduction

The ideas of Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss on the nature of human beings radically diverge from each other, although they share similar academic interests and ideals. Durkheim, who depicts man as a plastic and malleable creature, simply a product of the social milieu, radically modifies his ideas on human nature

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\* Yrd. Doç. Dr., İstanbul Şehir Üniversitesi, Sinema ve Televizyon Bölümü ([ebrukeyaalp@sehir.edu.tr](mailto:ebrukeyaalp@sehir.edu.tr))  
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after 1895 and unambiguously adopts the perspective of *homo duplex* in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Mauss who has been a loyal advocate of his uncle's ideas, develops his conception of *total man* after the First World War, but his account drastically departs from the Durkheimian notion of *homo duplex*, which stresses a categorical opposition between individual and society, body and soul. Thus, what Mauss suggests is the idea of 'human being' as an indivisible whole. On the other hand, Bourdieu immensely relies upon the works of Durkheim and Mauss in developing his most well-known and widely used concept *habitus*. Bourdieu's development of Durkheim's theory within the framework of Mauss's study on body techniques paves the way for his conceptualization of *habitus*.

A comparative perspective among these scholars aims at not only unpacking the similarities, twists and metamorphoses in their conceptualization of the 'Individual', but also exploring the long-standing divide in social sciences built between individual and society, agency and structuralism, and subjectivism and objectivism. This article aims to analyze Emile Durkheim Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu's discussions of the 'Individual' by focusing on their concepts of *homo duplex total man* and *habitus* respectively.

## Individual and Society

It would not be correct to suggest that the idea of *homo duplex* is present in all of the works of Durkheim. Although the mind and body dualism is often regarded as an underlying assumption in his theoretical and empirical concerns, as Hawkins suggests, the *homo duplex* perspective is actually not apparent in Durkheim's works produced before 1895 and in fact only coherently formulated in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* and the subsequent texts, especially in the article "The Dualism of Human Nature and Its Social Conditions" (Hawkins 2001, 99).

In *The Division of Labor*, Durkheim explains that mechanical solidarity refers to the moral attachment between the individual and society, while organic solidarity refers to functional interdependence within the division of labor which, in the end, bonds individuals into a social unity. This formula lies in the proposition that there is a duality in the relationship between the individual and society, whose balance radically changed with the shift from mechanical to organic solidarity. In mechanical solidarity each individual has a restricted autonomy, and is unaware of his separateness as an individual since he is dominated by the collective consciousness (Giddens 1990, 302). In his discussion of mechanical solidarity, Durkheim talks about two consciousnesses existing in individuals:

“[T]he one comprises only states that are personal to each one of us, characteristic of us as individuals, whilst the other comprises states that are common to the whole of society. The former represents only our individual personality, which it constitutes; the latter represents the collective type and consequently the society without which it would not exist” (1984, 61).

In this argument, it is clear that Durkheim considers man as a divided being who bears his individuality as well as society in himself.<sup>1</sup> Yet, as Hawkins argues, this split in the individual is drawn in his psychic sphere, and “hence does not correspond to a mind/body dualism” (2001, 103). In the case of organic solidarity, although there is heterogeneity in terms of individuals who appear as autonomous entities having their own personalities, Durkheim does not depict the relation between the individual and the society in opposition to each other. Durkheim’s explanation is based on the idea that although these two consciousnesses are distinct,

“[They] are linked to each other, since in the end they constitute only one entity, for both have one and the same organic basis. Thus they are solidly joined together. This gives rise to a solidarity *sui generis*, which deriving from resemblances, binds the individual directly to society” (Durkheim 1984, 61).

In *The Rules of Sociological Method*, instead of explicitly formulating his ideas on human nature, Durkheim prefers to criticize existing theories. He defines the specificity of the social with his famous criterion of ‘constraint’, an argument, which is considerably different from the *homo duplex* perspective. Every man is born, Durkheim argues, in a society, which already has an organization and structure conditioning the personality of the individual. Society puts limits on us, sanctions and punishes us but we do not feel the constraints that society exerts on us to the extent that we internalize and conform to these limits.

According to Durkheim, social phenomena cannot be reduced to the biological and psychological properties of the individual: “Individual minds, forming groups by mingling and fusing give birth to a being, psychological if you will, but constituting a psychic individuality of a new sort” (1982, 103). The sentiments and beliefs of individual, which are said to be the bases of institutions such as marriage and kinship, in fact result from the collective consciousness. Therefore, for Durkheim, it is much more natural to consider sentiments and beliefs as products of social life rather than the inherited instinct of the human species

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<sup>1</sup> Here I am using masculine pronouns not because of the reason that I am not gender sensitive but Durkheim’s texts are originally written from this perspective.

(1982, 107). In brief, in *The Rules of Sociological Method*, the individual is described as a malleable creature whose beliefs and sentiments are the outcomes of the social milieu.

Durkheim's lectures on socialism and his famous work *Suicide* mark a shift in his idea of the individual. In these texts Durkheim starts to invoke the body/mind dichotomy. He seems to abandon the belief of a harmonious relationship between the individual and society, and he brings the idea of controlling the desires of individuals, which is actually a very dominant theme in Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*. Since the individual is not naturally inclined to restrict his desires, the community must discipline the individual to control these instincts.

In *Suicide*, the 'biological' and 'social' components of personality are distinguished (Giddens 1990, 310). Durkheim's insistence that suicide rates have to be explained sociologically does not mean that there is no place for psychological studies. For example, he argues that not everybody in a situation of anomie commits suicide. This argument implicitly assumes that there is a biopsychological aspect of personality, which is developed outside of society. However, despite general inconsistencies, Durkheim still refuses to derive individual wants from human nature, and explains them as being socially determined. It is pertinent to emphasize here that Durkheim does not deny that individuals are naturally endowed with certain urges, such as hunger and thirst, but what he opposes is that individuals have innate feelings with certain objects. In this respect, his account is different from the contract theorists essentializing the human nature. Durkheim, at this stage of his thought, comes to believe that "egoism *itself* must be a product of society. That is to say, that there can be socially created self-interest," (Giddens 1990, 309) which implies the social creation of individual characteristics.

## **Homo Duplex**

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* and subsequent texts, Durkheim wholeheartedly adopts the perspective of *homo duplex* in depicting human beings. There is no ambiguity in these works that man is double. Durkheim describes two beings in man:

"In him are two beings: an individual being that has its basis in the body and whose sphere of action is strictly limited by this fact, and a social being that represents within us the highest reality in the intellectual and moral realm that is knowable through observation: I mean society" (Durkheim 1995, 15).

In the following pages, he suggests that human beings can never escape the duality of their nature and free themselves completely from physical necessities.

Durkheim also explains the idea of *homo duplex* in “The Dualism of Human Nature and Its Social Conditions” with similar words: “On the one hand is our individuality and more particularly, our body in which it is based; on the other is everything in us that expresses something other than ourselves” (1973, 152). In the footnote he stresses that he uses the word individuality deliberately instead of personality since the latter “is made up of essentially of supra-individual elements” (1973, 237). Very explicitly from now on, he explains individuality by partial appeal to certain characteristics, an argument that is in opposition to his previous thoughts that human beings are socially determined.

According to Durkheim, this duality of human nature corresponds to other dichotomies, such as individual and society; body and soul; sacred and profane. Each of these pairs is not only “different in their origins and their properties, but there is a true antagonism between them. They mutually contradict and deny each other” (Durkheim 1973, 152).

The individual and society, far from being a harmonious couple as Durkheim once argued, now stands in a relationship of mutual antagonism. The moral rules imposed on the individual might be in contradiction with the needs and instincts of human beings, and this creates an antinomy in human beings since they simultaneously cannot satisfy both their instincts and social requirements. Sensations and sensory needs are necessarily egoistic since they come from biological aspects of the individual, whereas moral activities are ‘impersonal’, and are generated from society. These are two opposed aspects of personality. Suggesting that man’s inner contradiction is one of the characteristics of his nature, Durkheim argues that “it is this disagreement, this perpetual division against ourselves, that produces both our grandeur and our misery” (Durkheim 1973, 154). Radically different from his previous writings, Durkheim now sees the pre-social existence as being in a state of conflict with society.

Moreover, according to Durkheim, human beings being divided into two realms, the pre-social and the social, are also subjected to another dichotomy: the body and the soul. Although the body and the soul are said to be closely associated, in fact they do not share the same world: “they are in a large measure independent of each other, and are often even in conflict” (Durkheim 1973, 150). The soul, which is considered as sacred, is opposed to the body and everything related to the body

such as the sensations and the sensory appetites, which are regarded as profane. The conflict, for Durkheim, is between intellectual and moral life, and sensations and sensory appetites. It is evident that while our rational activity is dependent on social causes, our egoistic tendencies derive from our individual constitutions. The profane, the body, and the human sensations are in opposition to the sacred, the soul and the society in his thought.

The following pages will elaborate Mauss's concept of 'techniques of the body' as the idea of *total man* has its roots within this concept.

### **Techniques of the Body**

The first sentence of "An Intellectual Self-Portrait" starts with Mauss's expression of his loyalty to the Durkheimian school: "It is impossible to detach me from the work of a school. If there is an individuality here, it is immersed within a voluntary anonymity" (Mauss 1983, 29). Yet, according to Schlanger, starting around 1920 and up to 1941, Mauss becomes a somewhat reluctant standard-bearer of the Durkheimian school with his new academic interest in the topic of body techniques (1998, 192).<sup>2</sup>

Mauss's interest in body techniques emerged during the First World War. Against the apocalyptic responses to war, and concerned with the destructive aspects of technology, the message articulated by Mauss, who voluntarily joined the army, is an optimistic perspective about technologies in general. For example, while Bergson attaches negative properties to the techniques associated with "intelligence, rationality, civilization and modernity" (Schlanger 1998, 197), Mauss attributes positive properties to the techniques associated with individual organic tendencies. In opposition to Bergson's idea of *homo faber*, Mauss introduces his *l'homme total* with the argument that "the Bergsonian idea of creation is actually the precise opposite of the technical (*technicité*)" (Schlanger 1998, 198). That is creation from matter which human beings have not themselves created, but which they have adopted and transformed, and guided by collective effort.

Mauss opens a new area of investigation in sociology by making body techniques an object of inquiry. An important breakthrough of his study is that it

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<sup>2</sup> The article "The *Année sociologique* team" (1983) written by Philippe Besnard is particularly interesting given that the writer challenges the commonly accepted image that the groups of *Année* collaborators establish a kind of sociological clan, homogenous in its scholars and tightly knit around one man (Durkheim) and one doctrine.

opens a “file” for systematic investigation of body techniques, which is seen as “miscellaneous” social phenomena, a conceptually disorganized set of bodily practices. He identifies a significant regularity of these phenomena, and promotes “body techniques” as a legitimate object of study (Levi-Strauss 1987, 6).

Mauss explores the idea of how men know how to use their bodies. He recounts how he has witnessed changes in the techniques of swimming and running with the period of his lifetime; the difference between French and English marching techniques during the war; and the distinctive walking style of nurses in the hospital in New York. He recognizes that these different techniques of the body are not due to purely individual mechanisms but are acquired through different training and education. Among the published studies, he first encounters Sydney Holland’s work on “Swimming” in 1898, then in preparation for the 1902 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Later, he pays attention to Elson Best’s study in 1924, which demonstrates the way Maori women in New Zealand teach their daughters how to walk in a distinctive manner. He also mentions the relation between magical power and physical ability in hunting and running rituals in Australia, where not only physical but also oral acts provide the agent with confidence to undertake difficult physical tasks.<sup>3</sup> From these observations, he draws an inseparable linkage between psychological phenomena and physical actions of the agent.

Mauss introduces the concept of “techniques of the body” to suggest that the body is a crucial mediator through which various elements of acts – physical, psychological, and social– are all assembled. This concept is to explain the social nature of such habitual bodily movements as walking, running, and swimming which vary according to the particular training, education, and the tradition that the agent has gone through. Techniques of the body can be divided by sex and age, which may due to physical education for different ages and sexes. It is also possible to identify variations of techniques of the body in different stages of life cycle: techniques of birth, techniques for caring for the infant, techniques of initiation for the adolescent, and techniques of reproduction. Studying these techniques of the body, Mauss suggests, makes it possible to understand a way of life itself as a product of successive transmission of particular practices and manners.

One of the most important points that Mauss emphasizes is the social nature of bodily practices. Having observed different techniques of walking, standing,

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<sup>3</sup> This information on the development of Mauss’s academic interests about the techniques of the body is obtained from “The Notion of Body Techniques” (1979a) and “An Intellectual Self-Portrait” (1983).

sitting, marching, and climbing, he defines “techniques of the body” as “the ways, in which, from society to society men know how to use their bodies” (Mauss 1979a, 97). Mauss, then, attempts to explain variations of body techniques across societies and different periods. Noting that “each society has its own distinctive habits,” he introduces the notion of “*habitus*” to stress the social dimension of bodily habits:

“Hence I have had this notion of the social nature of the ‘*habitus*’ for many years. Please note that I use the Latin word – it should be understood in France – *habitus*. The word [...] does not designate those metaphysical *habitudes*, that mysterious ‘memory’, the subjects of volumes or short and famous theses. These ‘habits’ do not vary just with individuals and their imitations; they vary especially between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestiges. In them we should see the techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason, rather than, in the ordinary way, merely the soul and its repetitive faculties” (1979a, 101).

The suggestion that techniques of the body are the work of collective and individual practical reason gives a significant insight into our contemporary preoccupation with the idea of the body as socially constructed. The understanding of the social formation of the body leads us to see a more dynamic picture of bodily acts as a product of ongoing practices, which vary not only across societies and historical periods, but even within a person’s lifespan. Mauss argues, above all, that techniques of the body are not natural, but are acquired:

“The positions of the arms and hands while walking form a social idiosyncrasy, they are not simply a product of some purely individual, almost completely physical, arrangements and mechanisms. [...] Thus there exists an education in walking, too” (1979a, 100).

Mauss attempts to explain the process in which body techniques are acquired. One of the cases he presents is called “prestigious imitation,” in which a child imitates actions that he has seen successfully performed by people whom he trusts and have authority over him. According to Mauss, “It is precisely this notion of the prestige of the person who performs the ordered, authorized, tested action vis-à-vis the imitating individual that contains all the social element” (1979a, 102). In this case, it is the power of performers that motivates a child to imitate their actions.

In another example, Mauss demonstrates a very active role of the body, referring to a hunting ritual in Australia. He observes that a hunter is able to perform difficult physical tasks, because he gains confidence by chanting a formula. From this fact, he suggests that it is the efficacy of oral acts that has a psychological effect



on the hunter's physical strength. He states: "[...] what I want to get at now is the confidence, the psychological *momentum* that can be linked to an action which is primarily a fact of biological resistance, obtained thanks to some words and a magical object" (1979a, 103). Through the body, multiple phenomena –magical, psychological, and physical– operate together, producing particular practices.

Perhaps one of the most significant innovations of his analyses of body techniques is the active nature he attributes to the body. According to him, "man's first and most natural technical object, and at the same time technical means, is his body" (1979a, 104). This suggestion seems to be pointing to the possibility of a new conception of the body, not only as the object of training and discipline, but also as an important medium available to the agent.

### **Total Man**

Mauss puts forward a clear view of bodily acts and the notion of *total man* while he was in interdisciplinary dialogue, especially with psychologists, in the 1920s. He is inspired by George Dumas' analysis of laughter, weeping and other expressions of sentiment. Mauss argues that all kinds of oral expressions of emotions are not only psychological and physiological, but also social phenomena, expressing collective ideas in action. He sees the theories of symbols in rites in agreement with the discovery of psychology, which recognizes the symbolic activity of the mind. While discussing techniques of the body, he considers psychological facts as connecting "cog-wheels," rather than causes, of a series of what he calls "physio-psycho-sociological assemblages" (Mauss 1979a, 120).

Similarly, in his discussion of *total man*, Mauss discusses that a triple consideration -physical, psychological, and sociological- is necessary to understand the agent, composed of a body, individual consciousness, and the collectivity. Mauss's idea of *total man* must be then examined under the light of this methodological framework. His fondness of such concepts as 'total', 'whole', 'complete', and 'concrete' cannot be regarded as arbitrarily chosen. All these terms have, for Mauss, a heuristic value in discovering facts previously unknown. In his most famous work, *The Gift*, where Mauss introduces the concept "total social facts" (system of total service), he mentions the importance of studying facts as a whole:

"The historians feel and rightly object to the fact that the sociologists are too ready with abstractions and unduly separate the various elements of society from one another. We must do as they do: observe what is given [...] After having of

necessity divided things up too much, and abstracted from them, sociologists must strive to reconstitute the whole. By doing so, they will discover rewarding facts. They will also find a way to satisfy the psychologists” (1990, 80).

By proposing the idea of “social total fact,” Mauss wants to “take his own sociological heritage and reorient it, to weave new relationships between sociology, biology, psychology, history, linguistics, and psychoanalysis, and to open up anthropology in this new space” (Karsenti, 1998, 73). The pursuit of the idea of ‘total’ in Mauss is an explicit exposure of his dissatisfaction with the strictly drawn artificial lines among disciplines. He believes that the most interesting and significant problems can be found on the frontiers of the disciplines and this ‘total’ vision can contribute to the erosion of disciplinary boundaries (Goffman 1998, 65).

Mauss’s interdisciplinary idea takes off from ideas of Durkheim who criticizes historical and psychological perspectives in the studies of sociology. Moreover, after developing the concept of “total social facts,” Mauss pays further attention to the actions and actors who create norms, values and social institutions. The link between psychology, biology and sociology, Mauss argues, has to be reformulated under the light of new object of study, i.e. *total man*.

For Mauss, “whether we study special facts or general facts,” we are always dealing with the *total man* in our studies:

“It is this man, this indivisible, measurable but not dissectible being that we meet in our moral, economic and demographic statistics. It is this man we find in the history of masses and peoples, and of their practices, in the same way that history meets him in the history of individuals” (1979b, 26).

Mauss’s conception of *total man* radically departs from the Durkheimian notion of *homo duplex* which stresses a categorical opposition between individual and society, body and soul. Mauss suggests the idea of the human being as an indivisible whole – as lived, flesh, being. He defends the idea of a complete ‘human being’ whose biological, psychological and socio-cultural characteristics constitute a whole. Karsenti splendidly accentuates the difference between Durkheim and Mauss:

“Whereas Durkheim’s human being is double only in relation to what is basically situated externally and only secondarily imposes its imprint on the individual, Mauss’s human being, on the other hand, constitutes a full-fledged object

all by itself, one that coheres simply by reference to itself and to the unity it materially embodies. Its social being is not more or less concealed borrowing: it belongs to the human being himself or herself, and reveals itself in the dynamic form of an immanent process of socialization” (1998, 79).

Thus, in the Maussian account the individual and the social do not confront each other as two opposite sites, as it is proposed in Durkheim’s concept of *homo duplex*. Human psychology cannot be opposed to the social or the body, or vice versa, because they all “make up together the social being of humankind” (Karsenti 1998, 80).

The next section elaborates the relationship between agency and structure in Bourdieu’s theory of practice and analyzes his criticism of the antimony between subjectivism and objectivism to shed light on which respects his theory diverges from both Mauss and Durkheim’s perspectives.

## **Mental and Social Structures**

There are many similarities between Bourdieu and Durkheim in terms of their ideas about the craft of sociology, but for the purposes of this paper, only how Bourdieu conceptualizes the relation between mental and social structures and criticizes the antinomy between subjectivism and objectivism will be analyzed.<sup>4</sup>

This article suggests that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus leans more on Durkheim’s earlier writings in which the individual is situated within the social. Bourdieu shares with Durkheim the urge to expose the social in the apparently most individual forms of behavior. Like Durkheim, he discovers the social in the core of the most subjective experience. Rather than adopting a psychological explanation to understand individual choices, both scholars think that there exists a correspondence between the mental and social structures. Bourdieu states that:

“If one takes seriously both the Durkheimian hypothesis of the social origins of schemes of thought, perception, appreciation, and action and the fact of class

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<sup>4</sup> In his article “Durkheim and Bourdieu: the common plinth and its cracks,” Wacquant (2000) argues that two scholars have many commonalities in their approaches to sociology: their fierce attachment to rationalism; their refusal of pure theory and the stubborn defense of the undividedness of social science; their relation to the historical dimension and to the discipline of history; their recourse to ethnology as a privileged device for “indirect experimentation.” Although I have some reservations about these similarities, it is sufficient to say here that some of these features attributed to their works are actually never realized in their works- for example, Wacquant’s claim that both scholars ‘absolutely’ hold an historical perspective remains something desired but not attained in reality.

divisions, one is necessarily driven to the hypothesis that a correspondence exists between social structures (strictly speaking, power structures) and mental structures. This correspondence obtains through the structure of symbolic systems, language, religious, art, and so forth” (cited in Swartz 1997, 48).

In *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (1992), Wacquant contends that Bourdieu specifically refers to the influential argument offered by Durkheim and Mauss in their study *Primitive Classification*, where they claim that the “classification of things reproduces this classification of men” (1963, 11).<sup>5</sup> This means that mental structures in primitive societies are derivations of their social system.

According to Wacquant (*An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* 1992, 12-14), Bourdieu goes beyond Durkheim’s thought in four directions: First, Bourdieu carries the correspondence between mental and social structures in traditional communities to advanced societies. Specifically with his study of education, this homology between two structures becomes apparent. Bourdieu sees the educational system as the primary institution, which controls the distribution of status and privilege in contemporary societies. He states that “the school system is one of the sites where, in differentiated societies, the systems of thought, which are the apparently more sophisticated equivalent of the ‘primitive forms of classifications,’ are produced” (ibid).

Second, Wacquant refers to Needham’s criticism in the Introduction to *Primitive Classification* that there is no logical necessity to assume a causal linkage between society and symbolic classification in Durkheim’s thought. For Needham, “[t]here are no empirical grounds for a causal explanation. In no single case, is there any compulsion to believe that society is the cause or even the model of the classification” (1963, xxv). Wacquant argues that it is Bourdieu who connects these two spheres with a causal relationship. In Bourdieu’s formulation, social and mental structures “are structurally homologous because they are *genetically linked*: the latter are nothing other than the embodiment of the former” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 13). The causal relationship between two spheres is realized by the concept of ‘habitus,’ which will be discussed in following pages.

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<sup>5</sup> Here Wacquant specifically talks about Bourdieu’s quotation in *The State Nobility*: “There exists a correspondence between social structures and mental structures, between the objective divisions of the social world- particularly into dominant and dominated in the various fields- and the principles of vision and division that agents apply it” (1992, 12).

Wacquant's third and fourth explanations are both about domination in the fields of politics and cultural production. While Durkheim does not touch upon the dimension of domination in this correspondence, Bourdieu submits that this match between social and mental structures provides the instruments of domination. In other words, if this correspondence operates to produce a desired harmonious unity for the social order in Durkheim's thought, it produces domination in Bourdieu's account. While the question for Durkheim is how solidarity is reinforced, for Bourdieu it is how solidarity is constructed in a social order imbued with hierarchy, conflict, struggle and power relations.

Apart from these differences put forward by Wacquant, another disparity between Durkheim and Bourdieu emerges from their stance on subjectivism and objectivism. While Bourdieu refuses to choose either agent or structure, methodological individualism or structuralism, subjectivism or objectivism, Durkheim's arguments stay within the borders and limits of objectivism.

### **Subjectivism and Objectivism**

According to Bourdieu, subjectivist/objectivist antinomy manifests itself in several different forms of social thought. Symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, phenomenology, and rational choice theories are all examples of the subjectivist approach. With a focus on micro-analysis, subjectivism is based on the idea of methodological individualism in which society appears as the emergent product of the decision and actions of conscious individuals. Bourdieu specifically dismisses Jean-Paul Sartre's notion of free will or voluntarism since this approach abstracts the decisions and actions of agents from their social context. This approach, for Bourdieu, ignores the fact that agents construct different understandings and hold different positions in a hierarchically structured social milieu.

Objectivism, on the other hand, includes Marxism, French structuralism, and functionalism, all of which concentrate generally on macro scale issues. Bourdieu claims that objectivism portrays individuals as passive agents within the structure who do not use their independent logic. Bourdieu particularly criticizes Claude Lévi-Strauss for his reduction of action into atemporal and abstract rules.<sup>6</sup> Objectivist scholars project their own ideas into the minds of agents, which Bourdieu calls the scholastic fallacy. Social scientists transform practical knowledge into theoretical

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<sup>6</sup> I will elaborate this criticism further in my discussion of gift.

knowledge by putting into the minds of agents their own scholastic view. In order to refrain from the scholastic fallacy, Bourdieu calls for a reflexive practice of sociology, which is to “objectivize the objectivizing point of view” of the sociologist (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 69). A detached observer, who can objectify the practices of human beings from a distanced perspective, is the foremost requirement of reflexive sociology.

Bourdieu sees his own work as an effort to “move beyond the antagonisms between these modes of knowledge, while preserving the gains from each of them” (1990, 25). He offers a third way which he calls ‘social praxeology’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 11), bringing the ‘subjectivist’ and ‘objectivist’ approach together. This third view enables Bourdieu to conceptualize a formation in which objective structures have subjective consequences, and the individual actors construct the social world. In order to grasp this double reality of the world, this seeming opposition with its translation into the antinomy of methodological individualism and structuralism must be transcended.

Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that “although the two moments of subjectivist and objectivist analyses are equally necessary, they are not equal: epistemological priority is given to objectivism over subjectivist understanding” (ibid). With his stress on objectivism, Bourdieu shares Durkheim’s position that science must break with everyday representations of social life in order to establish a scientific explanation. He pursues Durkheim’s ambition to build sociology as science rather than as social philosophy (Swartz 1997, 46).

As Swartz concludes, Bourdieu’s desire is to achieve “objectivity without objectivism” (1997, 276). Bourdieu’s call for a scientific method that “treats social facts as things”, as proposed by Durkheim does not mean that he shares Durkheim’s objectivism which ignores the role of agents in the social. Bourdieu’s conceptual account does not oppose individual and society as two separate entities that are external to each other. Rather he constructs them as two entities of the same social reality. Practices of agents are actually constitutive of objective structures.

The problem in Bourdieu’s theory arises when he conflates these two different approaches and then opts for the objectivism as the only methodology to investigate agents in the social. Although this position is what he criticizes in his theory, he applies it unwittingly in several cases. His idea of the “scholastic fallacy” is one of the most prevalent outcomes of this confusion. “Scholastic fallacy,” which is defined as the most serious epistemological mistake, puts “a scholar inside the

machine.” Scholar’s subjective relation to the social world is made the basis of the practice analyzed. Bourdieu applies his perplexing theory of objectivism to the anthropologist -as a researcher and as an individual in the social. By applying objectivism as a methodological principle not only of research but also of the researcher, Bourdieu creates a social scientist who is able to have access to “reality” through distancing herself from her interlocutors. The scientist becomes the person who is not deluded by the ideologies like other people. In this respect, there is a close parallel between Marx and Bourdieu, who both attribute privileged positions to the proletariat and social scientist respectively, as beings who are supposed to be able to overcome the “misrecognition” created by ideologies. This idea of the “scholastic fallacy” not only lacks an explanation of why social scientists are not deluded but also signifies an “absolute reality” that is not contaminated by ideologies.<sup>7</sup>

Next section will be the discussion of gift exchange, which includes an elaboration further on Bourdieu’s criticism of objectivism, and an introduction to how he utilizes Mauss’ ideas.

## Gift

Marcel Mauss’s well-known *The Gift* initiated profound discussions about gifts and gift exchange not only within the field of anthropology but also in other disciplines. The radical argument of this book is that although gift exchange might appear free and disinterested, it is in fact both obligatory and interested. In other words, gift is given in a context in which both its reception and its reciprocation are required as a matter of social rules. In Mauss’s words, a gift is received “with a burden attached” (1990, 41).<sup>8</sup>

According to Mauss, there are three themes of the gift, the obligation to give, the obligation to receive and the obligation to reciprocate. This *total system of*

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<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the idea of “scholastic fallacy” contradicts Bourdieu’s own theory of habitus. Although I have not discussed the concept of habitus yet, it is sufficient to say here that in a relatively closed system where mental and social structures are transformable into each other, Bourdieu leaves us without any explanation of how and why “scientific” practices (scientific habitus) of some researchers are differently developed from those of others.

<sup>8</sup> In “Gift, Gift” (1997) Mauss explains the obligation to return gifts with reference to the ambivalent and ambiguous etymology of the word gift in Germanic languages. The word gift has a double meaning: present and poison. This uncertainty anticipates the conjoined pleasure and displeasure when we receive gifts. Moreover, Benveniste goes one step further while discussing the indecidability of the gift. He shows that in Indo-European languages, the words derived from the root \*do- mean both give and take. Another example of these words is *pharmakon* (medicine or poison), which is discussed by Derrida under the category of ‘undecidables.’

*services* is based on the idea of recognition, as in the case of potlatch, which is “the basic act of ‘recognition’, military, juridical, economic, and religious in every sense of the word” (1990, 40). In this *total system of services* both the obligations to accept and to reciprocate gifts are compulsory since not receiving or paying back would be tantamount to declaring war. Mauss asserts that by giving gifts people are trying to degrade others, which can easily turn out to be an escalating contest for honor,<sup>9</sup> but this process, through creating a relation among people also prevents the waging of war. Moreover, for Mauss what creates society are these asymmetric exchange processes among people rather than a social contract in the Hobbesian sense in which people transfer their rights to a transcendent authority.

Lévi-Strauss celebrates *The Gift* as an example of structuralist anthropology since this book attempts to explain the unconscious rules of exchange in the gift society. Yet, Lévi-Strauss suggests that Mauss should have taken into consideration giving, receiving and repaying just as parts of the complex social whole of exchange since the fundamental phenomenon here is exchange itself.

Bourdieu criticizes Lévi-Strauss for just focusing on the reciprocity between gift and counter-gift, and considering this process the result of ‘automatic laws’ of exchange placed within the unconsciousness. Bourdieu argues that a proper conceptualization of gift exchange must go beyond the idea that gifts automatically call forth counter-gifts. With this idea of the ‘automatic laws’ of the cycle of reciprocity, Lévi-Strauss “reduces the agents to the status of automata or inert bodies moved by obscure mechanisms towards ends of which they are unaware” (1990, 98). In the last instance, exchange in Lévi-Strauss’s analysis is not different from ‘swapping’ which telescopes gift and counter-gift into the same instant or ‘lending’, which requires an automatic return (ibid, 105). Contrary to the idea of predictability in Lévi-Strauss’ argument, “the gift may remain unreciprocated, when one obliges to an ungrateful person; it may be rejected as an insult, inasmuch as it asserts or demands the possibility of reciprocity, and therefore of recognition” (ibid, 98). Rather than absolute certainty laid down by the ‘automatic laws’ of Lévi-Strauss, Bourdieu introduces the idea of uncertainty in gift exchange which becomes possible with the reintroduction of “time, with its rhythm, its orientation and its

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<sup>9</sup> Ruth Benedict’s explanation of Kwakiutl potlatch is a good example of this contest: “There are two means by which a chief could achieve the victory he sought. One was by shaming his rival by presenting him with more property than he could return with required interest. The other was by destroying property. In both cases, the offering called for return” (1934, 193). If the rival chief could not return the gift with required interest, he might probably commit suicide.



irreversibility, substituting the dialectic of strategies for the mechanics of the model” (ibid, 99).

Bourdieu believes that the time interval between the gift and counter-gift is “what allows a relation of exchange” (ibid, 105). The giving and receiving of gifts involve the manipulation of time which means that the returned gift is not only different but deferred at the same time. Gift exchange is neither a conscious act nor an unwittingly automatic process; rather, it is a strategic act which involves the manipulation of time. To clarify his idea on strategy in which agents play on the tempo of action, Bourdieu gives the example of a man whose daughter is asked for marriage: the man must reply as quickly as possible if he intends to refuse, lest he seem to be taking advantage of the situation and offend the suitor, whereas if he intends to agree, he can delay his response in order to maintain his situational advantage which he will lose as soon as he gives his consent (ibid, 106). Everything takes place as if agents’ practice, and in particular their manipulation of time, are organized exclusively with a view to concealing from themselves and from others the truth of their practice. At this point of discussion, Bourdieu introduces the concept of misrecognition: “[T]he functioning of gift exchange presupposes individual and collective misrecognition of the truth of the reality of the objective ‘mechanism’ of exchange” (ibid, 105). This collective self-deception is based on the denial of interest and calculation, although everybody knows the true nature of the exchange. Purely economic interest cannot express itself autonomously but must be converted into another form of capital, what Bourdieu calls symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is ‘denied capital’ (ibid, 118) since it disguises the underlying interested relations as disinterested pursuits. Although not perceived as power, symbolic capital is definitely a form of power legitimating demands of recognition, nobility, honor, etc. In the case of gift exchange, there is a denial of the economic interest, “a refusal of the logic of the maximization of economic profit” but it “is organized with a view to the accumulation of symbolic capital” (1997, 234). Therefore, another problem about the objectivist account is its reduction of value and interest to economic terms. However, with the concept of symbolic capital, values and interests can operate at another level where the distinction between the economic and noneconomic is lost.

Substituting strategy for the rule, Bourdieu distances himself from strict structuralist forms of determination, an approach followed by Lévi-Strauss who develops formal modes of deep structural rules that supposedly regulate kinship, social rituals, and marriage rules. Bourdieu suggests that although there is no rule in

Mauss's book, Lévi-Strauss rereads him with a prostructuralist perspective and creates rules from the instances of action.

Bourdieu states that the categories that Lévi-Strauss proposes are his own projections. In other words, following the idea of abstract rules, like a 'map', in his mind, Lévi-Strauss simply projects his own ideas on the natives.<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu claims that maps provide explicit representations and they lay out everything simultaneously. Maps, grounded on empty homogenous time, impose symmetry and the certainty of gift exchange, although the actual practice is asymmetrical, irreversible and uncertain. As Charles Taylor rightly points out, "what on paper is a set of dictated exchanges under conditions of certainty is experienced as suspense and uncertainty in practice" (1992, 182).

In formulating his criticism of abstract rules, Bourdieu follows the arguments of Wittgenstein.<sup>11</sup> Although understanding a rule seems to imply knowledge and awareness, Wittgenstein "shows that the agent not only is not, but *never could* be aware of a whole host of issues that nonetheless have a direct bearing on the correct application of the rule" (emphases in original, *ibid*, 167). Wittgenstein suggests that there are no abstract rules in the minds of people which could be consciously grasped and then practiced accordingly. For Wittgenstein "obeying a rule is a practice, that is, a social practice," which brings us to the concept of habitus (*ibid*, 177). Yet before a discussion of habitus, the impact of Mauss' account of the body on Bourdieu's work will be explored in the next section.

## Body

In his early work on Kabyle culture, Bourdieu demonstrates how the opposition between male and female is realized in posture, in the gesture and movements of body. Feminine virtue and modesty orient the whole women body downward, towards the ground, the inside, and the house, while male excellence is asserted in movement upward, outwards, towards other men (1990, 70). Male upward movements and female downward movements; uprightness versus bending;

<sup>10</sup> The below quotation from Malinowski is of help in understanding the experience of anthropologists who need a 'map' to figure out what is going on in the 'primitive societies,' whereas the natives just practice, lets say, 'Kula ring' without a need of any kind of models/rules/maps in their minds. In his book *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Malinowski writes that: "If you were to ask him what the Kula is, he would answer by giving a few details, most likely by giving his personal experiences and subjective views on the Kula, but nothing approaching the definition just given here. Not even a partial coherent account could be obtained. For the integral picture does not exist in his mind; he is in it, and cannot see the whole from the outside" (1950, 83).

<sup>11</sup> It is necessary here to note that Bourdieu rarely refers to the studies of Wittgenstein.

the will to overcome versus submission expose the socially defined vision of the sexual division of labor and the relations that the two sexes have to their own bodies and to their sexualities.

Another example Bourdieu suggests is the practice of sport. Within the social practice of sport, the player develops a certain ‘feel for the game’ that enables her to respond and act unconsciously. Trained actions are not the result of logical reasoning but occur through processes which take part outside conscious control. Performance in sport, games and daily social practices occurs largely at subconscious levels through which cultural dispositions are expressed and reproduced. For Bourdieu the day-to-day activities are produced by an interaction of agency and social structure. These practices are neither objectively determined nor exclusively the product of conscious will. They are produced by the interaction of the social context and the social action of agency.

While formulating his theory of practice, Bourdieu utilizes Mauss’ idea of the techniques of body. Mauss contends that there are different ways of walking, running, swimming, sleeping, eating, and having sex in different societies. “In them we should see the techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason rather than, in the ordinary way, merely the soul and its repetitive faculties” (Mauss 1979a, 101). There are two significant points here: First, by emphasizing collective practical reason, Mauss situates the constitution of the body in the social. In other words, like Bourdieu, he claims that the body is socially constructed. Second, his claim that body techniques manifest a individual practical reason, and are not just repetitions indicates his attribution of deliberative actions to the individuals. In this respect Mauss diverges from Bourdieu.

Although Mauss and Bourdieu are both interested in the process of the internalization of objective structures not only as mental but also as corporeal, Bourdieu puts more emphasis on a theory of action that is practical rather than a conscious effort. For Bourdieu, “it is an operator of rationality, but of a practical rationality immanent in a historical system of social relations and therefore *transcendent to the individual*” (emphases are added, 1992, 19) For instance, Bourdieu suggests that the child *mimics* other people’s actions rather than *models*. Thus, he explains the process of acquisition in terms of practical mimesis, “which implies an overall relation of identification and has nothing in common with an imitation that would presuppose a conscious effort” (1990, 72).

Bourdieu argues that practical sense is not a state of mind, but rather a state of body –as an embodied history or an enacted belief- which causes practices or bodily expressions of emotion. But agents never completely know what they are doing, although they believe in what their bodies do. This is because practical sense is not something acquired through agents' conscious effort to imitate certain manners and gestures, but through embodiment, in the form of dispositions, ways of walking, standing, speaking, and feeling.

Mauss' concept of techniques of the body is far away from assigning a sheer consciousness to the practices of individuals, however, it would be correct to suggest that his description of agency is less constrained than Bourdieu's account of agency. In other words, Maussian theory of practice draws a very different picture of embodiment wherein the individual does not fade away in the social. Mauss sees the agent, individual consciousness, and the collectivity within his individual. The physical, psychological, and sociological assemblages create a *total man*. This indivisible total man who is situated in direct opposition to Durkheim's *homo duplex* also diverges from Bourdieu's individual who is wedged within the structure of the social. If Mauss's individual is the human being belongs to herself, Bourdieu's individual seems to belong to the social.

## **Habitus**

Bourdieu explains how regular patterns of conduct occur over time without being the immediate product either of some external structure or of subjective intention. He defines habitus as:

“systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them” (1990, 53).

On the one hand, the habitus sets structural limits for action, and on the other hand, it generates perceptions, aspirations, and practices that correspond to the structuring properties of earlier socialization. The language of “structured structures” and “structuring structures” captures these two central features of habitus.

Habitus derives from the predominantly unconscious internalization of objective chances that are common to members of a society. Although Bourdieu proposes that his theory is not “without an agent,” his theory is not truly “with an agent” either. Put in other words, since Bourdieu’s account of practice is theory of the conditions that are necessary and sufficient for structural reproduction through time, it is logically restricted to treating all changes as exogenous. In this sense, his theory is limited to offer any systematic account of change itself.

The constant transformation of the mental and social structures into each other creates a relatively closed system, in which the choices of individuals are predetermined. Although Bourdieu’s agents are not Lévi-Strauss’s individuals, who are turned into automata through a system of mechanical determination, they are also stuck into a structurally determinative construct. Even in his discussion of strategy, where Bourdieu explicitly grants agency to his individuals, we see that individuals who strategically benefit from the system via the manipulation of time have “structurally determined” choices before them.<sup>12</sup>

Bourdieu strongly rejects these criticisms. He offers that habitus, being a product of history, is an “*open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structure. It is durable but not eternal!” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 133). However, to what extent habitus is described as a product of history in Bourdieu’s theory is still not clear. Although Bourdieu argues that social agents are the products of history and thus they actively determine the situation that determines them, in his theory these individuals do not seem to have the capabilities to create critical changes that take place in the macro level, such as globalization or capitalism. Since Bourdieu does not develop a historical analysis, he is unable to reveal the specificities of epochs and types of society.

If I clarify my argument again, my point is not identical with the criticisms that Bourdieu’s habitus reinforces determinism under the appearance of relaxing it. Bourdieu’s argument is more sophisticated than proposed by these criticisms, which formulate his theory simply as “structures produce habitus, which determine

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<sup>12</sup> The argument developed by Aihwa Ong in *Flexible Citizenship* (1998) is an excellent example illustrating how individuals can strategically maneuver in a system without being reduced to rational agents of the game theory. Ong’s discussion of Chinese transnational immigrants who strategically manipulate the ambiguities of the nation-states is based on a well-adjusted interplay of agency and structure. The strategies used by the Chinese immigrants cannot be foreseen from a Bourdieuan perspective which is closed to ‘surprising innovations’ and critical of ‘too much agency’.

practices, which reproduce structures.” Bourdieu’s theory goes beyond the limits of a mechanical and overly deterministic account with his insertion of time and strategy in his theory. With his concept of habitus, Bourdieu portrays a situation in which individuals can practice a diversity of multilayered dispositions.

Nevertheless, Bourdieu is far away from freeing individuals from the iron cage of structuralism, as he proposes. He is not able to explain how the big changes and innovations in such a structuring structure and structured structure come to occur through individuals’ actions. His theory of habitus, which combines the present with future but lacks the historical component, and which grants a limited agency to individuals, is unable to explain why there are different societies and epochs. With Bourdieu’s strong emphasis on the homology of mental and social structures, habitus remains more of a hypothetical theory rather than a real one, since no society can reproduce itself exactly through time.

## Conclusion

In this paper, my goal was not to reduce Bourdieu’s concept of habitus into Durkheim’s and Mauss’s ideas. Rather, by drawing the similarities and differences among three scholars, I aimed to situate Bourdieu’s work within a perspective, which seeks to investigate the debates between individual and society, agency and structure, and subjectivism and objectivism.

Durkheim, with his depiction of a double man in his last writings, moves away from his initial idea that individuals are socially constructed. Mauss, on the other hand, builds *homo duplex* in an indivisible *total man* who is a product of physio-psycho-sociological assemblages. Individuals, in Bourdieu, with their partial agencies, stay somewhere in between *homo duplex* and *total man*. Bourdieu’s individual resembles Durkheim’s, who fades away within the social, but she is certainly different from Mauss’s individual who is an indivisible whole. Unlike Mauss’s description of the individual, who is immanent in the world, Bourdieu’s explanation implicitly reproduces the distinction between agency and structure that he claims to transcend. The individual is not only constituted within the social but also belongs to the social but since Bourdieu’s explanation always starts from even the criticism of the antinomy between agency and structure, it still operates with the idea that individual and society are two separate entities.

Bourdieu is correct in his criticisms against conceptualizing human actions as direct, unmediated responses to external factors, or as conscious intentions and

calculations. It is clear that his individual is neither an automaton nor a conscious subject but this does not necessarily require that Bourdieu's theory transcends this dichotomy. His proposed dialectical relationship between agency and structure in fact works in favor of the latter, which in the last instance, locates the individual in the social.

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